



The
Fraternal
Values Movement
and how it's encouraging
change in the Greek system

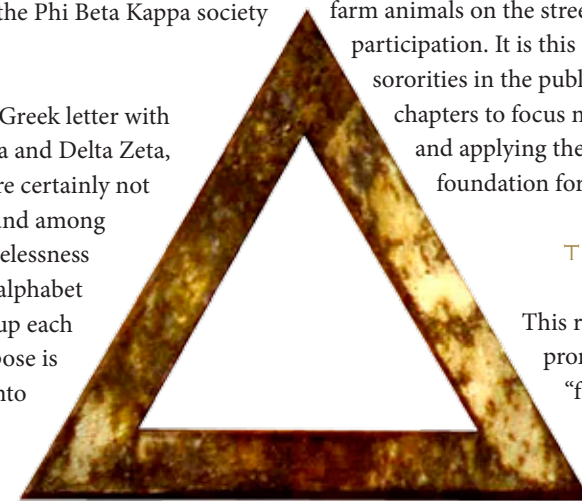
REDISCOVERING VALUES

The Greek alphabet has been used to write the Greek language since around 800 BCE. It is one of the oldest alphabets in the world, and perhaps the most universal. The 24 Greek letters are used as symbols in both mathematics and science. The alphabet is also shared by fraternities and sororities whose names are created by linking various letters, a tradition which first began with the Phi Beta Kappa society in 1776.

While Delta Delta Delta shares its Greek letter with others (Delta Gamma, Kappa Delta and Delta Zeta, just to name a few) Greek letters are certainly not the only mutual characteristics found among fraternities and sororities. The timelessness and universal nature of the Greek alphabet is echoed by the values that make up each organization — values whose purpose is to shape young men and women into well-rounded citizens.

However, in previous years, negative stereotypes have plagued the Greek system with incidents involving hazing, partying, binge drinking and other bad behavior being splashed across headlines. A few months ago I was forwarded a news story about a troupe of barnyard animals — two donkeys and a goat, to be exact — escaping a University of Texas fraternity party. One student was even quoted as saying, “I’m sure [the animals] were there for pure effect, but hopefully they’re ok because the music was pretty loud.” Though this particular incident was perhaps more amusing

than illicit, it still feeds the familiar stereotype of wild, out-of-control frat parties and gives an all-too-literal meaning to the term “Animal House.” And though this particular fraternity has a high regard for scholarship, gentlemanly behavior and support of charitable causes, the news story never mentioned those things — because it’s far more fun to talk about farm animals on the streets of Austin than philanthropy participation. It is this negative image of fraternities and sororities in the public eye that has been an impetus for chapters to focus more attention on living, teaching and applying the values that originally laid the foundation for the Greek system.



THE HISTORY

This refocused attention on values prompted the coinage of the term “fraternal values movement.” The term itself seems straightforward, but exploring exactly what the fraternal values movement is and where it came from is a

