

University of Mississippi

eGrove

Honors Theses

Honors College (Sally McDonnell Barksdale
Honors College)

Spring 5-10-2023

The Greek Advantage: Implications of Greek Affiliation on Student Government at the University of Mississippi

Lila Osman

Follow this and additional works at: https://egrove.olemiss.edu/hon_thesis



Part of the [Other Political Science Commons](#), and the [Public Affairs, Public Policy and Public Administration Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Osman, Lila, "The Greek Advantage: Implications of Greek Affiliation on Student Government at the University of Mississippi" (2023). *Honors Theses*. 2838.

https://egrove.olemiss.edu/hon_thesis/2838

This Undergraduate Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Honors College (Sally McDonnell Barksdale Honors College) at eGrove. It has been accepted for inclusion in Honors Theses by an authorized administrator of eGrove. For more information, please contact egrove@olemiss.edu.

The Greek Advantage: Implications of Greek Affiliation on Student Government at the
University of Mississippi

by
Lila Marie Osman

A thesis submitted to the faculty of The University of Mississippi in partial fulfillment of
the requirements of the Sally McDonnell Barksdale Honors College.

Oxford
May 2023

Approved by

Advisor: Dr. Melissa Bass

Reader: Dr. Kyle Fritz

Reader: Dr. Brent Marsh

© 2023
Lila Marie Osman
ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank Dr. Melissa Bass for guiding me through this process and helping me every step of the way. With every question I had and misstep I took, Dr. Bass always guided me and assured me throughout the two years it took to write my thesis. I would also like to thank my family and friends for encouraging me while researching and writing, as they helped me ultimately reach the finish line.

ABSTRACT

LILA MARIE OSMAN: The Greek Advantage: Implications of Greek Affiliation on Student Government at the University of Mississippi
(Under the direction of Dr. Melissa Bass)

Greek life is a prominent group at the University of Mississippi, especially when it comes to membership in the Associated Student Body (ASB). ASB is the student governing body at the University so it is important to analyze its membership to understand how reflective it is of the entire university campus it represents. This research answers the question: “How and to what extent does Greek affiliation affect candidates for student government at the University of Mississippi?” Through two mixed methods surveys, one sent to members elected to ASB in the spring 2022 election cycle and the other to the general student body, I identified multiple factors advantaging Greek candidates. These include: increased involvement, ingroup favoritism, favoritism from other groups, and increased political ambition among women. All of these factors play a part in the success of Greek students in student government, as increased involvement can perpetuate a positive feedback loop of Greek involvement in student government, ingroup and other group favoritism continues to promote the success of these candidates, and increased political ambition among women allows for there to be more representation among Greek women. Based on these findings, I recommend ways to help bridge the gap to the Associated Student Body, the student population, and the University’s faculty and staff in order to create more accessibility and fair representation in the University’s student government.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter One: Introduction.....	1
Chapter Two: Background.....	4
Chapter Three: Literature Review.....	16
Chapter Four: Research Design.....	26
Chapter Five: Results.....	28
Chapter Six: Discussion.....	40
Chapter Seven: Recommendations.....	46
Chapter Eight: Conclusion.....	51
List of References.....	55
Appendix A.....	58
Appendix B.....	61

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Greek Affiliated? ASB Survey.....	29
Figure 2: Greek Affiliation in ASB.....	30
Figure 3: IFC Membership in ASB.....	30
Figure 4: Panhellenic Membership in ASB.....	31
Figure 5: Individuals Approached about Running for ASB.....	32
Figure 6: Greek Affiliated? General Survey.....	33
Figure 7: General Affiliation in General Survey.....	34
Figure 8: Did you vote in the 2022 ASB spring election?.....	35
Figure 9: How did you hear about the 2022 ASB spring election?.....	35
Figure 10: Greek Voters.....	36
Figure 11: Greek Primary driver to voting.....	37
Figure 12: Greek membership impact on Greek voters.....	38
Figure 13: Non-Greek Primary driver to voting.....	39
Figure 14: Greek membership impact on non-Greek voters.....	39

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AAU	Association of American Universities
ASB	Associated Student Body
GRE	Graduate Record Examinations
IAT	Implicit Association Test
IFC	Interfraternity Council
NPHC	National College Pan-Hellenic Council
PHC	College Panhellenic Council
PNMs	Potential New Members
RSO	Registered Student Organization
SAF	Student Activity Fee
SAS	Situational Attitude Scale
SCM	Social Change Model
SEC	South Eastern Conference
SRLS	Socially Responsible Leadership Scale
UA	University of Alabama

Chapter One: Introduction

Since I was a young child, I had a large interest in policy making both on the local and national level. When the time came to choose what to major in, I decided to pursue Public Policy Leadership, a unique undergraduate major offered at the University of Mississippi. My interest in policy making did not end in the classroom, but expanded into my extracurricular activities. My freshman year I became a member of the Associated Student Body (ASB), the student government of the University of Mississippi. Since my freshman year, I have been actively involved in the Associated Student Body each year of college, serving in the role as president my senior year.

As I was active within ASB, I had to run three campus elections during my tenure. While running in elections, I always felt a sense of ease, as I am a member of a large Greek organization on campus who I knew would support me throughout the duration of my campaign. As I continued to run and watch elections take place, I began to notice how almost consistently Greek candidates, such as myself, consistently beat non-Greek candidates and were prevalent in each election group. Non-Greek candidates have approached me in the past for advice when running and often insisted they felt as if they did not have a chance due to their opponent being Greek. Furthermore, as I looked around the ASB Senate, due to my personal relationships with various senators, I began to recognize how many of those in the Senate were Greek affiliated.

The purpose of this research is to discover the advantages Greek candidates have in student government elections at the University of Mississippi, and what can be done in

order to lessen this potential advantage so non-Greek students feel better equipped and able to run. By conducting two surveys, one to elected officials in ASB from the spring 2022 election cycle and one to students at the University of Mississippi, I hope to identify advantages of these students that propel them through student government elections.

This research will delve into a topic that is largely under researched even though it is a big topic of discussion within student government not only at the University of Mississippi, but at universities around the country. This research could result in broader knowledge and recognition of this topic and issue, along with its implications.

Research Question

My research question is: How and to what extent does Greek affiliation affect candidates for student government at the University of Mississippi? I can hypothesize that due to the large Greek presence on campus, strictly in terms of numbers, Greek candidates have a large advantage. Furthermore, being a part of a Greek organization myself and benefiting from the social networking available, I believe that provides an advantage over non-Greek students as well. Lastly, I can hypothesize that due to the fact Greek chapters will fund candidates throughout an election, that the monetary support they offer is also of benefit to them.

At the beginning of my thesis, I currently have background knowledge of both ASB and Greek life at Ole Miss due to my involvement in both throughout my four years in college. That being said, I am pursuing this research in order to expand the body of knowledge on this topic and offer personalized recommendations to the University of Mississippi, which can go for other universities and colleges around the country.

This thesis includes the following sections: Background, Literature Review, Research Design, Results, Discussion, Recommendations, and Conclusion. The Background section will give a brief overview of the Associated Student Body, how it functions internally and oversees student government elections at the University of Mississippi. In addition, it will give a brief history of Greek life at the University of Mississippi and insight into the perception of Greek life in student government. The Literature Review will discuss current studies that give insight into the implications of Greek life, concerning campus involvement and ingroup bias amongst Greek groups. Furthermore, it will discuss political ambition among women, which is important to consider when discussing political representation and the advantages that may come when being Greek affiliated. Class status and diversity will also be discussed in terms of representation in large political bodies and how nascent ambition transpires. The Research Design chapter will highlight the methodology used in this study, including two electronic surveys and documentary research. The results section will show these findings in detail. Next, the Discussion and Recommendations section includes a discussion of the results, along with their implications, and how to mitigate some of the factors that were identified through recommendations to the Associated Student body, Student Population, and University Administration, Faculty, and Staff. Finally, the Conclusion will offer an overview of all the findings along with how this topic can be further developed in later research.

Chapter Two: Background

This section will give a brief background on the Associated Student Body, outlining how it functions and serves the student body. Furthermore, it will discuss the Associated Student Body's role in student government elections at the University of Mississippi, in addition to discussing the rules and regulations attached to those elections. The history and prominence of Greek life at the University of Mississippi will also be discussed, in addition to the perception of Greek life in the Associated Student Body.

The Associated Student Body

Since 1917, the Associated Student Body (ASB) has served as the student government at the University of Mississippi (Associated Student Body, 2022). According to Section 5, Article I of the Constitution of the Associated Student Body, power is divided into three departments: "legislative powers shall be vested in The University of Mississippi Campus Senate...; executive powers, in the President of the Associated Student Body...; judicial powers, in the ASB Judicial Council" ((I) Section 5). The purpose of the separation of powers into each of these departments is to have a system of checks and balances.

Each department of ASB is different from the others in its structure and work. The executive branch consists of the ASB President's Cabinet, the Secretarial Department, the Department of the Treasury, and the Department of Justice. The key responsibility of the ASB President's Cabinet is to "maintain internal operations of ASB and participate in external capacities to further the ASB agenda" ((I) Section 102, A, Title

I). Essentially, the ASB President's Cabinet is responsible for pursuing the president's agenda and focusing on student welfare in a variety of ways. The Secretarial Department is responsible for the way in which ASB internally and externally interacts with students and different departments. Along with "maintaining ASB member lists," the Secretarial Department is in charge of Programming, Public Relations, Outreach, and Philanthropy ((I) (Section 105, A&B, Title I). The Department of the Treasury is in charge of ASB's internal budget and allocating funds from the University's Student Activity Fee (SAF). The Department of Justice is in charge of interpreting the ASB Code and supervising and administering campus elections.

The Legislative Branch is chaired by the vice president and the internal operations are conducted by the Vice President's Legislative Council. The Senate is made up of fifty seats which are allocated in two different ways, by academic school or representation of a Registered Student Organization (RSO). Twenty seats are apportioned to the following academic schools based on enrollment: School of Law, College of Liberal Arts, School of Pharmacy, School of Business Administration, School of Accountancy, School of Applied Sciences, School of Education, Graduate School, School of Engineering, and School of Journalism and New Media ((II.a) Section 102, B, Title II). The other thirty senate seats are "apportioned among the constituencies of Registered Student Organizations (RSO)" ((II.a) Section 102, C, Title II). Each of the following groups receives two representatives: Academic/Professional, Cultural/Multicultural, Honorary/Honors Society, Political, Religious/Spiritual, Service/Philanthropic, Special Interest, University Department-Sponsored, Sport Club, Student Governance, Wellness/Health, Greek (NPHC, PHC, and IFC), and Campus Equity/Advocacy ((II.a)

Section 102, C, Title II). Those running for an academic school seat must be studying in the academic school and those running for an RSO seat must get the signature of the president of an RSO they are representing.

