

Exclusive and Expensive: Sororities Could be Widening the Wealth Gap

By: Lauren Chapman

Kaitlyn Smith came from Cartersville to the University of Georgia with a similar goal in mind to most of her classmates. She wants to make some friends, join some clubs and of course get her degree. There's another goal she shares with thousands of women across America: to join a sorority. But instead of renting dresses from Nuuly and checking Pinterest for outfit inspiration in preparation for rush, Smith had to settle on not joining a sorority due to the fees associated with them.

"I didn't have a job set in stone whenever the recruitment sign ups were due," Smith said. "My tuition is paid for through Hope and Zel and everything, but there's also living on campus, having a meal plan and all of that. I have a couple of scholarships but not enough to cover all of it, so being in a sorority was going to add a huge expense on top of all that."

Sororities have many benefits that attract young women every year, including making lifelong friends and memories. The idea of having a group of young women who would be there to support each other but also being able to make connections, help charity organizations and party while doing it is appealing to many.

"It's something I've wanted to do my entire life, and I've always felt like the sisterhood has some of the best friends you could ever make," Smith said.

5 SORORITIES AT UGA AND THEIR DUES*

ΑΦ

ALPHA PHI

IN HOUSE: \$10913 PER YEAR
OUT OF HOUSE: \$4025 PER YEAR

CHI OMEGA

IN HOUSE: \$4585 PER YEAR
OUT OF HOUSE: \$1185 PER YEAR

ΧΩ

ΔΔΔ

DELTA DELTA DELTA

IN HOUSE: \$4480 PER YEAR
OUT OF HOUSE: \$1274 PER YEAR

PI BETA PHI

IN HOUSE: \$5065 PER YEAR
OUT OF HOUSE: \$1365 PER YEAR

ΠΒΦ

ZTA

ZETA TAU ALPHA

IN HOUSE: \$4800 PER YEAR
OUT OF HOUSE: \$1500-2000 PER YEAR

*All statistics were taken from each sorority's UGA Involvement Network page. <https://greeklife.uga.edu/panhellenic-council/>

This infographic of membership dues was created by Lauren Chapman.

Smith joins many women across the country who cannot afford to join a sorority. Sororities have benefits that are exclusive to sorority members while in college and post-grad as well. By excluding lower income women from the chance to join, Greek Life may be contributing the wealth gap in America.

Bonding and Bright Futures

Davina Trimble is a part of the Kappa Kappa Gamma sorority at Idaho College. She says that being in a sorority and being on the executive board offers her a chance to do things that are not only fun but will improve her resume. She also believes sororities are worth the money.

“I am planning on going to law school so I need every type of academic support and leadership support I can get,” Tremble said. “I’ve gotten to travel twice for Kappa, which is something that I wouldn’t have got to do with any other club. I’ve gotten to go to Kappa’s leadership conference which was really exciting. We even stayed in a \$400 a night hotel for two days. I’ve already gotten back my fees.”

In addition, sororities offer exclusive opportunities post-grad as well. Tifani is an alumna and financial advisor for Sigma Sigma Sigma at Idaho State University. She said having a simple run in with someone of the same sorority can offer many opportunities.

“I can’t tell you how many sisters I’ve met just walking through airports,” Tifani said. “I’ve heard stories of some of our girls making internship connections because they saw a random Sigma walking through airport and walked up to them.”

Many people credit friendships to being in a sorority. Parties often aid in this. But many sororities and fraternities make it difficult for people not involved in Greek Life to go to them.

“I think I’ve been to two events and one party,” Smith said. “So, I don’t go to nearly as many as I would if I was in a sorority.”

While parties are often seen as places to drink and dance at, they also could be a place to make friends. And you never know if the friend you’re making has a father who’s a CEO or a mom who’s a lawyer that could get you your dream job.

In addition, many sororities offer scholarships to their members. According to the UGA Office of Greek Life, [\\$101,590 in scholarships](#) have been awarded to members. According to Pew Research, with [the wealth gap in America widening](#), scholarships being awarded to students who already are doing well financially might be giving them a leg up over students who are not as well-off as their Greek life counterparts. Therefore, this possibly sets Greek Life members up to graduate with less student loans (if any) and able to begin accumulating wealth faster.

According to survey conducted by the [National Interfraternity Council](#),

“More than half of fraternity and sorority alumni, compared to just 36% of nonaffiliated alumni, had accepted a job offer or found employment within two months of graduation.”



The UGA Office of Greek Life offers services to current and potential Greek Life members, such as information about scholarships, philanthropy and events. It is located on the first floor of Tate Student Center. Photo Credit: Lauren Chapman

Rush Tok and the Redefining of Sorority Rush

One of the most common critiques that sororities have faced has only been heightened by the rise of the popular sector of Tik Tok called “Rush Tok”, in which, women across America show off the outfits that they plan on wearing for each day of sorority rush.

These outfits have reached upwards of thousands of dollars for one outfit. While spending this much on outfits is not required for rushing, it has caused many young women to feel like they do not have enough money to keep up with standards that sororities are upholding. This is once again keeping lower income women from exclusive opportunities that could lead to a better job.

Smith also noted this was a large contributor to her decision not to rush.

“I felt like I wasn’t going to fit in or fit in with the standards that all these girls were fitting into,” Jones said. “I was worried that I was going to get dropped because I wasn’t going to be wearing the same stuff.”

The 73%

According to the UGA Office of Greek Life, Smith joins the [73% of students](#) at UGA who are not a part of Greek life. Like the other 73%, she must figure out how to navigate college without the sisterhood to lean on.

As Smith does her homework with the hope to become a teacher, and the sounds of sorority members getting ready for their date nights echoes the hallway, she wonders if sororities were just a little cheaper, what opportunities could have awaited her. Could she have met an alumna that would have put a good word in for her at a high-paying school district? Could she have shared the same sorority as someone on the hiring committee at the school she wants to work at?

These are the questions that Smith and thousands of young women across America ask themselves as they get daily reminders of what could have been.

Source List:

Kaitlyn Smith: Kaitlyn.Smith1@uga.edu

Davina Trimble: Davinatrimble04@gmail.com

Tifani: Whittifa@isu.edu