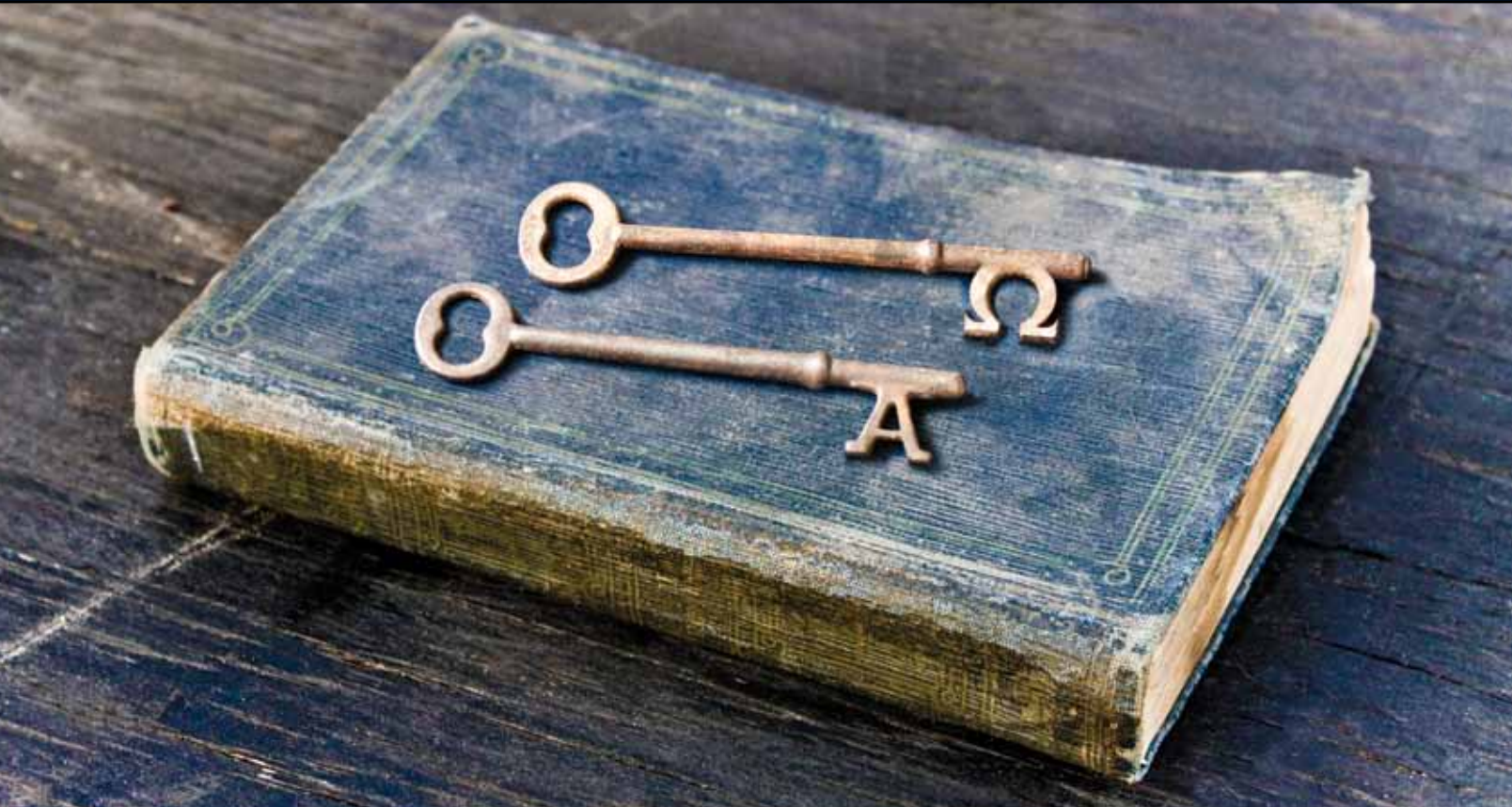
bit more complex. I had the pleasure of speaking with Dr. Dan Bureau, director of student life learning and assessment at the University of Memphis, who has researched, written about and presented on the fraternal values movement. According to Dan, the movement has essentially existed since the beginning of the Greek system with the founders of each organization intending members to have common values, ideas and goals. For Tri Delta, the fraternal values movement began when Sarah Ida Shaw envisioned a women’s

By Staff Writer, Amanda Milford

Opposite page: The University of Texas at Austin’s Tower is decorated with five alphabets, one of them Greek.

“One’s philosophy is not best expressed in words; it is expressed by the choices one makes. In the long run, we shape our lives and we shape ourselves. The process never ends until we die. And the choices we make are ultimately our own responsibility.”

~ Eleanor Roosevelt



fraternity that would inspire the ideals of truth, self-sacrifice and friendship and founded Tri Delta with the purpose of establishing “a perpetual bond of friendship among its members, to develop a stronger and more womanly character, to broaden the moral and intellectual life, and to assist its members in every possible way.”

At the time when Tri Delta was founded, Greek organizations were essentially the only activities available for students outside the classroom. They had originated as outlets for students wanting to get together — often secretly — and discuss and debate topics ranging from politics to philosophy.

But as college campuses began to develop, so did the role of fraternities and sororities.

“In the ‘50s, ‘60s and ‘70s, what it meant to be a member of a fraternity on a college campus changed,” Dan explains. “As college campuses became more diverse, larger and offered more extracurricular activities, it was important for fraternities to identify their niche.”

