Black Greek life at Columbia [1]

Dear Alice,

OK, this is going to be a strange one (question, that is). As I am a first year student, I don't know much about the hot spots on campus. I am interested in the Black Greek undergraduate life at Columbia. Do you know of any contacts? Or better yet, can you direct me to a Black Student Center where I can find more info? I'd appreciate any help you can give.

Thanks,
the Black Greeks

Answer

Dear the Black Greeks,

Joining a fraternity or sorority is a time-honored tradition at many institutions of higher learning. It is an excellent way to become integrated into campus life, and luckily, Columbia has lots to offer for the rush-ready.

Columbia University recognizes five out the nine largest historically African American Greek-letter fraternities and sororities, as determined by the National Pan-Hellenic Council. As of the fall semester, 2008, these include Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority and Delta Sigma Theta Sorority for women rushers; and Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, and Omega Psi Phi Fraternity for men.

Choosing to go Greek typically becomes an integral part of the remainder of your education and overall experience at Columbia. Many fraternities and sororities focus on building personal character, while also maintaining a strong commitment to community service. Leadership development and scholarship are also heavily stressed in Greek life, amidst strong social ties. Many fraternity and sorority members feel they are part of a brotherhood or sisterhood with fellow members who can support them in their transition to college, with the experience and camaraderie leading to lifelong friendships.

Another aspect of Greek social life is the option of shared living in chapter residence. Thirteen fraternities and four sororities have some form of on-campus housing at Columbia. Cohabitating with brothers or sisters can facilitate important skills, such as shared responsibility, positive communication, and compromise, and can also provide opportunities for academic improvement and social activities. Many Greeks also find that living cooperatively allows for even closer friendships and stronger bonds with fellow Greeks, which
can be an added plus in a sometimes demanding and stressful college environment.

For more information about Columbia University Greek life, or if you have specific questions about Greek residence programs, check out the Student Affairs Fraternity & Sorority Life [2] page. The Black Student Organization (BSO) [3] may also be a good resource for information about Black organizations, activities, and student life. In addition, the Office of Multicultural Affairs [4] provides information on the cultural diversity and opportunities that exist at Columbia.

If you do decide to rush, good luck, and welcome to Columbia!

Alice!
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