The Legislative Branch is tasked with creating legislation for the betterment of the University of Mississippi. The Senate has seven different committees: Governmental Operations, Student Life, Athletics, Academics and Administration, Inclusion & Cross-Cultural Engagement, Infrastructure & Sustainability, and External Affairs. Within each of these committees, members of the Senate serve as Chair and Vice Chair. Together, the Chairs make up the Rules Committee, chaired by the President Pro Tempore. Legislation is composed of resolutions and bills, the latter amending the ASB Code, the former acting as statements or recommendations of the Senate.

At times there has been confusion as to the difference between Cabinet and Senate, as both work towards the same end goal: bettering the life of each student at the University of Mississippi. Cabinet does not normally write formal legislation, other than when it specifically concerns an initiative or Code change it is involved in. Furthermore, Cabinet is not involved in Senate voting in any way. Cabinet is focused on personal meetings with faculty, staff, and administrators, in order to enact its initiatives without pursuing formal legislation. On the other hand, Senate is more formally structured, with weekly meetings using parliamentary procedure, along with committee meetings. Senate is focused around legislation and the passing or failing of such legislation.

Lastly, the judicial branch is made up of the Judicial Council which is in charge of handling student conduct and having jurisdiction over internal ASB matters. These include: “all rulings of the Elections Review Board, advisory opinions authored by the

Attorney General or Deputy Attorneys General, disputes between branches of the ASB, disputes between ASB members, ethical complaints and violations of the Code of Ethics, and the form and content of Senate legislation in the context of the Code and Constitution” ((III) Section 102. Title III). The Judicial Branch also houses the university’s Student Traffic Appeals Board.

The executive and legislative branch positions are voted upon in campus-wide elections. These positions include: President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer, Attorney General, and Judicial Chair, along with the fifty Campus Senate seats. All other ASB positions are appointed by Executive branch members through varying application processes. Appointed members of ASB must be confirmed by the Campus Senate. Overall, ASB functions in many different capacities but ultimately the goal of the organization is to represent the student body and cultivate an atmosphere for a positive student experience.

Associated Student Body Elections

The Associated Student body conducts the student government elections process at the University, utilizing the position of Attorney General and the Department of Justice as the overseers of the election process.

Voter Turnout

An important aspect of elections to acknowledge is voter turnout. Over the past few years ASB has had widely varying voter turnout, making it difficult to predict each year’s turnout beforehand. The 2019 fall general election saw the largest voter turnout in

ASB history, with 6,443 students voting (Associated Student Body, 2022). The fall elections fill “personality” positions, which include a Homecoming Maid from each grade, Homecoming King and Queen, Mr. and Miss Ole Miss, and ten Campus Favorites. Fall elections tend to have higher voter turnout compared to spring elections, which fill the ASB elected positions. For example, 2,014 total students voted in the 2022 spring election (Associated Student Body, 2022). These voters represent a fairly small percentage of the University student body. Specifically, as of the 2020-2021 year there were 18,386 students enrolled at the University of Mississippi Oxford campus (Mini Fact Book, 2021).

Campaign Finance and Rules

There are many rules and regulations concerning Associated Student Body elections. One of the most important is the spending limit imposed on candidates. Each of the following positions have a spending limit of \$750: ASB President, ASB Vice President, ASB Secretary, ASB Treasurer, ASB Attorney General, ASB Judicial Council Chair, Miss Ole Miss, Mr. Ole Miss, Homecoming Queen, and Homecoming King. The following positions have a spending limit of \$100: Homecoming Maid, Senator, and Senior Class Officer ((V.c) Section 123. Rules Governing Campaign Expenditures, A, Title V). Within these spending limits, candidates may receive funding from different sources. Candidates are allowed to receive funding from Registered Student Organizations (RSOs), which are formally recognized organizations composed of UM students, and from their parents (Associated Student Body Code and Constitution, 2022). Otherwise, candidates are not allowed to receive or accept funding directly from outside organizations, such as external political organizations.

In addition to spending limits and sanctions, there are strict rules concerning where and when candidates may campaign. Candidates are not permitted to campaign in “academic settings” and may only have signs in designated places determined by the Department of Justice (Associated Student Body Code and Constitution, 2022). Candidates are only allowed to campaign during the official campaign period, which begins after the candidate certification meeting. The campaign lasts twelve days, including two more days if necessary for a run-off election. There are also regulations concerning how many individuals can be at a candidate’s sign campaigning at once and what materials are permitted for handout. Each of these rules is meant to ensure equitable, fun, and non-disruptive elections. In the past few years, ASB has passed many different reforms to campaign finance and other rules, often citing that Greek organizations, or other special groups, have an undue advantage over individuals who do not belong to these groups.

Greek Life at the University of Mississippi

At the University of Mississippi, Greek life is deeply rooted in the campus community. According to The University of Mississippi Fraternity and Sorority Life office, around 7,953 students at the University of Mississippi are affiliated with Greek life. Within the three councils, the Interfraternity Council (IFC, historically white men), the College Panhellenic Council (Panhellenic, historically white women), and the National Pan-Hellenic Council (NPHC, historically black) there are twenty-nine Greek organizations at the university (Fraternity & Sorority Life, 2022). As of spring 2023, there were 2,857 IFC members, 4,979 Panhellenic members, and 117 NPHC members.

The undergraduate university enrollment in Oxford as of spring 2023 was 16,712, meaning 48% of undergraduates at the University of Mississippi are Greek affiliated. To note, the 2022-2023 racial demographics of Ole Miss undergraduates is as follows: .4% American Indian, 3% Asian, 11% Black, 5% Hispanic, .08% Pacific Islander, 79% White, 2% Multi-Racial, and 1% Unknown (Mini Fact Book, 2022).

Since the establishment of Greek life at the university in 1850, only two years after the University received its charter, there has been tension between Greek and non-Greek students. According to *The University of Mississippi: A Sesquicentennial History*, non-Greek students felt excluded from campus social life shortly after its creation (Sansing, 1999). These tensions were not contained easily; even *The University Magazine* called Greek institutions “the most vicious institution that has grown up in any college” (Sansing, 1999, p. 179). Around the turn of the twentieth century there was ongoing worry that widespread altercation would take place between Greek and non-Greek students. As time progressed, the state of Greek life has swayed back and forth at the university, even being banned between 1912 to 1926 due to state-wide anti-fraternity legislation (Sansing, 1999, p. 204). Today, Greek life is still regarded as a powerful institution on campus, while efforts have been made in recent years to make it more inclusive.

Greek life can contribute to both internal and external exclusivity. Each is important when assessing the implications of Greek life on the overall experience of a student at their university. Internal exclusivity concerns the Greek system’s history of racial, ethnic, and income discrimination. As mentioned earlier, the three councils at the University of Mississippi, the Interfraternity Council, the National Pan-Hellenic Council,

and the Panhellenic Council have different historical roots when it comes to racial and ethnic diversity. Plainly, IFC and Panhellenic, as “historically white organizations were formally segregated” in the past, and did not accept or willingly integrate, (Why Historically-White Sororities and Fraternities are Racially Problematic in US Universities, 2021). So now, as these historically white groups try to become more inclusive, the history of these institutions continues to carry a message that is not as accepting to minority groups. Furthermore, the costs associated with joining a fraternity or sorority, especially at the University of Mississippi, is not a small undertaking. Many of these organizations require thousands of dollars per semester for membership. In addition to these factors, looks and personality are a large component of Greek life, as the whole process appears to be a judgment of not only character, but looks and personality as to how that student will fit into the organization as a whole.

On the other hand, external exclusivity is also associated with Greek life, as many students feel as if they do not get the same social experience as Greek students do on college campuses. While it is still possible to have a flourishing social life without Greek affiliation, many non-Greek students cite the extra effort it takes, as they do not have a pre-established social network such as other members of Greek life (Hydrisko, 2021). In addition, non-Greek students often have a harder time gaining the institutional knowledge Greek students have, such as information about getting involved on campus and how to run a campaign for student government elections. For example, many sororities at the University of Mississippi have “Campaign Chairs” who are in charge of running members in fall and spring elections, a large advantage Greek students have over non-Greek students pursuing the same offices or positions.

Currently, the process to enter Greek life varies depending on which council an individual wishes to join. Panhellenic Primary Sorority Recruitment typically takes place the week before classes begin in the fall. To sign up for Panhellenic recruitment, potential new members (PNMs) must: pay a \$150 registration fee, film an introduction video, and provide personal information such as picture and resume materials (Panhellenic Primary Sorority Recruitment Registration, 2022). Other materials such as letters of recommendation from alumni sorority members may also be required, depending on the sorority. Panhellenic sorority recruitment has many written rules, but also unwritten rules such as not speaking about what house individuals would “prefer to be a member of” and so on. Following registration, the week of primary recruitment is when potential new members meet with different houses. On the first day of recruitment, Greek Day, PNMs watch videos from each panhellenic house and rank their houses from favorite to least. At the same time, each panhellenic house individually ranks PNMs based on the information they have submitted. From there, the process winnows: on Philanthropy Day PNMs go to a maximum of eight houses, on Sisterhood Day a maximum of five, and on Preference Day a maximum of two. On Preference Day, the PNMs rank their top panhellenic house while each house ranks its potential members.

Each of these days has a different focus, hence the names of each day. Greek Day is when PNMs receive an overview of all the Greek Panhellenic houses, Philanthropy Day is when each sorority highlights their philanthropy efforts, Sisterhood Day is when each sorority emphasizes their unique sisterhood bond, and Preference Day is when a PNM decides which sisterhood they would like to join. While the process can be

mentally and physically trying, the hope is for each PNM to find a home in the Greek community.

The IFC recruitment process mirrors that of the panhellenic community, taking place during a different week and having slightly varying maximum houses allotted per round. In each process, the idea is that it is a “mutual selection process” from the side of the Greek house and the PNM.

The process of joining a NPHC chapter is different from those of Panhellenic and IFC. In order to join a NPHC chapter, interested students must attend “Greek Forum” which takes place both in the fall and spring semesters. “Students who are considering participating in an NPHC-affiliated Greek organization’s intake process must attend Greek Forum before attending any NPHC organization’s interest meeting” (How to Join an NPHC Organization, 2022). This process is called “Membership Intake” (How to Join an NPHC Organization, 2022). Each NPHC house has different recruitment criteria that they prioritize, which they share during informational meetings. Students wishing to go through Membership Intake are required to complete computer-based pre-recruitment/intake educational modules before they are able to participate (How to Join an NPHC Organization, 2022).

