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What about deferred pledging ?

By J. F. Findlay

DEAN OF MEN

THE arguments for and against deferred pledging by fraternities and sororities at the University of Oklahoma have been discussed for several years, and so far, administrative officials have not arrived definitely at the conclusion that the plan should be adopted.

The problem is still being studied, and at the last meeting of the Board of Regents before this article was written, the Board delayed making any final decision one way or the other.

The long study of the problems involved has revealed that there would be both advantages and disadvantages in a deferred pledging system, and has shown that there is considerable confusion of thought on the matter in educational institutions over the nation.

College officials are divided as to the wisdom of deferred pledging. There seems to be no consensus of opinion that would indicate one method of pledging is inherently superior to another. Local conditions are the most important factor to be considered in the question.

There seems to be some significance in the fact that practically all institutions where deferred pledging has been tried and has succeeded operate a dormitory system large enough to house the entire freshman class.

Where the plan has succeeded, the factors involved in its success appeared to be careful thought in devising a plan to accomplish the ends sought, care in securing the co-operation and not the antagonism of the fraternities in setting up the system, and care in strongly emphasizing the regulations governing the practice of rushing and pledging.

Practically all the deferred pledging programs require that a certain grade average must be achieved by all prospective pledges before they can be considered seriously for pledging.

There is much to recommend this feature of the deferred pledging system. It places the emphasis where it belongs—upon academic achievement. It is worth noting that this feature of deferred pledging could be adopted at the University of

Oklahoma without doing any violence to the present system of securing membership in our fraternities.

Where fraternities maintain lodges without living accommodations for the pledges or members, a totally different set of factors governs the situation than those existent on the University of Oklahoma campus. A considerable number of institutions have lodges rather than large fraternity houses.

For this reason it becomes exceedingly difficult to compare the pledging problems of our own campus with the problems of these institutions. Comparisons should be made of like situations, if we are to arrive at the correct conclusions.

The number of institutions having deferred pledging is in the minority. A

THE QUESTION OF WHETHER DEFERRED PLEDGING SHALL BE ADOPTED IS STILL OPEN

recent study shows that of 123 colleges surveyed, only 49 had deferred pledging at the time the survey was made.

The arguments for and against deferred pledging can be summarized as follows:

FOR DEFERRED PLEDGING:

1. Deferred pledging encourages the elimination of "hell week" and materially assists in lending new weight to more constructive methods of pre-initiation instruction of prospective members. On some campuses the introduction of deferred pledging has made it necessary to abandon largely the old traditional methods of the "pledge court" and the paddle.

2. It tends to place in proper relation the primary loyalty to the college or university and the secondary loyalty to the fraternity.

3. It gives the college or university an opportunity to orient freshmen more effectively.

4. Social democracy is achieved for the first year student instead of encouraging social stratification.

5. A study made by the Interfraternity

Council on deferred pledging (1932) shows that a small period of deferment (one week to one semester) definitely reduces the number of broken pledges.

6. The chief argument for deferred pledging used on most campuses, is that it gives the rushee adequate time to make a choice and it gives fraternities an opportunity to scrutinize candidates before a pledge button is offered.

AGAINST DEFERRED PLEDGING:

1. The chief objection on most campuses to deferred pledging is a financial one. It is claimed that many chapters would find it impossible to continue to operate if the total income is reduced by eliminating the freshman group. It is also claimed that the expense of rushing is increased because of the much longer period over which it must be extended.

2. The study referred to above showed that deferred pledging tended to lower scholastic standards.

3. The same study also showed that deferment tends to make the strong chapters stronger and the weak chapters weaker.

4. Some campuses have found that deferred rushing has had an unfortunate effect upon the morale of the fraternities.

5. If the college or university believes sufficiently in fraternities to permit their existence as an integral part of the institution, it follows that the school must believe that fraternities have something to contribute to the educational or personal experience of their members and pledges. If this premise is true, then it is logical to believe that anything which is good should be placed at the disposal of freshmen as well as upperclassmen.

6. A very considerable number of institutions once having instituted some form of deferred pledging have abandoned the plan.

Those are the major arguments about the problem, and there is some merit in most of them.

In addition to these arguments, some less specific but definitely significant

What would happen to the financial setup of Greek chapter houses like these if deferred pledging were adopted? That is one factor discussed in studying the situation.

trends in the fraternity field are worth noting.

New forces are at work in the fraternity world which probably will do more than deferred pledging to achieve two important objectives: 1. Maintain or raise the quality of chapter personnel; 2. Improve life within the chapter house so that it will make a more constructive contribution to the education of both members and pledges.

Fraternity literature shows quite definitely that the national offices of strong Greek organizations are stressing the importance of character, intellectual capacity and true quality of leadership in the selection of pledges—rather than the unimportant traits which all too often have played a part in the selection of new material in past years. Equally as important is the new movement within the national fraternities which now is stressing the fact that the fraternity—if it is to have permanency—must recognize that it is an integral part of the academic institution and as such must make a serious contribution to the educational life of the men housed within its walls.

For these reasons these fraternities are more and more stressing such things as a proper and wise orientation of their freshmen, an adequate scholastic stimulation of both members and pledges and the environment within the house itself.

New frontiers are being pioneered in fraternity matters. There is much promise in the new conception of the place which fraternities may have in the educational picture.



Leaders in Democrat league

About a dozen Sooners have been elected presidents of various chapters of the League of Young Democrats.

The new chapter presidents include: J. R. Cornelison, '28law, Sayre, Beckham county; Jack Campbell, University chapter, Norman; Russell Farmer, '35law, Pauls Valley, Garvin county; Floyd Nelson, '35ex, Holdenville, Hughes county; E. Smith Hester, '33law, Purcell, McClain county; Quinton Griffith, '30ex, Okemah, Okfuskee county; William Jones, Jr., '25 law, McAlester, Pittsburgh county; Truman Harrison, '29law, Ada, Pontotoc county; R. Gordon Lowe, '26ex, Tulsa, Tulsa county; and Gordon Watts, '35as, '35law, Wagoner, Wagoner county.