While college campuses began to grow and provide more opportunities beyond the books, there were few organizations that offered a values-based approach or had rituals and activities directly connected to values. This is how fraternities and sororities found their places within the changing landscape of higher education.

However, in the ‘70s and ‘80s, negative perceptions of Greek life surfaced. Images of proper ladies and gentlemen gathering for scholarly discussions over tea were replaced with “Toga! Toga! Toga!” and beer bonging. This was much to the dismay of the fraternities and sororities who wanted their organizations to reflect a well-rounded college experience, not constant drunken revelry. In order to combat the toga-party persona, the Greek system refocused attention on returning their organizations to their values-based roots and reasserting themselves as beneficial assets on college campuses.

Yet, research has shown that there is often a disconnect between the rhetoric of Greek chapters and the actions of their members. In other words, the values outlined by the

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“Education without values, as useful as it is, seems rather to make man a more clever devil.”

~ C.S. Lewis

organization are not always upheld, or even completely understood, by its members. In recent years, leaders in both the Greek community and academia have taken notice of this, and have begun an attempt to better educate students on the role fraternal values should play in their undergraduate experience.

In 2003, a task force, known as the Franklin Square Group, which included several university and Greek leaders, convened and published “A Call for Values Congruence.” This article outlines strategies that campuses can use to realign chapter behavior with its respective fraternity’s mission.

KEY VALUES

The Oxford English Dictionary defines “values” as one’s principles or standards; one’s judgment of what is valuable or important in life. In this sense, “values” are subjective — what is important to one person may not be important to another. However, when applied to fraternities and sororities, “values” becomes more universal; it becomes easier to pinpoint the same reoccurring principles across each organization. A brief survey of a few experts in the Greek community unlocks these specific key values.

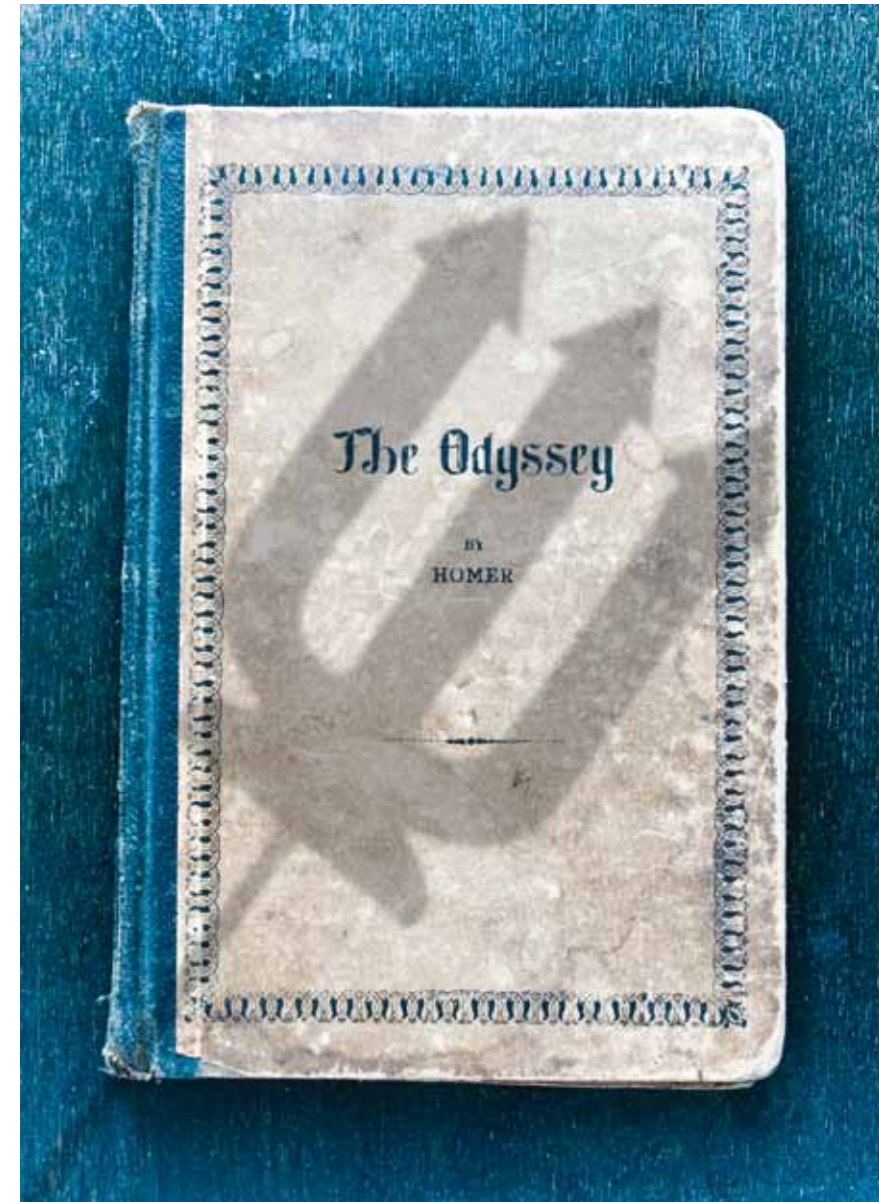
According to Dan, “The commonality you will find across all organizations is promoting qualities like respect, honor, integrity and friendship.”