Perception of Greek Life in Student Government

At some institutions, there is a strong aura surrounding Greek life that actively influences their student government elections, epitomized by The University of Alabama’s (UA) “Machine.” According to *The Crimson White*, a student-led newspaper at the University of Alabama, the Machine is “a 100-year-old underground political organization of sorority and fraternity members that controls campus elections” (Hope,

2018). The Machine is notorious at UA, known for boycotting businesses that oppose their cause and even for tapping a non-Machine candidate's home phone in 1983 (Hope, 2018). The Machine, also known as “the group,” is kind of a ghost: everyone knows it exists but no one sees it (Hope, 2018). Machine members are known to vote together and Machine-affiliated SGA senators are typically told how to vote in Senate. In 2015, UA saw its largest voter turnout in a homecoming election at 13,000 students voting, which is still only around one-third of their student enrollment; many on their campus believe that low voter turnout aids Machine candidates in their elections (Hope, 2018).

The perception of Greek students having an advantage in student government elections does not escape the University of Mississippi, although there has never been a “silent hand” like organization seemingly controlling elections. In an Opinion article for the Daily Mississippian titled, “Opinion: It’s all Greek to me: Greek advantages in campus elections” Levi Bevis, a Public Policy Leadership major, raised the idea of Greek advantage (Bevis, 2018). Bevis, a non-Greek student who had worked on four campaigns over three years, argued that, “to develop a more equitable election system, it is important to understand the advantages of Greek candidates” (Bevis, 2018). He cited funding as one of the greatest advantages for Greek candidates, as in the 2018 fall election cycle “all candidates for Miss Ole Miss and two candidates for Mr. Ole Miss acknowledged that their campaign was funded by their respective Greek organizations” (Bevis, 2018). A luxury many non-Greek students do not benefit from, funding is a large barrier to running or keeping up with your fellow competitors. Another hurdle non-Greek candidates must overcome is the power of Greek life in numbers. With a large percentage of the student population being Greek, non-Greek candidates have to fight harder to get the Greek vote,

while “Greek houses have access to hundreds of active members to organize a campaign, pass out stickers, build campaign signs and more” (Bevis, 2018).

While Bevis’s opinion does not reflect the feeling of all students at the University of Mississippi, he is not alone in his perception that ASB elections are dominated by Greek life. For example, John Hydrisko, an English, philosophy, and history major, authored “Opinion: The Case Against ASB” (Hydrisko, 2021), in which he highlighted the “loathsome affair” that is ASB (2021). Pointedly noting that “Greek-affiliated students enjoy significant financial and social backing from their respective organizations” (Hydrisko, 2021), Hydrisko points out the uphill battle that low-income students face when competing against Greek candidates who already have established social networks and bank accounts at the ready.

Overall, Greek life is a large presence at the University of Mississippi, which raises the question of what advantages and disadvantages Greek students gain compared to non-Greek students. These conversations are not new or unique to the University of Mississippi, especially when there are students who constantly can acknowledge the opportunities they felt they’ve missed or lost due to lack of involvement in Greek life. When it comes to key policymaking and other initiatives on campus, normally brought forward by the Associated Student Body, it is important to discover who is making these decisions and how they got their positions to indicate who may be left out of the picture and how student government can be more equitable and representative.

Chapter Three: Literature Review

When delving into the advantages of Greek life in terms of student government, it is important to consider the pre-existing literature on the matter, as the implications of Greek life are widespread across college campuses. Another factor to consider is political ambition, as nationally, women are less likely to run for office. So, we must consider how this impacts Greek women running for office and if they mimic this trend or not. Both of these factors and implications affect the representation of Greek life in student government.

Greek Life

Greek life is prevalent all throughout the United States, as “the National Interfraternity Council reports that Greek organizations currently have approximately 9.3 million living alumni and 750,000 undergraduate members at approximately 12,000 collegiate chapters” (Routon & Walker, 2014, p. 63). Many students opt to join Greek life during their collegiate years if they have the time and the means. Some colleges have larger Greek organizations than others, notably schools within the South Eastern Conference (SEC). There are oftentimes stereotypes and stigmas surrounding Greek life. Students who participate in Greek life are often considered “not the most serious students, are more prone to engage in partying than studying, and may overuse alcohol and other illicit substances” (Routon & Walker, 2014, p. 63). Different studies have identified features attributed to Greek affiliation and weigh different outcomes when it comes to studying the impact of Greek life on a student’s collegiate career.

Implications

There is almost no general consensus on the implications of Greek life among the scholarly community. Researchers have found positive, negative, or no effects of Greek life on a variety of outcomes. Gary R. Pike (2000) conducted research with 6,782 undergraduates at 15 Association of American Universities (AAU) public universities. He found a “weak positive relationship with engagement and gains in learning” among those with Greek affiliation (p. 369).

Wesley Routon and Jay Walker explore the impacts of Greek life on multiple factors including: academic outcomes, alcohol consumption, involvement, and more (Routon & Walker, 2014). The researchers used “a longitudinal survey of college students from over 400 institutions and a propensity score weighting framework” (Routon & Walker, 2014, p. 64). The researchers grouped their outcomes into three categories: academic, health and behavioral, and other (Routon & Walker, 2014). When comparing Greek and non-Greek students, the researchers found multiple areas in which the two groups differed: male Greeks tended to have slightly worse GPAs (grade point averages) and lower Graduate Record Examinations (GRE) scores than their non-Greek counterparts. In contrast, female Greek members generally score comparable to their non-Greek counterparts. In terms of health outcomes, Greek affiliation appears to have a significant impact on male drinking habits, with Greek males “14.3 percentage points more likely to be frequent drinkers of beer” (Routon & Walker, 2014, p. 69). In the “other” category, the research found that Greek students had higher rates of involvement in student government and volunteering and were more likely than non-Greek individuals to work full-time after completing their undergraduate degree (Routon & Walker, 2014, p.

70). Overall, the research found Greek and non-Greek students' differences in the areas that were identified academic, health and behavioral, and other outcomes, but the differences were not as stark as the Greek stereotypes would suggest.

Campus Involvement

As previously noted in the Routon and Walker study, the Greek affiliation has commonly been linked to increased campus involvement. Christopher O'Connor (2018), a Ph.D candidate at The University of North Carolina at Greensboro, sought to answer the question of how exactly Greek affiliation impacts student involvement patterns.

Through a case study design, O'Connor sought to answer the following questions:

1. Does becoming affiliated in a Greek Life organization influence involvement patterns of students who choose to join them? If there are changes in involvement why do they take place?
2. How does becoming affiliated in a Greek Life organization influence a student's perceived connection to campus?

In order to answer these questions, O'Connor interviewed full-time undergraduates who were a part of Greek Life and had been for at least one semester (2018, p. 44). This research was conducted at Southeastern University, a small, religiously-affiliated school in Florida, using purposeful sampling as a method to identify eight participants.

Prior to Greek affiliation, a majority of the participants framed their connection to campus through academics. Upon joining Greek life, participants described the "creating of connections to campus through Greek Life that did not exist before they affiliated" (O'Connor, 2018, p. 60). Many of the participants emphasized this connection to campus, their peers, and themselves that they found through joining the Greek system. One key

finding was that Greek affiliated students “became more focused on the depth of their involvement, often reducing their breadth of involvement by dropping either membership or leadership roles in clubs or activities that they joined before they had affiliated” (O’Connor, 2018, p. 78). For example, six out of the eight participants noted lessening involvement in different areas in order to focus on their increased Greek responsibilities (O’Connor, 2018, p. 59). This study provides an interesting analysis of involvement in the Greek system. While the sample size was small, it showed the deep connections formed by Greek affiliation to their campus and peers. Furthermore, this study showed the ways in which student involvement may alter once a student is Greek-affiliated.

In a study conducted by Hevel (2014) and others, the researchers found that students’ socially responsible leadership does not increase over their four years as an undergraduate while being Greek affiliated. With a sample of 1,930 students from 18 4-year colleges and universities, researchers collected data between 2006 and 2011 concerning the participants’ experiences. The researchers sought to answer the question, “Do fraternities and sororities still enhance socially responsible leadership in the fourth year of college?” (Hevel et al., 2014, 242). The dependent variable in the study was socially responsible leadership, which was assessed by using the socially responsible leadership scale (SRLS). The SRLS consists of subscales that correspond with the eight values of the social change model of leadership (SCM) which include consciousness of self, congruence, commitment, collaboration, common purpose, controversy with civility, citizenship, and change (Hevel et al., 2014, p. 235). This model is used to differentiate different types of students, between the involved and uninvolved. Based on the findings, the researchers concluded that fraternities and sororities do not enhance socially

responsible leadership by the fourth year of college. Students did reap benefits at the beginning of their Greek affiliation, but those benefits disappeared over their years of school.

Overall, Greek affiliation has differing and waning impacts on their members' involvement and social responsibility. While in the beginning members may feel very driven by their Greek affiliation, that drive may not survive their four years of college. On the other hand, Greek students do often find a connection between themselves and their institution through their involvement in Greek life.

Ingroup Favoritism

A study by Brett Wells and Daniel P. Corts (2008) sought to explore the extent of implicit attitudes towards members of fraternities and sororities that are hinted at through previous studies. The study analyzed implicit and explicit biases of members in the Greek system. The Implicit Association Test (IAT) was utilized, which is used to measure people's unconscious biases. The study involved 50 college students from the Midwest, 21 Greek and 29 non-Greek. These students were provided the names of Greek organizations and academic or service organizations in conjunction with eight “good” or “bad” words (Wells & Corts, 2008, p. 843). The researchers used the Situational Attitude Scale (SAS) to measure explicit bias. They found that Greek students do, in fact, harbor an in-group bias, scoring significantly higher on the SAS than non-Greek groups. Greek members often saw their groups in more positive light than non-Greek, groups showing “consistent ingroup favoritism; individuals favor groups they belong to in order to increase their self-esteem” (Wells & Corts, 2018, p. 845). These results showed just how

much Greek students favor their own groups, particularly viewing themselves in a more positive light than non-Greek individuals do.

