Fraternity pledge numbers decrease

Although fraternity pledge numbers decreased, sorority pledge numbers are on the rise. Students list numerous reasons for saying yes or no to the Greek system.

By Madhia Adiga
Staff Writer

The first week of classes at Georgia Tech would not have been complete without the annual fall rush and fraternity rush. Comprising 25 to 30 percent of the student body, the Greek community has always been a major factor at Tech.

According to Interfraternity Council (IFC) President Ian Carr, however, fraternity pledge figures this year were slightly lower than usual. “Only 469 guys pledged overall this year as opposed to our usual 500 to 550,” said Carr. “Since I have been here this has been the first year that fraternity rush has experienced a decline in pledges.”

By comparison, the number of sorority rushers improved this year. Almost 45 percent of the freshman girls participated in rush, said Panhellenic Council President Susanne Hodges.

Fraternity rush and sorority rush are run in significantly different ways. Every night during Rush Week, the fraternity campus opens its houses for students to come visit and to find out which organization is best for them. Most of the houses have a special type of food event each night, like Monday Night Football and wings. Because there are 31 fraternities on campus and limited time, fraternity brothers try to meet as many rushers as they can to determine whom they should offer a bid.

“I was very impressed with the rush process. I loved the free food and all the attention you got from each house. It’s pretty great when they’re all fighting after you and treating you like you’re the coolest person in the world,” said Elliot Laffey, a computer engineering freshman who accepted a bid to Phi Kappa Tau. “It was just a great way to get to know and meet people since we were all pretty much new here and didn’t know anyone else,” he said.

Sorority rush is more structured by comparison. Each day has its own schedule for the rushers. First, they visit each of the six sororities, and then they find out about the philanthropies each sorority supports and in what kind of projects they participate. Finally, they become better acquainted with the sisters. During the process, the sororities begin to narrow down the list of rushers they want to invite back to their parties. On Preference and Bid Days, both the sisters and rushers make their final decisions.

Fraternity pledge numbers decreased this year, while sorority pledge numbers increased. Students list numerous reasons for saying yes or no to the Greek system.
It’s not as light as you think
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Last week’s Tech Up Close:
campus call box
The wonderful world of LEGOS

By Craig J. Davis
Staff Writer

Engineers might as well start somewhere. Childhood engineering development begins with blocks, then Lincoln logs and finally one of the most amazing construction-type toys ever: LEGOS.

LEGOS have been in existence for almost 70 years, entertaining bright children anywhere around the globe. They come in a variety of colors, and they are made of a hard plastic so they are not easy to break.

The word "LEGO" comes from the Danish words "leg godt," translating into English as "play well." It also means "I study" or "I put together" in Latin.

At first, since plastic materials were not readily available, the toys had to be made of just wood. It wasn’t until 1947 when the LEGO company began using plastic injection-molding machines to produce its toys. Eventually, more and more improvements were integrated into the system, forming the products we know today.

The world of LEGO is almost limitless. Boats, trains, airplanes, houses, cars, spaceships, trees and entire towns can be made of them. All of these are illustrated in the LEGO LAND theme parks in Europe and in Las Vegas, Nevada. "I’m still playing with LEGOS, I still even have some at home," said Jake Tompkins, a freshman chemical engineering major.

What makes LEGO such a diverse toy is how it can interest a child from under five years old until adulthood. The DUPLO system is designed to make the youngest children happy in their building endeavours. The most difficult LEGOS, however, are the TECHNIC system; some of the plans, such as the Super Car, can include over 1,300 individual LEGO pieces.

"My dad passed his Lincoln logs to me, and then I graduated to LEGOS. As a mechanical engineer, it’s the perfect toy," said freshman Joe Tucholski.

LEGOS are for girls, too. The Belville line of LEGOS was introduced in 1994 and the LEGO SCALA line in 1997 to attract young girls five years old and up to creative building. "I remember playing with LEGOS with my brother. It was really annoying sometimes because my little brother would always destroy everything we built," said Melissa Wallace, freshman biology major.

LEGOS can be more exciting with a theme. Pirates, divers, rescue operations, even Star Wars and Winnie the Pooh themes have entertained young children for years. There are even computer programs that can be integrated with LEGOS. With such programs as LEGO Creator, LEGO Chess and LEGO Loco, children can expand their creativity into a computer environment.

LEGOS are so popular with Americans that in October 1999, the McDonald’s fast food restaurant chain included them in their Happy Meals. LEGO also promoted McDonald’s simultaneously.

In 2000, the British Association of Toy Retailers announced the LEGO brick as the "Toy of the Century." Also, a nine-act Italian opera was produced to illustrate the LEGO Company’s history since 1932 to the present day.

