

SELF STUDY FOCUS COMMITTEE ON THE STUDENT EXPERIENCE:
PATTERSON COURT INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

First Session: Kappa Sigma
Burt Arrington, President
6 February 1995

Second Session: Phi Gamma Delta
Matt Hammett, President
13 February 1995

Interviewers:
Ms. Lulu Srinivasan, Professor William Mahony

Responses recorded by Professor Mahony

1. How do you view your experience on Patterson Court as contributing to your education?

Kappa Sigma. The general tenor of the responses was that the experience was quite positive. There seemed to be three general ways in which students saw the experience to be valuable. First, it presents students with the opportunity to gain job skills (kitchen manager, service coordinator, and so on); to learn organization, time-management and problem-solving skills; and to exercise leadership roles (President, Vice-President, etc.). Second, students commented on the importance of education in social skills in one's larger educational program in general (one student said that "social skills are at least as valuable as the academic education we get at Davidson"). Such social education in the context of fraternity life was said to be particularly important in regards to relationships with those of the opposite sex and especially valuable for "people who went to single-sex schools." Third, fraternity life was said to give an outlet to release academic pressures.

Phi Gamma Delta. All comments were positive. One student commented that the fraternity house is a "really good outlet for me, away from campus, yet close enough to get back if I need to." According to one student, the fraternity "serves as an unofficial Mens Studies Program." Several noted that fraternity life releases academic stress. According to one comment, it also

makes it possible for fraternity members to share common experiences and to talk about coursework with others who previously have taken those particular courses. The fraternity sometimes keeps a file of "spots." One student pointed out that the national fraternity gives educational scholarships to its members and that the national organization expects such recipients to be active in college community and to keep his grades up.

2. How do you as members of a fraternity perceive your relationship with the faculty? with other students, and other student organizations? with the administration? with the physical plant?

Kappa Sigma. Students who responded seem to feel that the Faculty and Administration do not approve of fraternities, and "that saddens me a great deal because the fraternity establishes a link with the college." One noted that fraternities and the Administration have clashed over behavior issues. Another asserted that "beer bashing and gang raping does is not pertinent at Davidson." Two students noted that they do not see Patterson Court to be an alternative to education at Davidson and suggested that the Faculty cannot see a peaceful co-existence between Court life and education. "Nobody ever looks at the good stuff we do," one student said. Another wondered just how informed the faculty are regarding Patterson Court activities. "How many faculty come down to Patterson Court?," he asked. To this another said, "We have nothing to hide." When asked about the fraternity's relationship with other organizations, one student noted that "If we are asked, we will participate in other organizations (SGA, FLAG, Lunar Luau, Phonathon)." The Physical plant "hates us," one student said, although "We don't hate them." The general tone of the remarks on this question as a whole was summed up by one student, who said that "We feel constantly on the defensive."

Phi Gamma Delta. The comments began when a students asserted that "Certain professors regard us negatively. Professors feel that fraternities are not healthy for a student's educational career." Another student added to this by saying that "Some professors are quite supportive. Will Terry was very solicitous of Fiji opinions regarding campus issues." Others commented that "We have always gotten along well with the Administration. Most faculty probably don't even care, or are neutral [about us]." There seemed to be general agreement with a comment that "Faculty and fraternities are separate worlds." When pushed on the relationship between the fraternity and other organizations, the group offered such responses as: "Any one at Davidson can go to any other fraternities on Patterson Court"; "I have many friends who are independents. We are not just a clique"; "Most brothers are active

in student organizations." When asked of their relationship with Physical Plant, one student said, to general agreement, that "Physical Plant does not cooperate with anything [such as car washes] that we have tried."

3. How do members of your fraternity relate to members who choose not to consume alcohol? to those who consume too much?

Kappa Sigma. According to the first response, "Five or six of our pledges do not drink alcohol at all, and we do not have a problem with that. We do not have a judgmental attitude." Another said that, "If there is a problem, the group setting encourages that people to look out for each other. You really do have your brothers looking out for you." We were reminded that it is "the Vice President's job to monitor brothers' alcohol use as well as academic process." Another student remarked that "It's much better now than it was four years ago, when the place was trashed, people were puking all over the place. etc."

Phi Gamma Delta. According to one student, "There is no problem with people who do not drink." There seemed to be general agreement with this assertion. One members pointed out that "Our president is dry" and that "Several members do not drink." Another said that "Fiji does not consume all that much alcohol. The Fraternity is not about alcohol." According to another: "If somebody is drinking, people take care of him. There would be no problem with our speaking with somebody who drinks too much." Another recalled that "We retracted a bid from a person who we felt drank too much."