Political Ambition

When discussing political representation and advantages individuals may have, even in terms of student government on college campuses, it is important to consider the factors that play into deciding to run for office. If these factors persist on a smaller scale on college campuses, then there should be an effort to focus on making sure demographically, the gender makeup is accurately representative of the campus. For the purpose of my research, exploring political ambition is necessary in order to identify factors that advantage members of Greek life, especially if outside factors, such as political ambition, may impact women running for office.

When it comes to political ambition, there is a large persistent gender gap. Political scientists Jennifer L. Lawless and Richard L. Fox sought to explore how motivated women are to enter politics. Based on a survey of more than 2,100 college students between the ages of 18 and 25, the researchers found that “young women are less likely than young men to have considered running for office, to express interest in a candidacy at some point in the future, or to consider elective office a desirable profession” (Lawless & Fox, 2013, p. ii). Based on this research, they identified five factors that contribute to the gender gap in political ambition among college students.

Political socialization is defined by Anja Neundor and Kaat Smets as “the process by which citizens crystallize political identities, values and behavior that remain relatively persistent throughout later life,” (Neundor & Smets, 2017, p. 1). This is the first factor identified by Lawless and Fox, as women are much less likely to be encouraged to

pursue political careers by their parents than men, which impacts their political ambition later on in their lives (Lawless & Fox, 2013, p. 7). This is found with both mothers and fathers, giving young men double encouragement. Second, women tend to be less exposed to conversations and information concerning politics. Women are less likely to take a political science class in college, or to discuss political topics in class, and are less likely to be involved in political activity in college. Women and men watch cable news at equal levels, but men are significantly more likely to view news websites, political websites/blogs, and to watch *The Daily Show with Jon Stewart* and/or *The Colbert Report*. Third, women are less likely than men to have played an organized sport which instills the idea to care about winning. Men were more likely to have played a varsity or junior varsity sport, to play a sport and be very invested in it, and to admit to being very competitive. Individuals who played a varsity or junior varsity sport, from both genders, were more likely to express interest in pursuing a political office. Fourth, women often do not receive support to run for office from anyone, not just parents. Men were significantly more likely to have received encouragement “to run for office later in life” by a parent, grandparent, aunt/uncle, sibling, teacher, coach, religious leader, or friend (Lawless & Fox, 2013, p. 12). Women are faced with a disadvantage before even pursuing office by not having been encouraged to do so. Lastly, women themselves are less likely to view themselves as qualified to run for political office, compared to men. “Among those who thought they might be qualified to run, 53 percent of women, compared to 66 percent of men, had considered politics a viable option for the future” (Lawless & Fox, 2013, p. 13). When asked “When you finished school and have been working for a while, do you think

you will know enough to run for political office,” 51 percent of women said “No” (Lawless & Fox, 2013, p. 14).

Another factor to take into consideration is class status. Nicholas Carnes and Noam Lupu conducted the “first cross-national analysis of social class gaps in nascent ambition” (2022). In many countries around the world, working class citizens are not well represented in the political field. Essentially, Nascent ambition is required to hold office as, “politicians are drawn from the pool of people with some desire to become politicians” (Carnes & Lupu, 2022, p. 3). So, while much of the research is centered around the gender gap and lack of female politicians in the United States, it is important to delve into the role that class status plays in nascent ambition. Interestingly enough, the study did not find any compelling evidence of “social class differences in standard measures of nascent ambition,” but continued to find gender gaps (Carnes & Lupu, 2022, p. 3). When discussing campus-wide elections, money is a large factor that is typically brought forward, but this research implicates that social class itself does not play a role in political ambition, even though campaign budgets may still be a barrier to entry.

Larger than only gender and class, it is important to look holistically and consider each part of an individual’s identity and how that may influence political ambition. A diverse body of research shows that “a legislator’s gender, race, ethnicity, class, and even their parental status shape their priorities and decisions in political office” (Barnes & Holman, 2019, p. 829). Tiffany Barnes and Mirya Holman delve into how these many factors may affect a person’s political ambition. The researchers focus on diversity, which was chosen due to the fact that in political office, “public officials address a variety of complex problems that have varying effects on different groups of people” (Barnes &

Holman, 2019, p. 830). Given this, it is important for individuals to come from different backgrounds and experiences to identify different problems along with what groups can be helped. This diversity helps more constituents be represented and heard, rather than having multiple public officials from the same background dealing with many issues with which they may have no experience. In addition, “diversity among elected representatives is important for fostering democratic legitimacy and strengthening representation linkages with society” (Barnes & Holman, 2019, p. 831).

Through the study, which delved into the diversity of the Argentinian National Congress, the authors argued that diversity cannot be limited to gender or race, but must extend to social and class diversity: “Increasing the number of women in office, for example, may improve appearances—signaling that an institution is diverse—but simply adding more women may not be sufficient to improve other aspects of legislative diversity” (Barnes & Holman, 2019, p. 838). They argue that a more well rounded approach to diversity may address women’s hesitancy to run. In the United States, they recommend this is how Republicans and Democrats should recruit future political leaders.

With the prominence of Greek life around the United States, there are many stigmatizations attached to it. There is a significant impact on male drinking habits, along with higher rates of involvement in student government and volunteering. Greek students may feel a different connection to campus, framed through Greek life, although that connection does not stay as strong throughout all four years of affiliation. Importantly, ingroup favoritism is high amongst Greek students, which can perpetuate Greek culture. Meanwhile, political ambition is lower amongst women, which has been tied to lack of

gender representation in different groups and is important to consider on the collegiate level. Class status does not appear to affect political ambition, while diversity is a factor in political ambition. All of these factors are important to take into consideration when researching the advantages Greek affiliated students have in student government elections and may help explain the trends that are identified.

Chapter Four: Research Design

I utilized two different surveys in order to answer the question, “How and to what extent does Greek affiliation affect candidates for student government at the University of Mississippi?” Both of these surveys were distributed electronically through the QualtricsXM interface. Furthermore, both were approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) in July 2022, before I began conducting any of my research.

The purpose of the first survey was to inquire about how ASB members elected during the spring 2022 election cycle found out about ASB, ran their campaigns, and what financial support they may have received. This survey used purposive sampling and was electronically distributed through email to Associated Student Body Senators and the Executive Board, the two bodies that are elected by a campus-wide election. The small number of senators who resigned before this survey was distributed were still sent the survey, as they had won seats and their input was still valuable. The survey contained quantitative and qualitative questions concerning these students' involvement within ASB and Greek organizations. These questions were meant to discover how much Greek members' networks and influence impacts involvement in ASB. This survey was first sent out on Wednesday, September 28 and again on Friday, October 7, as a reminder to those who had not yet completed the survey. These survey questions are found in Appendix A.

The purpose of the second survey used random sampling and was to inquire as to why individuals vote in ASB elections or not, if they voted last in the election cycle, and about their Greek affiliation, if any. This survey was electronically distributed through

email to 5,000 current undergraduate and graduate students at the University of Mississippi who were classified as a sophomore or higher based on course hours. The reasoning for this is that current freshmen would not have voted in the spring 2022 election cycle. These survey questions are found in Appendix B.

I sent out this survey through the University of Mississippi's Office of Institutional Research, Effectiveness, and Planning, after completing a Survey Panel Request. After approval, my survey was sent out multiple times to the randomly selected 5,000 qualifying students with an initial email on October 18, and reminders to those who had not responded on October 21, October 24, and November 7. My sample included both members of ASB and general members of the student body.

In addition, I conducted documentary research to delve deeper into how many members of the Associated Student Body in elected positions are in fact Greek (or non-Greek) to assess how much Greek life has been present in the organization in the past, drawing a connection with its pressure and potential advantages. In this case, I compiled the names and Greek/non-Greek affiliations of two years of current and past ASB Senators and Executive members from the years 2022 and 2021. From there, I utilized a few mediums to identify Greek affiliation: Instagram, Facebook, and personal knowledge. Due to being involved in ASB each of these years, it was easy for me to identify individuals' involvement, or to reach out to others who would know their involvement. I marked who was Greek and non-Greek and calculated the percentage of Greek affiliation in ASB.

Chapter Five: Results

Both the ASB survey and general student body survey were successfully sent out to both groups and garnered results over a short period of time. Furthermore, the assessment of ASB senators and executive members shed light on how representative the body is of the general student body population, which is around 48% Greek.

Associated Student Body Data

In order to assess the prominence of Greek life in the Associated Student Body, I identified the past two years of ASB Senators and Executives members' affiliations using personal knowledge, social media, and peer information. For the 2021-2022 ASB Senate and Executive Officers, out of 54 students, 44 were affiliated with a Greek organization, or 81%. For the 2022-2023 ASB Senate and Executive Officers, out of 56 students, 45 are affiliated with Greek life, or 80%. This data is pertinent to this research, outlining why there is a need to assess the prominence of Greek life in ASB and how these individuals might get to the positions they are in today.

Out of the 56 elected ASB members sent the survey concerning running in the spring 2022 election cycle, 27 completed the survey, yielding a response rate of 48%. A majority of respondents were classified as sophomores (52%), followed by juniors (26%) and seniors (22%). Of these respondents, a large majority identify as White or Caucasian (89%), with only one individual identifying as Black or African American and two identifying as Hispanic or Latino. Twenty-two of the respondents were senators while the

other five were executive members. Furthermore, the majority of respondents were female (59%) and the rest were male (41%).

Regarding Greek involvement, of the 27 respondents, 21 , or 78% were Greek (Figure 1). Nine belong to the Interfraternity Council (IFC), 12 individuals belong to the Panhellenic Council, and no one identified themselves as a member of a National Pan-Hellenic Council (NPHC) organization (Figure 2). The other six respondents did not belong to any Greek organization. The nine men involved in IFC came from five chapters: Alpha Tau Omega, Beta Theta Phi, Kappa Alpha Order, Phi Delta Theta, and Sigma Nu (Figure 3). The 12 women involved in the Panhellenic Council came from six chapters: Alpha Delta Phi, Delta Delta Delta, Delta Gamma, Kappa Delta, Phi Mu, and Pi Beta Phi (Figure 4). Beta Theta Pi and Delta Gamma had the highest number of Greek respondents, with 33% from Beta Theta Pi and 33% from Delta Gamma.