LEGO MINDSTORMS are a more recent invention from the LEGO Company. Probably the most complex system ever, MINDSTORMS are essentially robots. The movements of the toys such as cars, dinosaurs and robots can be controlled. The system is so complex that it includes such elements as sensors, motors and over 700 LEGO elements. MINDSTORMS even require a computer program that allows the user to program the robots to whatever the user wants the toy to do. All a user has to do is program with his PC, which then instructs the RCX (the autonomous LEGO microcomputer).

Another interesting aspect in LEGO’s TECHNIC line is the Bionicles. The alien-looking creatures create an interesting niche for some. "Here you will learn the truth and the legends about the Toa, the Turaga, Makuta and the other denizens of the Mata Nui. You can also discover the power of the Kanohi masks and learn why they are so valuable to both sides in the struggle," the Bionicle website suggests. Even Bionicle video games are coming to the PC and Game Boy Advance. Collectively, Bionicle is just a story about conflicting fictional creatures in a fictional world, unlike the other more "real" themes such as pirates and divers.

LEGOS are probably one of the most ingenious toy ideas ever. They are great for creative thought.
both fall and summer rushes, the sisters may not talk to potential members outside of rush activities, and they abide by rules to ensure that one sorority does not gain an unfair recruitment advantage.

“A lot of the women liked the sorority rush format,” said Hodges. “National Panhellenic Council requires us to run it this way, so we really have no choice. But the structure helps the rushees find out as much as they can about each house.”

Kamber Christensen, a chemical engineering freshman and a new member of Alpha Chi Omega, also enjoyed the structure of rush. “I appreciate how formalized it was because I know that if it were as relaxed as fraternity rush, I wouldn’t know where to begin in choosing a sorority. Besides, as structured as it was, it was still a great way to meet people,” she said.

Those in the freshman class who decide not to go Greek have many reasons, but the most common was time and money. Many who came to fraternity rush and decided not to pledge have said that they wanted to wait until spring semester rush. “I went to fraternity rush to meet people, and of course, for the free food,” said Mac Young, a UCS freshman. “It was fun, but I didn’t want to pledge this year because of the time commitment and the money. It’s still an option for me next year, though. I would have to say that if fraternity rush were as structured as sorority rush, though, I probably wouldn’t have even rushed.”

Whitney Hagan, a UCS freshman, said, “I was already against the sorority thing because of all the negative stereotypes of sorority girls, and I didn’t like how formalized the whole rush process was. I would have to say, however, that the main reasons I didn’t rush were because of the cost and because I thought it would take up too much time.”

Many first-year Tech students have already adopted irregular sleeping patterns. Tom Rhodes, a building construction major, recognizes how sleep deprivation affects his personality. “I get annoyed at everything if I don’t get enough sleep,” said Rhodes. “I want to be a successful person… I realize I need to make sacrifices,” he added.

For a majority of students, especially first- and second-year ones, average hours slept per night range from anywhere as low as four hours to as much as six. “Tia Emerson, a first year transfer student, adopted an ATSP rather effortlessly. “I’m used to it [5-6 hours of sleep],” said Emerson. “It has been so long since I’ve had real sleep,” she added.

Students have unique ways of getting inspired to wake up every day, especially those with eight or nine o’clock classes. Nathan Blassingame, a first year mechanical engineering major, drinks half a pot of coffee in the morning to get going. He does whatever it takes because like many other students, he refuses to fail at school.

The first step in getting more sleep is to determine how many hours of sleep is right for you. Keep track over a couple of weeks what amount of sleep best helps you to be successful the next day. Try and get that much sleep every night.

The next step is to get better sleep. One of the easiest ways for improving your sleep is to make sure your sleeping environment is comfortable. A firm mattress, a feather pillow or maybe even an extra fan may help.

Another obvious way to improve your sleep is to establish a bedtime ritual. This includes going to bed at the same time every day. Doing so will let your body get used to providing you with sufficient energy at about the same time every day.

A very important method of improving sleep is to get exercise. Physical activity promotes sleep and stimulates your body when you want to wake up. Nate Padgett, a second year computer science major, does push-ups in the morning to “get the blood moving.” If you have trouble waking up, just force yourself out of bed and do something. Turn on some music and dance if you have to. Once you stimulate your body, it is highly likely that you will stay awake.

Although academic life at Tech lends itself to poor sleeping habits, there are many simple things you can do to combat sleep deprivation. Help yourself by getting more sleep, or at the very least better quality sleep so that you can perform your best in school. Students often risk the quality of their studying time for the quantity of their studying time. Staying up until three in the morning usually means that you’re cramming anyway, so prepare ahead.

By Rob Hill / STUDENT PUBLICATIONS

Fraternity brothers and potential pledges vent some serious anger on an old clunker during fall rush. The event was a brother bonding experience where students could get to know the various fraternities on campus.