Mark Koepsell, executive director/CEO of the Association of Fraternal Leadership and Values (AFLV), says, “At the heart of fraternities and sororities are the values that we were founded on. Although each organization has its own unique values, there are overarching values that tie us together as a community. Things like civility, knowledge/scholarship, loyalty, service, leadership and the deep bond of brother/sisterhood are common ties that bind us together.”

Dr. Mari Ann Callais, director of development for The Center for Living, Learning & Leading and past national president of Theta Phi Alpha, also shared some of the values from her fraternity.

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“From the beginning, loyalty, friendship, truth and honor have been values that have been shared and taught to members of [Theta Phi Alpha],” Mari Ann says. “One of the first aspects of our Fraternity that you learn as a new member is our Creed ... Our Creed challenges each one of us to do our best to ensure justice, to be thoughtful in our actions, loyal to our friends (sisters) and honorable.”



“No matter our social status, success, the way we look or the challenges we bring with us, the quality of how we treat one another and love one another is still the primary reason why we have these organizations we call fraternities and sororities.”

~ Dr. Mari Ann Callais



Let's take a closer look at each one of the values and how they are applied in the Greek community:

Scholarship. As mentioned before, Greek organizations such as Phi Beta Kappa, which began as a literary society, originated as a means to perpetuate scholarly debates. There is no escaping the fact that scholarship is entrenched in the history of our organizations. Today, most fraternities and sororities require members to uphold a certain GPA and push for high standards in intellectual achievement. Some organizations, Tri Delta being one, reserve special academic awards and scholarships for those members who demonstrate academic excellence. In an effort to further “broaden intellectual life,” each year Tri Delta funds two research fellows at the National Humanities Center.

Leadership. Chapter president, philanthropy chair, new member educator, Panhellenic president. There are myriad opportunities to gain valuable leadership experience within a fraternity or a sorority, and most organizations have programs which focus specifically on leadership development. No matter which Greek chapter a person is a member of, by the time they graduate from college, chances are they will have already developed a leadership skill set that will accompany them into the professional workforce.

Even the research is there to prove it. A 2009 report from the University Learning Outcomes Assessment (UniLOA), which examines the impact of male fraternity membership on student growth, learning and development, found that compared to non-affiliated men, fraternity men scored substantially higher in the areas of citizenship and leadership.

Brotherhood/Sisterhood. This is a big one for Tri Delta. Every one of us knows that “The Purpose of Delta Delta Delta shall be to establish a perpetual bond of friendship among its members.” However, this idea is not exclusive to any one fraternity, and brotherhood and sisterhood means more than simply being friends with your fellow fraternity members — it's about valuing one another as individuals and treating others with respect.

“I would hope that no matter how much our world changes, valuing one another as people who should be treated with respect will always be of utmost importance in our lives.”

Loyalty. Honor. Truth. Integrity. Respect. Civility. Knowledge.

Although the words used to describe these principles may vary, in essence the universal fraternal values can be broken down into four characteristics that each organization aims to instill in its members: scholarship, leadership, brotherhood/sisterhood and service. These key values are the primary ways in which members develop and demonstrate principles like loyalty, honor, truth, integrity, respect, civility and knowledge.