Greek Affiliated? ASB Survey

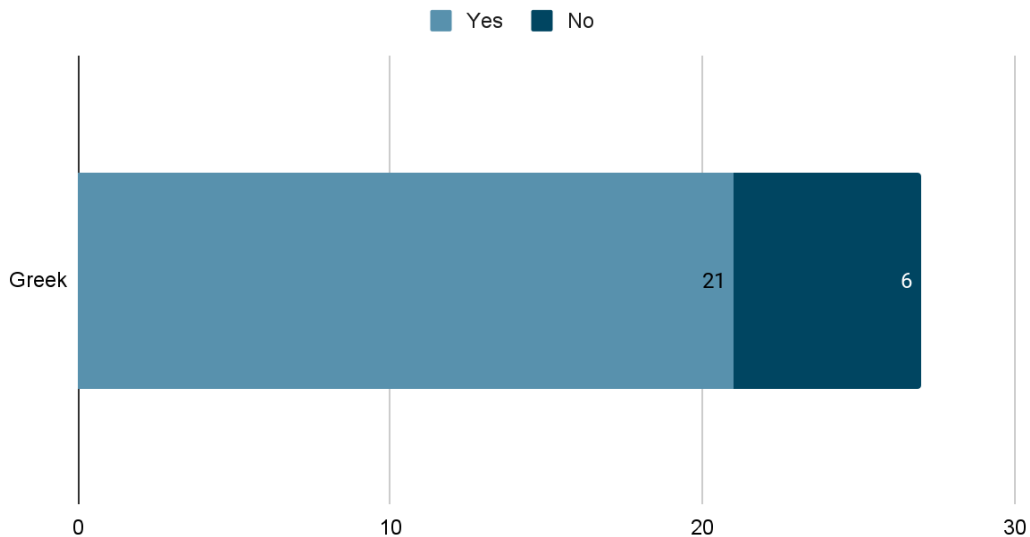


Figure 1

Greek Affiliation in ASB

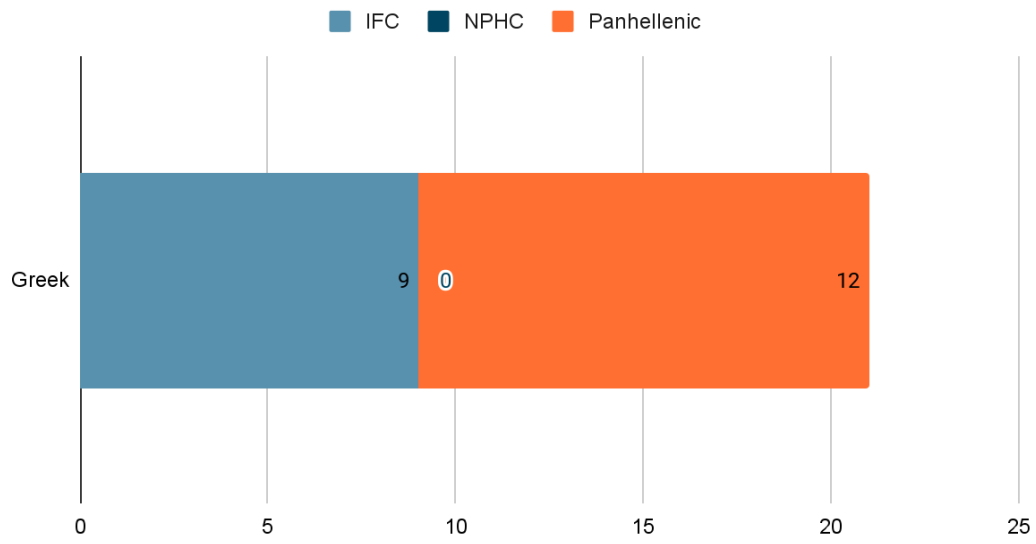


Figure 2

IFC Membership in ASB

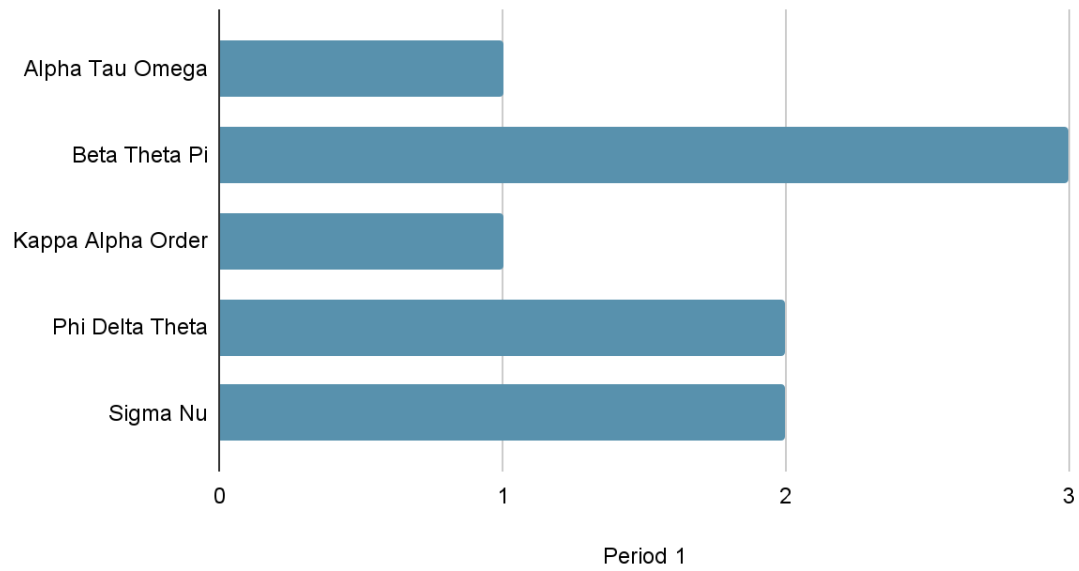


Figure 3

Panhellenic Membership in ASB

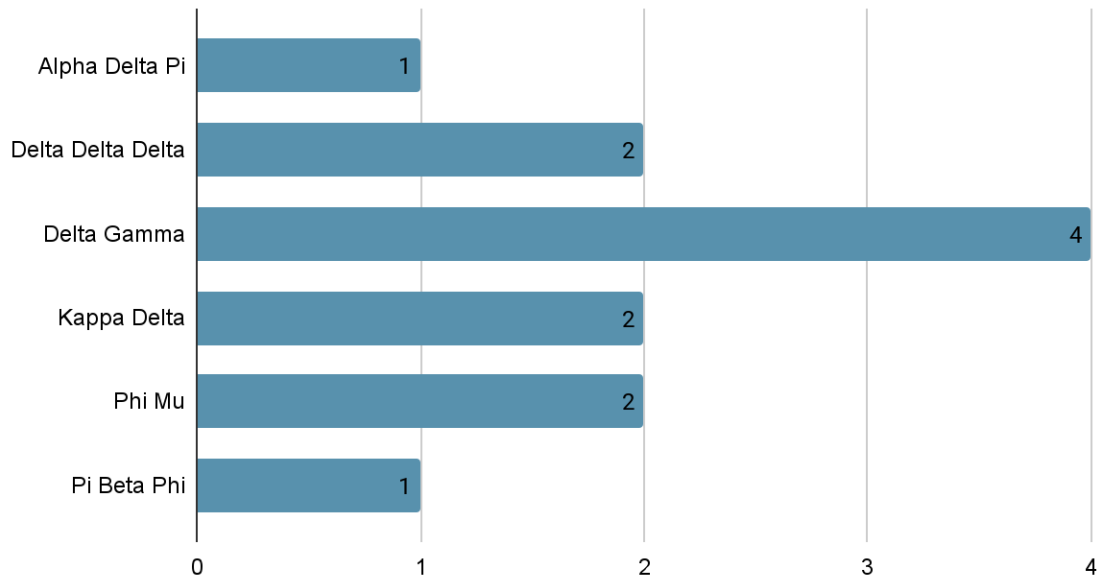


Figure 4

When it came to involvement in ASB, 13 respondents were two year veterans. Eight were new to the organization, having one year of involvement, while three individuals each had three years and four years of involvement. Most individuals either heard about the organization through orientation or involvement fairs or through a peer. Furthermore, when it came to knowing about the process of petitioning to run for their chosen position, a majority had found out through a peer; 18 respondents indicated that form of communication. In addition, 18 respondents indicated that they were approached about running for an ASB position (Figure 5). Of these, 15 indicated a friend approached them while three indicated that they were approached by a member of a Registered Student Organization, each adding in the text section that it was a member of their Greek chapter.

Individuals Approached about Running for ASB

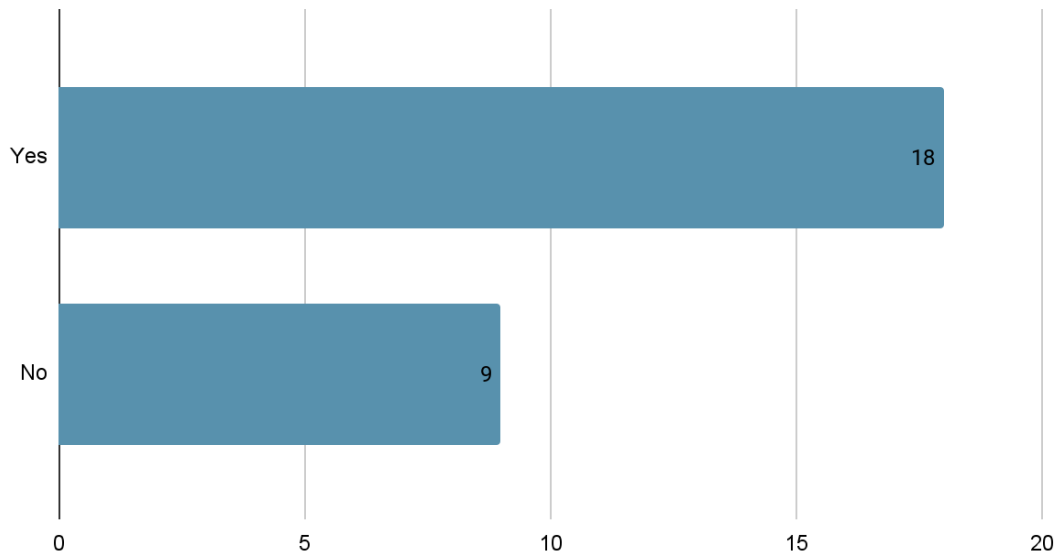


Figure 5

When it came to running a successful election, the majority of respondents ran their campaign themselves, while three had a campaign manager, and three others had a campaign manager and team supporting them. Furthermore, 20 respondents had self-funded their campaign, while one received funding from their parents, and three received funding from their Panhellenic chapter.

