

## **Ever-changing opinions on Greek life face a new challenge**

*Kimberly Boensch*

The climate surrounding fraternities and sororities at Winthrop seems to fluctuate almost as much as the weather here and now the reputation of Greek life on campus is facing yet another challenge. Winthrop's chapter of the Sigma Sigma Sigma sorority has been suspended until 2025 following multiple violations of the 2021-2022 Student Code of Conduct. Students and faculty have mixed opinions on Winthrop's Greek life as a whole especially since news of this suspension was released.

The sorority's suspension went into effect on Thursday, Feb. 24. This suspension followed an investigation that began on Thursday, Jan. 24 regarding incidents from the past two years that included but were not limited to alcohol violations, member intake policies and Interim Title IX Sexual Harassment Policy.

Madison Mendes, a senior mass communication major, said that as someone who is involved in Greek life she's very disappointed by the actions of Sigma Sigma Sigma. "I personally find it disgusting, because, in my opinion, the letters are never worth your dignity. It was dangerous and irresponsible to do," Mendes said. Mendes mentioned that, like many others, she had a tainted view of Greek life before later joining Winthrop's chapter of Sigma Gamma Rho. "I was always against [fraternities and sororities] because of how they were portrayed in media," Mendes said. She explained, however, that after a breakup and conflict with some friends she took a chance and has been pleasantly surprised so far with her decision to join a sorority at Winthrop.

Another student said that while she agrees with the decision to suspend Sigma Sigma Sigma, she thinks it's unfair that some others judge the sorority so harshly. Katherine Light, a

freshman with an undeclared major, said, “It does no good to put down others when you don’t know the full story. I understand that underage drinking is a serious deal, but I do empathize with some members about what they’ve lost as a result of the suspension.” Light, like Mendes, says she too had a negative opinion of Greek life at first but soon had her mind changed. “Growing up, I honestly never thought I’d join a sorority just because of the stereotype of drama,” Light said. She explained that the Chi Omega recruitment chair reached out to her on Instagram and since Light was struggling to fit in on campus, she figured this would be a way to make friends.

Aiden Haase, a junior business administration major, said that he definitely thinks there is a bad stereotype surrounding Greek life because of media portrayal, the allegations of sexual assault against Winthrop’s chapter of Pi Kappa Alpha, and the recent suspension of the Sigma Sigma Sigma sorority at Winthrop but he said, “every fraternity is different.” Haase, who is also the vice president of the Sigma Alpha Epsilon fraternity on campus, said that in his fraternity there are strict rules against hazing and pledging. He said that because of these rules, “the people who do know about our fraternity see us in a positive way.”

Haase’s fraternity, along with other Greek life organizations on campus, held a charity event on Scholars Walk Monday, Mar. 7. In this event, students could pay \$3 to “pie” a fraternity member with a paper plate full of shaving cream with proceeds going to Ukraine crisis relief. Haase is originally from Ukraine so this cause is important to him. He says that not only does he hope this charity event helps those in need in his home country but he hopes that it also helps change people’s views of Greek life.

Naeema Stennett, Winthrop’s assistant director for fraternity and sorority affairs said that the recent suspension of the Sigma Sigma Sigma sorority and the multiple protests held regarding the allegations of sexual misconduct against the Pi Kappa Alpha fraternity absolutely

effects the number of students who are willing to get involved in Greek life. “Unfortunately, they are not exposed to the positive aspects of the Greek experience in the way they should be,” Stennett said. Stennett believes that this tarnished reputation of Greek life at Winthrop can be rectified though. “I think it could be corrected by chapters first grounding themselves in the values and ideals of what their organizations stand for as well as continuing to improve the campus and community around them as well,” Stennett said.