FACES OF TRI DELTA

THE FOLLOWING FOUR REMARKABLE SENIORS

would make Sarah Ida Shaw proud. They have not only made an effort to represent Tri Delta's Purpose in their collegiate careers, but they also plan to continue incorporating these values into their lives for years to come. Here is what they have to say about how Tri Delta's values have influenced them:

Tereas Bermensolo-Cutler, Northern Arizona



Scholarship. Leadership. Loyalty. These are all characteristics Tereas embodies. She credits Tri Delta with helping her grow as a leader. “Over the course of my collegiate years, Tri Delta has helped me to develop leadership skills such as confidentiality, critical decision making, rational thinking and teamwork. It has pushed me to become further involved on campus. Without Tri Delta, I do not think I would have had the skills and confidence to become involved in other organizations. Tri Delta has pushed me to become the best of who I am.”

While her unselfish leadership will certainly have a place in Tereas' future career, other values she has learned through Tri Delta that she will take with her after she graduates are the importance of community service and, of course, sisterhood.

“I think Tri Delta's values will always influence the quality of my personal relationships. In 10 years, I know the friendships fostered through Tri Delta will remain similar in strength despite the lapse of time.”

Noelle Lorine, Villanova



Though initially hesitant to join a sorority, Noelle soon learned the true value Tri Delta: Sisterhood. “I think of my Tri Delta sisters as my soul mates, by bridesmaids, my best friends and my role models,” she says. “Tri Delta has helped me grow from a shy, anxious girl into a confident, independent woman. However, my biggest reward has been seeing this growth in my sisters.”

Noelle credits any success she has had or will have in the

future to the amazing support system of her sisters. Her roles as collegiate chapter president and vice president of public relations provided her with the skills and practice for the professional world, and she looks forward to life as an alumna. “I'm excited to meet other alumnae in whichever city I end up living post-graduation. Forming friendships with members from other chapters is a great way to keep Tri Delta active in my life.”

Lucy Luken, Rhodes



Leadership and friendship have both been an important part of this business major's college experience. According to Lucy, “Tri Delta means a sisterhood that is much bigger than any individual chapter. Anywhere I may travel during my lifetime, I will always be able to find a sister.”

When thinking about the future, Lucy says, “After graduation, I will take the refined leadership skills I have gained as a member of Delta Delta Delta. I am confident in my abilities to be a leader whether I am at work or within another organization.” She also believes the lessons she learned as chapter president will continue to help her throughout her professional career, and she intends to always fulfill the pledge of unselfish friendship.

Cassie Wilson, Kansas



“When Sarah Ida Shaw founded Tri Delta, she hoped to inspire ideals of truth, self-sacrifice and friendship,” Cassie says. “These ideals are present in my everyday life, from being honest as a student, being unselfish as a leader and an abundance of friendship within my sisterhood.”

As for the influence Tri Delta will have on her professional life as a meteorologist, Cassie believes, “Tri Delta's values correlate with any profession, but being a public figure I see these values being part of my everyday life even more. An unselfish leader will be transformed into a trusted voice, a stronger and more womanly character will be transformed into poised and polished, and broadening the moral and intellectual life will be transformed into educating the public.”

“If we are to go forward, we must go back and rediscover those precious values — that all reality hinges on moral foundations and that all reality has spiritual control.”

~ Martin Luther King, Jr.

No matter our social status, success, the way we look or the challenges we bring with us, the quality of how we treat one another and love another is still the primary reason why we have these organizations we call fraternities and sororities,” says Mari Ann.

Service. As Tri Deltas we work hard to raise money for St. Jude Children’s Research Hospital as well as other local children’s cancer charities. However, we are not the only Greek organization with an adopted cause. Most fraternities and sororities, including each National Panhellenic Conference member organization, have an official philanthropy partner for whom they do volunteer work and raise money. Phi Mu has Children’s Miracle Network, Alpha Sigma Tau has Habitat for Humanity and Chi Omega has Make a Wish Foundation, just to name a few examples. Through these various philanthropic opportunities, members learn the importance of civic engagement and giving back to the community.

