

Edited by Ginny Wong

## letters from the dorm

## It's all about that Greek life

Joining a fraternity or a sorority may seem daunting at first, but the friendships made through them and the work done with them make them an important part of university life in the US



Joyee Au Yeung,  
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**T**he Greek life is about as American as you get. It means joining a fraternity or a sorority, social organisations at universities across the country. These groups aren't as highly regarded elsewhere, or aren't seen as important, anyway.

Joining a Greek life association seems simple enough – you pick one with a branch on campus and, if it accepts members of your gender, you “rush” the organisation by attending events and meeting those that are already in.

It's not just about whether you like them, though – they get to decide whether you are a good fit or not, too. If they do, you are invited to pledge. This is when you spend time with the organisation and you are accepted to the brother- or sisterhood after this process.

Navigating Greek life was incredibly difficult for me, since I had never heard of sororities or fraternities before arriving on campus. What organisation you are in determines your

social status. The assumption seemed to be that if you were rich and white, you were a part of an elite organisation. Almost one-third of the undergraduate population at the University of Pennsylvania is part of the Greek life. There was, therefore, pressure to join. I considered rushing a sorority, but I felt like an outcast when I saw all these blond, white girls in their heels and designer gear. Cultural sororities, although they allow people to remain in touch with their cultures, weren't ideal, either. I already felt like I was trapped in an “Asian bubble”, and I didn't want to sink myself further into it.

In the end, I joined a co-educational service fraternity, Alpha Phi Omega (APO), and I became a part of the Alpha class for Phi Chi Theta (Phi Chi), a coed business fraternity.

APO is filled with people who give back to the community, and it is a kind and welcoming space. Being a part of Phi Chi has given me the chance to help bring about real change, too. We founded a chapter at Penn, I have helped host the rushing and pledging processes, and I have been able to mould Phi Chi into the home I've always wanted.

**Being a part of Phi Chi has given me the chance to help bring about real change**



Greek life provides students with a “forever home”

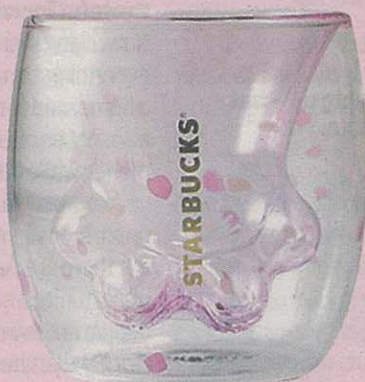
The greatest thing about Greek life is that these people are the ones you have chosen to be your brothers/sisters. They chose you in turn. You are family for life.

Sure, Greek life has its downsides – we've all heard the stories of hazing gone wrong, and problems with organisations being too exclusive but, after two years, I believe it has its merits. Greek life gives students a “forever home” and a family that is created by choice. The people in these organisations tend to be closer to each other than other groups on campus, too. They help give students, who may be studying overseas, a feeling of kinship and support that they might be missing when they're so far from home.

## A look at the booming coffee industry

One thousand limited-edition Starbucks “cat paw” mugs sold out – in seconds! – on the mainland last month. Three thousand more sold out the following day.

For two decades, the Seattle-based coffee giant has been making its presence permanent in China. It's helped to create a strong coffee culture in a country more traditionally known for tea. Just having coffee is not enough for Chinese consumers now, though – they want more instant varieties, capsule machines, and even bulletproof coffee, a mixture of coffee, oil, and butter.



The limited-edition cat paw mugs sold out in seconds

Starbucks no longer dominates the coffee market on the mainland, either, with Coffee Box and Luckin Coffee making names for themselves. These two cafe chain start-ups offer a 30-minute-delivery service and discounts in larger cities. They are popular with white-collar workers and university students.

Wu Linman, an English senior from Sun Yat-sen University, said she is surprised by how popular coffee is with people her age. Half of the girls in her class post Coffee Box links to their WeChat group daily.

“Honestly, the taste is just so-so, but I can't resist

**The taste is just so-so, but I can't resist its popularity. I can afford to drink it every day**

[its popularity]. I can afford to drink it every day thanks to the coupons,” Wu said.

Mo Junyuan, a computer science sophomore from Shenzhen University, sees the Luckin Coffee logo – a white stag against a blue background – as the symbol of a lifestyle he craves. “It makes me feel good every time I drink a cup of Luckin Coffee.”

Liu Xianzhe, a senior Chinese major of Sun Yat-sen University who sees himself as a coffee connoisseur, became addicted to coffee in school. He reads up on coffee culture and tries to drink healthier types.

Although Liu was one of the people who queued up early in the morning to get a cat paw mug from Starbucks, he said that the dark roasting coffee that's typically found in coffee chains is of a low quality.

Instead, he said, he usually goes to independent cafes. Posting on WeChat, he said: “I'd rather [order] pour over coffee, cold brew coffee, or cold drip coffee.”

When asked about the ever-increasing number of coffee shops and cafes on the mainland, though, Liu was sceptical.

“These start-ups have lost hundreds of millions of yuan, and they're going to lose more,” he said. “[That's because their] problems lie in their aggressive marketing strategies. We may see them closing more stores this year.”

**Liang Xinlu**