General Population Data

Out of the 5,000 students who received the survey sent to the general student population, 616 students responded, yielding a response rate of 12%. However, even on questions meant for every respondent, not all received 616 responses. Of the respondents 37% were seniors, 31% juniors, 27% sophomores, and 5% freshmen. Eighty-three percent of respondents identified as White or Caucasian, 8% (50 students) identified as Black or African American, 3% (21 students) identified as Hispanic or Latino, 3% (17

students) identified as muliracial or biracial, and three did not choose a race or ethnicity. Female respondents (72%) outnumbered male (26%), with 2% identifying as non-binary/third gender or preferred not to say.

Sixty-four percent did not belong to a Greek organization (Figure 6), 23% were members of the Panhellenic Council, 9% were members of the Interfraternity Council (IFC), and 4% were members of the National Pan-Hellenic Council (NPHC) (Figure 7). Thirteen out of the 15 IFC chapters were represented in this survey, along with three of the five NPHC chapters and each of the Panhellenic Council chapters.

Greek Affiliated? General Survey

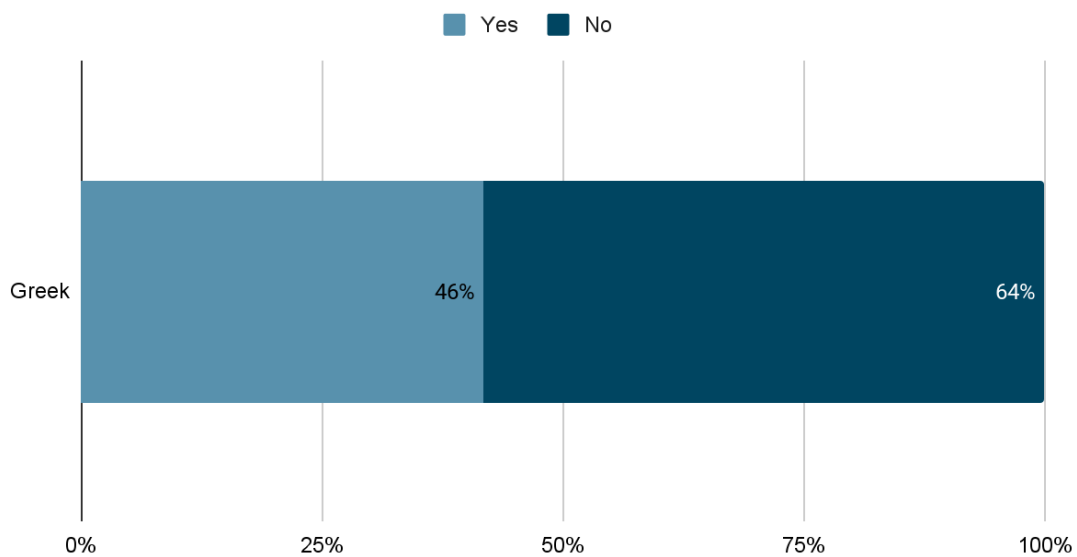


Figure 6

Greek Affiliation in General Survey

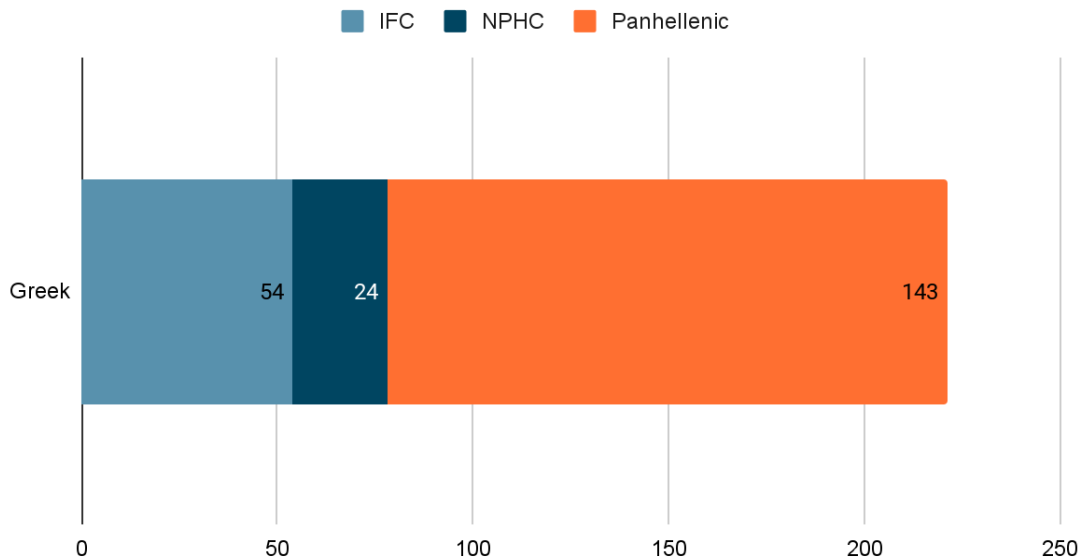


Figure 7

When it came to participation in the spring 2022 ASB election cycle, the responses were pretty evenly distributed, with 314 respondents indicating that they had voted and 259 indicating they had not (Figure 8). For those who had voted, many were influenced to vote due to a friend running. Smaller, varying numbers were due to interest in ASB/SAF (Student Activity Fee), seeing the email with the link to vote, being in a RSO that reminded them to vote, or receiving the link to vote via text. For those who did not vote, reasons included lack of care for and knowledge of ASB and its elections.

A slight majority of the respondents (52%) indicated they had heard about the spring election from social media such as Instagram and Facebook, while others had seen candidates campaigning in front of the Ole Miss Student Union (17%) or were added to a campaign GroupMe (7%) (Figure 9). Of those who had heard about the ASB election in an RSO meeting, each RSO listed was either a Greek organization or ASB itself.

Did you vote in the 2022 ASB election cycle?

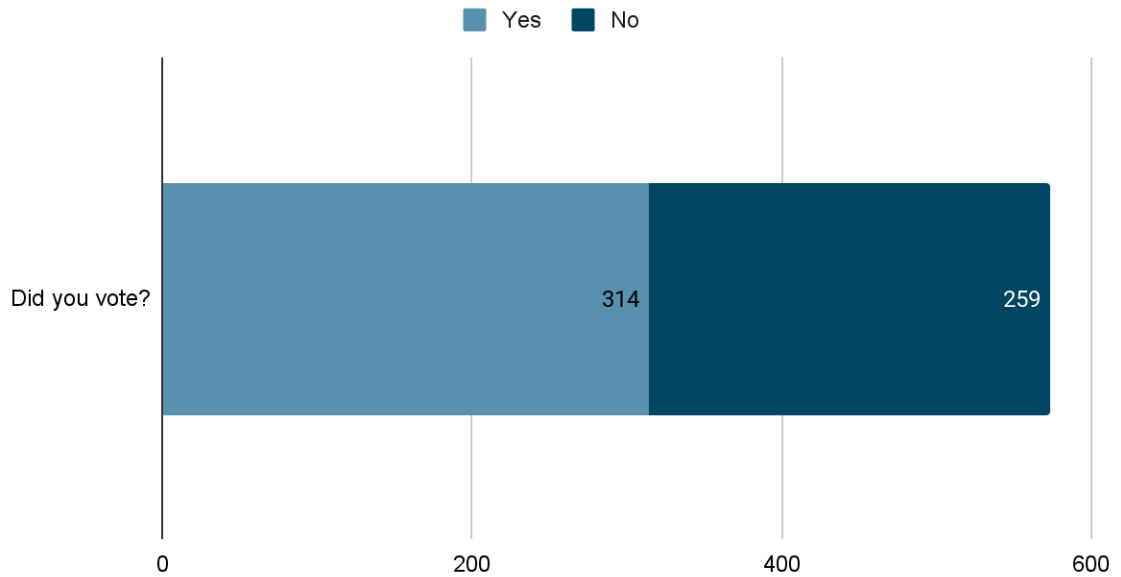


Figure 8

How did you hear about the 2022 ASB spring election?

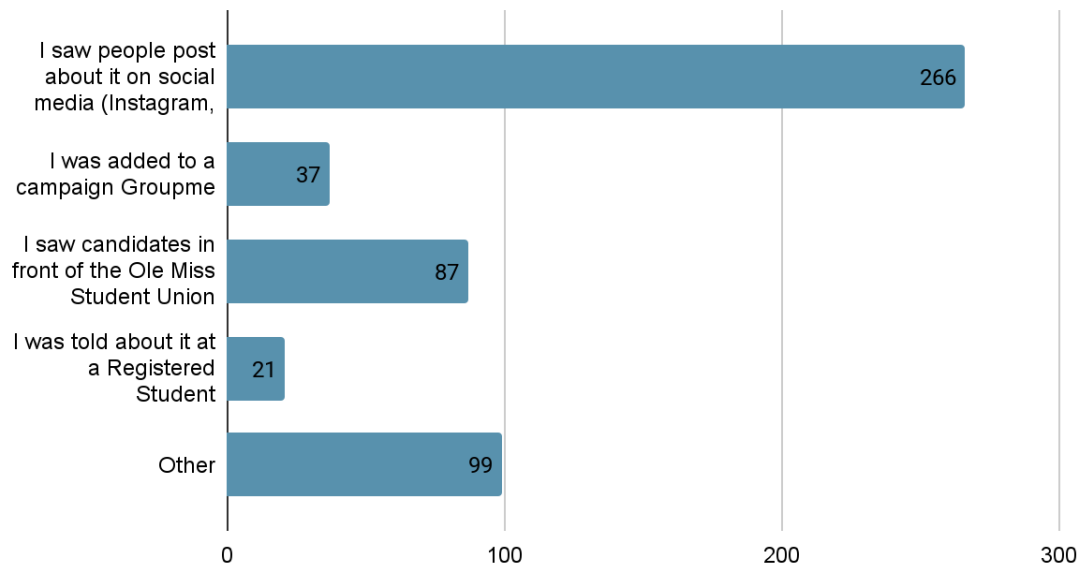


Figure 9

Focusing on respondents who indicated that they were members of Greek life, 82% of members of IFC indicated they had voted in the 2022 election cycle, while 18% had not. For NPHC, 71% had voted and 29% had not. Of those in Panhellenic 75% had voted and 26% had not (Figure 10).

Greek Voters



Figure 10

Members of IFC indicated that the primary driver to vote was a close friend running (45%), a candidate's platform (24%), and their affiliation with their fraternity (18%). Members of NPHC indicated that the primary driver to vote was a candidate's platform (40%), their affiliation with their fraternity/sorority (40%), and a close friend running (20%). Lastly, members of Panhellenic indicated that the primary driver to vote was a candidate being a member of their sorority (35%), a close friend running (26%), a candidate's platform (19%), and a candidate's personality/social media presence (13%) (Figure 11).