Although these four values are the common denominator across the Greek community, each individual organization also possesses its own creeds, missions and rituals that its

members are expected to uphold. When the creeds, missions or rituals are combined with these four overarching values, the result is a well-rounded, socially developed citizen. The face of the Greek community transforms from a toga-wearing frat brother (or sorority sister) to an articulate, intelligent professional with a network of brothers and sisters and a desire to serve and better his or her community. This is the image all Greek organizations strive for and through a collective effort, can be achieved.

“It is understandable that we all want what is best for our organizations,” Mari Ann says. “However, looking at the big picture, all of us being successful and good at what we do and helping to develop young men and women is our mission.”

Similarly, according to Mark, “It is through the celebration and focus on these shared values that we can strengthen the impact and relevance of fraternities and sororities in our communities. Within individual chapters and councils we can make a small impact, but as a unified whole, the synergistic outcome is exponential.”

“Personal leadership is the process of keeping your vision and values before you and aligning your life to be congruent with them.”

~ Stephen Covey



FRATERNITIES IN THE FUTURE

While the fraternal values are timeless, the landscape of higher education is ever-changing. According to Mari Ann, today’s college students face many more challenges than their predecessors: rising tuition, a tougher economic situation, increased use of alcohol and illegal drugs, body image, bullying, and the list goes on. After looking into the past and seeing how Greek organizations have had to reassert their places in academia, one wonders what role fraternities and sororities will play on college campuses 10 to 20 years from now and what place the fraternal values movement will have in the constant struggle against negative influences.

“I believe that we cannot look at ‘the values movement’ as something that comes and goes,” says Mari Ann. “It can’t be something that we check off of our list and say, ‘Well, we’ve got a program on values: ‘check’ and move on.”

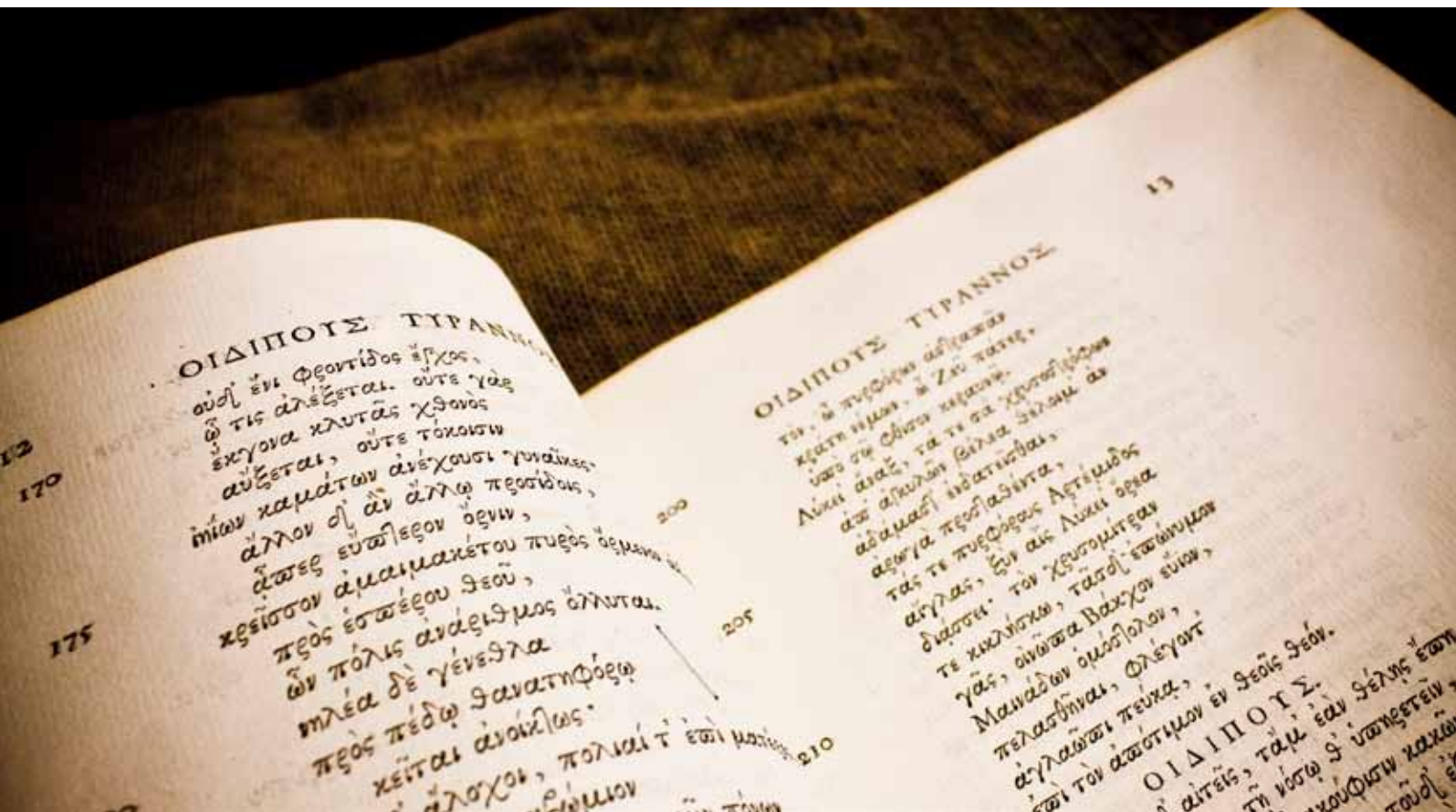
Dan agrees. “A focus on fraternal values will always be important. The crux of what [fraternities and sororities] do is to provide opportunities for students to explore and reach their personal bests.”