4. What is it you get from Patterson Court that you couldn't get from other outlets on campus?

Kappa Sigma. The common response seemed to be summed up with the word, "Brotherhood." As one member said, "You can count on these people 30-35 years from now. You will not get that from being a member of the Union Board." Another said that the "Fraternity facilitates getting to know a much larger number of people than if you were eating at the Commons." Another noted that "Each party on the Court is different, [so there is] much more variety than at the Union."

Phi Gamma Delta. One students noted that members of Fiji have a "sense of ownership. We take care of the place." Another pointed out that the

fraternity house is "a place to go to get away from campus without having to go to Charlotte." Another said that "Fiji has given me a family (I have no father & brothers)." Several students commented on the general idea that the fraternity presents a "combination of brotherhood, service projects, fun, and so on. Fraternity is a total package that puts it all together so that you don't have to join every committee." Another pointed out that the fraternity allows members to make business contacts: "I got my job last summer from a Fiji contact."

5. What is the biggest asset and the biggest liability about being involved in a fraternity house?

Kappa Sigma. The comments opened with a student saying that "the biggest liability is other people coming in and causing trouble." Another student said that "another problem is that you immediately subject yourself to being stereotyped into an image which is not true." This was followed by some short discussion on the theme that "If somebody in my house does badly, it reflects badly on me."

Phi Gamma Delta. Members who responded seem to agree that one liability is the "loss of personal identity. When you join group, you open yourself to a stereotype." One student said that, "without a sense of confidence can lose a sense of identity." A third noted that "New members can tend to pretend to be somebody he [sic] isn't." Discussion elicited such responses as this: "This sort of thing can be true of any kind of group. Fraternities aren't alone [in this regard]. Just being a student at Davidson does the same thing."

6. What is the atmosphere like at your house for women? for men?

Kappa Sigma. One student said that "We are the most open house on the Court. We are the kind of guys most people feel comfortable with." Another pointed out that "There is a group of women who socialize with us all the time. We good-naturedly call them 'pledges'." A third noted that "We encourage people outside the house all the time and would be disappointed if they didn't come." Another said, "What makes me mad is people who drink our beer and come to our parties but do not become members: 'Mooching Independents', we call them." One student said that "There is a danger of being a bit exclusive."

Phi Gamma Delta. Members pointed out that "At our open functions, we open our doors wide to anybody who wants to come. Closed functions remained closed. Closed functions are reserved for brothers and their dates." One members said that "Women feel comfortable here. We actually have a bathroom strictly for women." Another pointed out that "its usually clean!" Another said, "I know of no case of women feeling uncomfortable." According to one reply, "Men from other fraternities and independents feel welcome here. There are no fights between groups."

7. What is the atmosphere like at your house for African-Americans? for other minorities?

Kappa Sigma. "We honestly make a sincere effort to welcome everybody," one student said. To this another said, "But you are kidding yourself if you think that a nonmember is as comfortable as a member." A third: "We reach out, but we also expect people to approach us," to which a fourth replied: "We hope people come down. We are not out to meet a quota." Another: "We certainly don't discriminate, but its hard to reach out. We have one minority social member."

Phi Gamma Delta. The comments would seem to be summed up by one student's statement that "We always like it when a member of a minority comes here, but they do not come very often. Problem is that we are away from campus and sometimes it is seems to far to come here."

8. Would a co-ed eating house have had more appeal for you than a single-sex eating house when you were making your decision to affiliate with a Patterson Court house?

Kappa Sigma. This question elicited a resounding "No" from one or two members. One member pointed out that this is a meaningless question, since there are no co-ed eating houses (he seemed to have missed the point of the question). One admitted that "We are biased here, because we like single-sex houses." Another student said replied "No, although I do wish I could eat more meals with women." "But there is more to a House than merely eating," another member replied, "Guys need time to be with their own gender."

Phi Gamma Delta. As one member said, "I joined this fraternity because I liked its character, not because it is a fraternity or not because it is single-sex. I

like the people here, and their goals." According to one response, "Most people you know as a freshman will be of the same sex, so new members tend to be of the same gender. Fraternity is not just a club, but has a distinct character, a cohesive moral overtone."

9. What would you like to see as directions in the future?

Kappa Sigma. The responses began with the comment that "I would like to see fraternities stick around, without the level of hostility with the Administration." Another student added the phrase, "Without high and haughty proclamations from Chambers on High." Another pointed out that "It's very rare to get to know a professor outside of the classroom." One student argued that "If Patterson Court doesn't stay strong, Davidson will not be as good a school. If Patterson Court were not here, I would not be here" (the tone of voice suggested the assumption that "I make Davidson the great place it is!"). One student argued out that the Administration needs to have more humor: "Fraternities are hilarious," he said. One student suggested that "If there were some way the fraternities could own their houses, it might make the brothers take more pride in the house; if we did the repairs on the house it might make us take the physical house more seriously." Another: "I would hate to see the alcohol policy be so restrictive that you can not have a party at Davidson. If it gets more restrictive, then parties will move off campus and people will start dying in car accidents. There isn't enough to do around the town of Davidson." The following comment augmented that statement: "There needs to be a social outlet that is somewhat removed from the campus and its academic pressures. No Union, no matter how great it is, could replace Patterson Court."