Greek Primary driver to voting

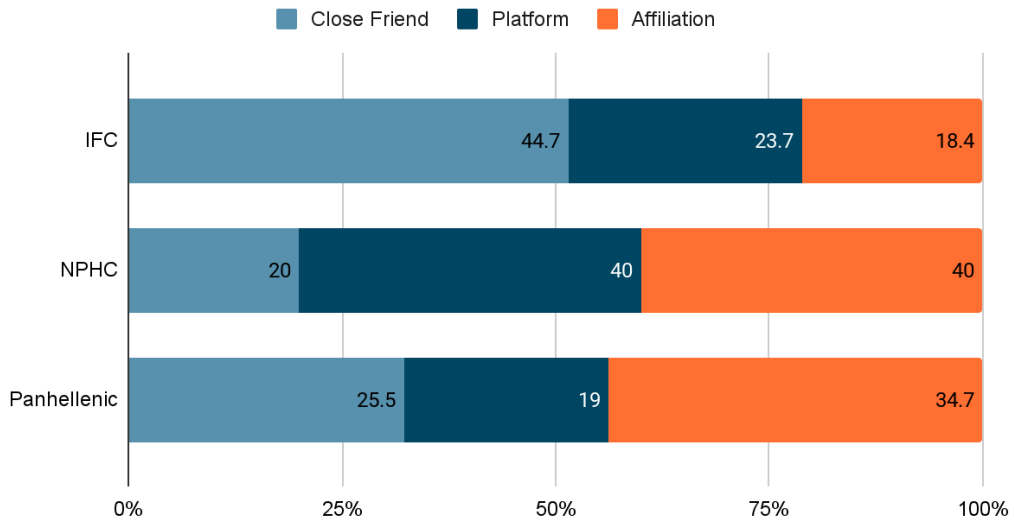


Figure 11

When IFC members were asked if Greek membership came into play when choosing whom to vote for, 46% said no, 38% said yes, and 16% said maybe. Sixty percent of NPHC members said yes and 40% said no. Lastly, 61% of Panhellenic members said yes, 28% said no, and 11% said maybe (Figure 12).

Greek membership impact on Greek voters

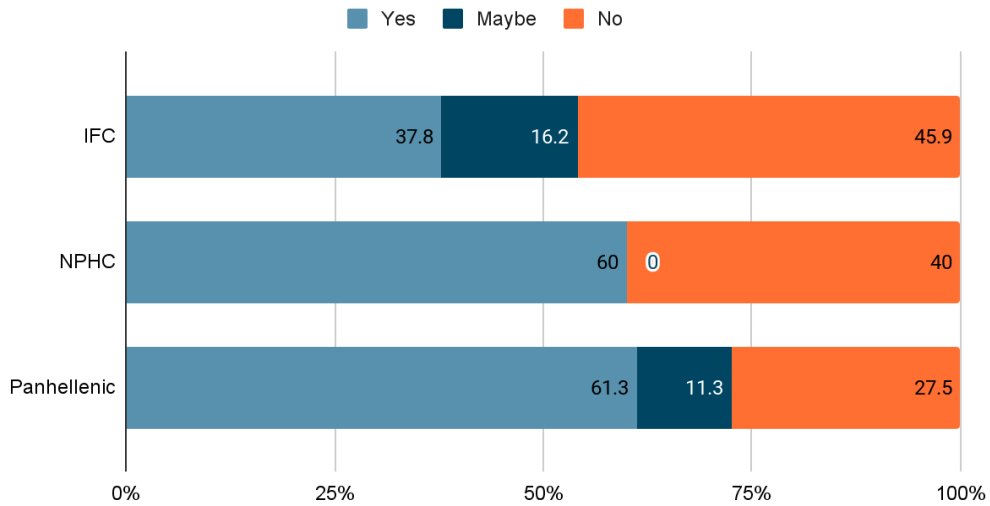


Figure 12

Now, focusing on students who indicated they were not members of a Greek council, 41% of respondents had voted in the 2022 spring election cycle. Furthermore, these respondents indicated that the primary driver to vote was having a close friend running (32%), a candidate's platform (28%), and a candidate's strong presence/social media (17%) (Figure 13). When asked if Greek membership came into play when choosing whom to vote for, the majority (52%) of non-Greek respondents said no, while 37% said yes and 11% said maybe (Figure 14).

Non-Greek Primary driver to voting

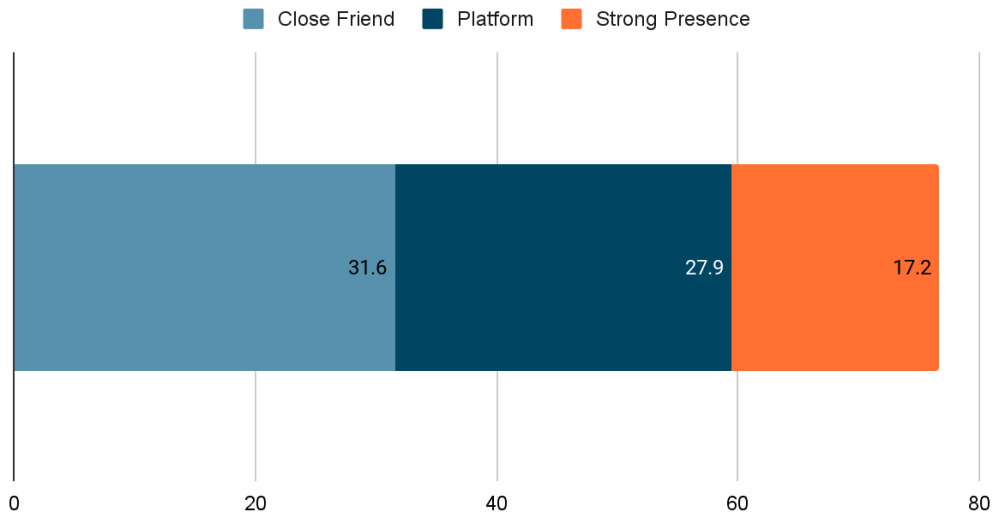


Figure 13

Greek membership impact on non-Greek voters

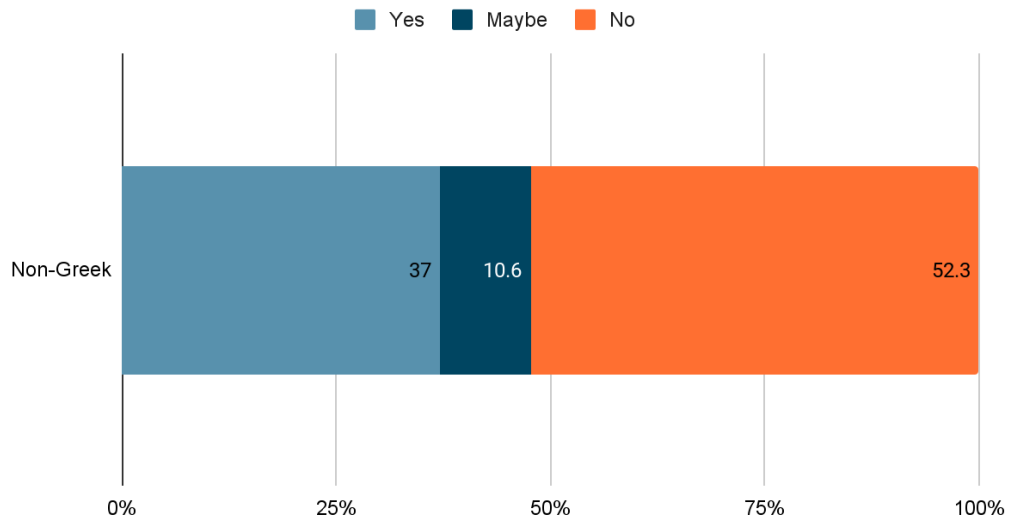


Figure 14

Chapter Six: Discussion

Broadly speaking, there are connections between existing research and my research results. The implications and impact of Greek life aligns with the responses gathered in my surveys, but with the relatively limited body of research on this topic, my research presents interesting findings that build upon the current body of knowledge.

Campus Involvement

In relation to Greek involvement on campus, the prevalence of students affiliated with Greek life in ASB is supported by the Routon and Walker (2014) study, which noted that Greek students tend to have increased campus involvement. This is supported by the prominence of Greek life in ASB elected positions from 2021-2023, in which around 80% of officers were Greek affiliated. The prevalence of Greek life in ASB elected positions does not accurately reflect the university's undergraduate population, as Greek life makes up around 48% of undergraduates. Meanwhile, survey respondents were majority White (89%) while campus is around 75% White, so there is slight lack of representation of other minority races. Consistent with O'Connor's (2018) case study, which found students become less involved on campus as they became more involved in their Greek chapter, participation in ASB tends to dwindle with age, as Greek seniors were least represented in the ASB survey. Seventy-one percent of sophomore respondents are Greek, 100% of juniors, and 66% of seniors. This data could reflect the impact of Greek affiliation on students going on to pursue positions in the Greek community compared to outside campus organizations.

Ingroup Favoritism

The results of my study yielded interesting data concerning ingroup favoritism among Greek students. According to Wells and Corts (2008), Greek students have ingroup bias, compared to non-Greek students and non-Greek students have less ingroup bias towards non-Greek students. My study found varying results concerning ingroup bias among Greek students. The majority of Greek students voted in the 2022 spring election cycle, but when it came to choosing whom to vote for, these students did not always favor their own groups. Out of the three Greek councils, IFC showed the least amount of bias, while both NPHC and Panhellenic members were more driven to vote for members of their own sorority or fraternity. These results were further supported in the question concerning Greek membership's impact on voting, as IFC members were less likely to be driven by Greek membership, while NPHC and Panhellenic members were more likely to be driven by Greek membership.

An interesting result that I did not foresee based on the available literature was the impact of Greek membership on non-Greek students. While about half indicated it did not have an impact on their voting choice, the other respondents indicated that it had or might have impacted their voting choice. These numbers could indicate a level of favoritism or distaste towards Greek candidates when it comes to student government elections from non-Greek students. Due to the wording of the question, the exact feeling cannot be determined. According to Wells and Corts (2008), while Greek individuals tend to view themselves in a more positive light it is possible that non-Greek members also have this impression. The stereotypes attributed to Greek life, like partying, drinking, and use of other illicit substances, could possibly not deter non-Greek students from voting for

Greek candidates in student government elections, which could mean that these stereotypes may not be as strong at the University of Mississippi, perhaps because the university has such a high level of Greek involvement. In addition to this, it may be possible that those more likely to vote in these elections are students who tend to partake in these habits themselves, such as partying and drinking, so they do not judge others for doing so either. The data does fall in line with Routon and Walker's (2014) research, which found differences in academics, health, and behavior, but they are not as stark as commonly portrayed.