“The role of fraternities and sororities is to enhance the social, intellectual and cultural life of a campus community and to provide a meaningful personal development opportunity for individual members,” Mark says. He adds that he doesn’t believe that this particular role will change over time, but there will be an increased expectation from campuses and communities for organizations and their members to stay true to their core purpose.

Yet, as long as a commitment to values-based community and individual development remain the primary focus of the Greek system, fraternities and sororities will remain an integral part of the college experience.

Dan explains, “Our position in higher education is based on the idea that we add value to students’ lives. Anything we can do to promote learning helps with the higher education process, and exploring values is one of the most powerful learning experiences.”

The four years of college are formative to the development of young adults. Aside from getting an education, Dan says



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Photographs by Michelle Vaughn; book at left, courtesy of the Baylor University Libraries Special Collections

FRIENDSHIP

college is about examining who you are, what you want to be and determining a path to get you to where you want to go. "College students are always reflecting on how to become members of society, and fraternities and sororities encourage them to reflect on values."

The Association of Fraternal Leadership and Values (AFLV) is taking the values conversation directly to the collegiate level with the Fraternal Values Society, which serves as an umbrella organization bringing together the various Greek chapters on a college campus and facilitating values-based dialogue and discourse.

Mark finds that on most campuses there are members of fraternities and sororities who want to forward the values conversation within their community, but don't know where or how to begin. "The Fraternal Values Society exists to provide a home for that conversation, to provide voice to the values movement and to create a sustainable network within each fraternal community for those who want their fraternal experience to be representative of the founding fraternal/ethical values of our organization," he says.

So what does all of this say about the future of fraternities and sororities? Simply put, fraternities will only continue to flourish as long as there remains a focus on instilling values

in members. Without this purposeful action, the Greek system will have no place in higher education.

Which bring us to the sixth definition for "value" listed in the Oxford English Dictionary: "The ability of a thing to serve a purpose or cause an effect." It is through collaboration and cooperation within the Greek community that the public, school administrators, non-Greek students and even the critics will fully recognize the value in our organizations and the true purpose we serve.

In science and mathematics, the Greek letter Delta stands for "change." And what better a symbol to lead the way in the fraternal values movement — changing the face of the Greek system for the better.

Mari Ann sums up the sentiment best: "One important lesson that I have learned from Tri Delta as a non-member is that the Purpose of Tri Delta can be applicable to all of us, no matter our affiliation. All of our organizations are built upon friendships that are intended to take us through our journey of life. As fraternal organizations, it is in all of our best interest to take these bonds of friendship and to realize that our actions impact the fraternal movement not just for the here and now, but for years to come." ▲

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Tenacious

Kassie McClure Rempel,
North Carolina
Founder and Owner, SimplySoles
2010 Woman of Achievement



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