Phi Gamma Delta. The comments began with one student saying that "To close Patterson Court parties would be very unfortunate. That would lead to more rivalries." Another student said that "Risk management should revolve around limiting alcohol rather than closing parties." Several members pointed out what they felt to be the "disparity between the law and what is being done." Others argued that to "drive away the social scene will force peple to their rooms, where they will drink by themselves, creating more alcoholism." There were some comments regarding the "growing attempt by the College to control social life. Social life should be under the control of the students. College has responsibility in terms of its liability, but the general directions of social life should be up to the students." One member said that, "In the long run, such moves will make it difficult to recruit students and will make it difficult to keep Davidson's character." Another argued that "Fraternities and social life foster individual responsibility, make people be responsible for themselves. College needs to supply a place for students to

have a social life." Another: "Simply converting Johnston Gym into a Union is not enough. Davidson needs a student-use building designed to be a student-use building." He continued: "A new Union is required, but not in a converted building. The Union should have at least as many resources put into it as the VAC."

Patterson Court Interview

Phi Delta Theta

February 20, 1995

1. How do you view your experiences on Patterson Court as contributing to your education?

*Way of handling the pressure.

*Court provides an opportunity "to grow socially."

*Provides leadership and community service opportunities.

*Network through fraternity.

*Fraternity brothers help in course work; support of upperclassmen.

*Way of handling stress.

2. How do you as members of a fraternity/eating house perceive your relationship with the faculty? with the administration? with the physical plant?

*Faculty have a negative view of fraternities. "I don't go out of my way to reveal my fraternity affiliation."

*Faculty have a bad view of fraternities: "You have the letters [of the fraternity], and you can't change it."

*"Professors hear only the worst, about the fights and the vandalism."

*Faculty does not understand the purpose of fraternity life. Students are here for more than "book education."

*Administration is "in a state of flux." Dean Terry perceived "always as a friend of fraternities." Perception is that Dean Shandley is "not as pro-Court as Terry."

*Feeling of "impending doom that has come over the Court since Dean Shandley's arrival. With Terry we never thought about whether or not we would be here in 10 to 15 years." Now there is a feeling that a change "is being enacted."

*"We are being given just enough rope to hang ourselves" by the administration.

*"We feel as if we are walking on hot coals. We are a lot more tentative than we have been in the past."

*General feeling that the fraternity needed to work at getting the positive image across. Also a feeling that people outside the fraternity "blame the institution instead of the individual who caused the problem."

*Unfair pricing system with physical plant.

3. How do members of your fraternity/eating house relate to members who choose not to consume alcohol? to those who consume too much?

*Not a problem. There are members who do not consume.

*People who do not drink are respected as much or more than people who do drink.

*The non-drinkers say that there is no pressure to drink.

*For those who drink too much, there are "brothers to watch out for you."

4. What is it you get from Patterson Court that you couldn't get from other outlets on campus?

*"The brotherhood" and "male bonding."

*Can feel comfortable with anyone in the house.

*The pledging process gives us a community; there is "no pressure to do anything but be yourself."

5. What is the biggest asset and the biggest liability about being involved in a fraternity/eating house?

*Biggest asset is the brotherhood.

*National fraternity provides a "post-college network."

*"Continuity. When you are a Phi Delt, you are a Phi Delt for life."

*Biggest liability -- "Your name goes on the lawsuit! ""Risk management is a huge liability."
"You are blamed for everything." Perceived as "a meathead."

6. What is the atmosphere like at your house for men? for women?

*"Good atmosphere, and good interaction between men and women."

7. What is the atmosphere like at your house for African-Americans? for other minorities?

*"We are the house that BSC most closely identifies with."

*"Minority students party here."

*"We have done a lot to attempt to facilitate relationship between minorities and the campus as a whole."

8. Would a co-ed eating house have had more appeal for you than a single-sex eating house?

*Less appeal.

*"There's the Commons."

9. What would you like to see as a direction for the future?

*More faculty learning about fraternities.

*More fraternity/campus events.

*See eating houses get "more like fraternities." "Be truly self-selective"; be a smaller size to allow members to know one another.

*See more appreciation from the independents. "We're paying for their good time."

*"I'd like to see harmless pledge activities encouraged rather than discouraged."