Political Ambition

When it comes to considering running for political office, Lawless and Fox's (2013) survey found a gender gap in political ambition between men and women, as women were less likely than their male counterparts to seek higher elected office. Of the 27 respondents to the ASB survey, 16 identified themselves as female. Twelve out of 16 of these women were affiliated with Greek life. The prevalence of Greek women involved in ASB raises the question of how Greek affiliation impacts political ambition. With only four female survey respondents being non-Greek, this data suggests that political ambition may be higher in Greek women compared to non-Greek women. Neundor and Smets (2017) find that political ambition tends to be lower in women due to parents being less likely to encourage their daughters to pursue these offices. My findings suggest the possibility that the strong support system sororities offer their members makes them feel comfortable and supported enough to pursue office on the university level.

In addition to this, it is possible that Greek sorority women may feel more comfortable running if they have the financial backing of their sorority, compared to having to finance themselves, although it is important to note that to be in a sorority, one has to have the finances. Of the 27 respondents, three women indicated that their sorority paid for their campaign, potentially contributing to their comfort in running for office on campus. Further, given the costs associated with joining a Greek organization, sorority members may be more likely to have their own resources to fund a campaign than non-Greek women.

How and to what extent does Greek affiliation affect candidates for student government at the University of Mississippi?

Overall, Greek candidates appear to be advantaged in student government elections due to their Greek affiliation. This research has identified the following factors that contribute to this Greek advantage: increased involvement, ingroup favoritism, favoritism from other groups, and increased political ambition among women.

Being more involved on campus and in ASB, gives Greek members more name recognition than those less involved on campus and not affiliated with a Greek organization. In addition, Greek students already have a vast built in social network on campus, which can translate into winning office. Increased involvement within ASB also may create a cycle of more Greek members becoming involved in ASB, as Greek members may encourage others in their chapter to join ASB. This is supported by the ASB survey that indicates three respondents were encouraged by someone in their sorority or fraternity to run for office. While 15 respondents indicated a friend approached them, they possibly could have identified a member of their sorority or

fraternity as a friend because that is how they view their friendship, not based on the organization. Further, the large majority of elected ASB members are Greek, broadcasting the message to non-Greeks that it may be hard to win without Greek affiliation.

Next, the survey indicated that NPHC and Panhellenic members have a strong ingroup bias when it comes to voting for Greek candidates. While this strong bias is not found as much within IFC, the fact that the other two councils strongly hold this bias is important, as those councils make up around 65% of the Greek community. Furthermore, the fact that non-Greek voters also consider Greek affiliation when voting cannot be underestimated. If there is favoritism of Greeks from these groups, they encompass a large percentage of the overall undergraduate population, which can perpetuate and advantage Greek students in winning elections.

Lastly, it appears that Greek affiliation advantages Greek women when it comes to political ambition. This may be tied to the large support system behind these women along with financial support from their chapter on campus. The support of a large Greek sorority, financially and physically, likely increased the number of women pursuing office on campus, giving them a large advantage compared to their non-Greek female counterparts.

Limitations

While these surveys were able to identify factors that play a role in Greek affiliated students being advantaged in student government elections at the University of Mississippi, it is hard to quantify the extent of this advantage. We can deduce there is an advantage, due to all the factors identified, but I believe that multiple years of research

into ASB would be needed to accurately depict the extent to which Greek affiliation advantages students. While we could predict surveys of other years would reflect similar sentiments, it is impossible to know without data spanning previous years.

In addition to the lack of research in ASB over the years, upon further reflection, I believe some of the survey questions could have been stronger. With the wording of some of the questions being somewhat vague, it was difficult to deduce findings without risking making possibly erroneous assumptions. For example, the question concerning how non-Greek students were impacted by a candidate's Greek affiliation, it was impossible to deduce if that meant it was more or less favorable due to not asking a follow-up question. Furthermore, utilizing the "display" function, which prompts certain follow-up questions to appear based on certain responses, when it came to allowing certain respondents access to specific questions would have allowed for more specific questions concerning the different populations, Greek and non-Greek.

Chapter Seven: Recommendations

Based on my research findings, I have concluded there are several factors that contribute to Greek-affiliated students having an advantage in student government elections at the University of Mississippi. In order to mitigate some of these factors, to make the playing field more even and ASB more representative of the actual student population, I offer the following recommendations to the Associated Student Body, the student population, and University administration.

Associated Student Body

Based on my research, most of the current elected members of ASB found out about petitions through a peer. While this should be an encouraged form of communication, it limits the number of students who know about ASB petitions to those likely involved, or somewhat invested in ASB already. To address this limitation, ASB needs to extend its communication networks. This can be accomplished in a number of ways. First, ASB needs to expand its social media presence. The general population survey indicated that the majority of students hear about elections through social media. Currently, the ASB Instagram account, its primary form of mainstream media, has 3,736 followers. Even if each follower is a current UM undergraduate, only 22% of the undergraduate population follows the ASB Instagram. If ASB wants Instagram to be its main form of communication about petitions, it needs to drastically expand its number of followers, so that information can be disseminated to various groups. It could do that by

doing giveaways that require following the account as a prerequisite to enter or tabling outside the Ole Miss Student Union promoting students to follow the account while handing out free food items.

Second, ASB should make a point to contact each RSO on campus in order to spread awareness of ASB petitions. This can be done through email communication with each RSO contact, which can easily be found on the ForUM, a site that serves as the university's platform for RSOs. By doing this, ASB can reach out to various constituencies around campus in a purposeful manner.

Lastly, ASB should plan various events drawing attention to election season and petitions. Over the last few years, ASB has lacked events and information sessions concerning ASB elections. Information sessions should start early in the spring semester, so that those who have no knowledge of ASB have time to learn more about the organization, petitions, and campaigning. Information sessions can be successful in multiple ways. Not only would these sessions spread the word about ASB in general, but they could give students a grasp on how to campaign and the rules and regulations attached with campaigning. Information sessions should be broadcasted on social media and the ForUM, along with invitations sent to each RSO, so that as many constituencies are personally invited to attend as possible. These sessions could take place in a formal setting, such as a room in the Ole Miss Student Union, or in an informal setting, like tabling in front of the Union. Using varied techniques of communication will allow for more students to be reached, especially when it comes to tabling in front of the Union because that allows students who may not be involved in an RSO or aware of these sessions to still walk by and engage.

Next, while communication is important, there are other barriers that prevent students from running for elected positions, such as the campaign budget. A budget of \$750 requires an investment from those running the campaign. Most campaigns will spend a large portion of their campaign budget, especially in contested races that require more time and energy. While some students do get financial support from Greek houses or parents, there needs to be some way to help offset the cost of a campaign. ASB should have a pool of funds for candidates to use during the election cycle to give each candidate a stipend for their campaign. By doing this, candidates would still be able to have the same amount of resources, not harming the quality of their campaign, while relieving some of the financial burden. I believe that a fair amount of money to give to each candidate would be \$375, so that they would only be responsible for providing half of their overall campaign budget.

If this were not feasible, another option would be to create a fund for ASB elections with awards based on need. While some students may feel comfortable and are able to fund their own campaign through their own avenues, this would allow students who lack resources to still run and have a funding source, without making ASB pay a stipend to every candidate. Furthermore, ASB could buy signs from past candidates and keep these signs in their inventory. By doing so, once the number of signs needed is accumulated, ASB could provide a sign to every candidate, which would cover a large expense that normally every candidate will incur. While it is impossible to take away the social network Greek students have, grantings funds or providing signs would help alleviate expenses that all candidates face, which would be a fair and equitable way to help each candidate and expand accessibility to elections.

Student Population

While ASB has a vested interest and responsibility in making elections more accessible, the student body also needs to be more engaged for ASB's effort to make a substantial difference. When students who did not vote in the spring 2022 election were asked why they did not vote, many of them stated that they did not care about ASB. While I can understand the sentiment, voter apathy inherently hurts the system of democracy, especially in this case when certain groups are not being represented in a way that reflects the makeup of the university. In order for ASB to become more representative, students must engage themselves with ASB's social media platforms and posts to stay up to date with what is being done in ASB, when elections are happening, and so on. Without the student body's engagement, there will continue to be a lack of representation for all groups on campus.

Furthermore, to help other groups form strong social networks, which was often credited as an advantage to Greek life, non-Greek RSOs should create more opportunities for mixers and social events among groups. While this may not create the same kind of network formed among Greek members, this would allow non-Greek students from different parts of campus to meet other students they normally would not. Even though some members of these organizations will be members of Greek life, it would still provide the opportunity for both groups to meet more people they otherwise would not. This may be positive in different ways, including allowing students to expand their own social networks and promoting inclusion on campus.

University: Administration, Faculty, and Staff

Lastly, the University of Mississippi itself, campus administration, faculty, and staff, are needed to help close the gap between Greek and non-Greek students. University administration should allow ASB to send out campus-wide emails to advertise information sessions, petition due dates, and election day, in order to promote more engagement and inclusivity. Furthermore, faculty and staff can help promote these opportunities to their students who may be interested in student government. By doing so, mentors can encourage their students to run for elected offices, increasing the amount of representation from different parts of campus. All of these efforts would require the University and ASB to work more closely together when spreading the word.

Overall, these recommendations have to happen in tandem, as there needs to be accessibility, transparency, and inclusivity around campus for more students to run, and succeed when running, for student government at the University of Mississippi without being Greek affiliated.

Chapter Eight: Conclusion

Since its founding, the Associated Student Body has served as the University of Mississippi's student government. Separated into three branches, ASB handles the formation and enactment of different widespread initiatives, philanthropies, programs, and university elections. The election cycle is often a highly engaged and politicized event, as groups come together to form campaign teams. Over time, Greek life on campus has been accused of overrunning election season. Greek students have been charged with having an unfair advantage due to their social networks and funding at their disposal. On a campus that is almost half Greek, it is imperative to delve into this advantage to see how the gap between Greek and non-Greek students can be bridged.

The literature shows that there are many preconceived notions concerning Greek life, such as the overconsumption of alcohol and illicit substances, lower grades, and partying. While Routon and Walker's (2014) study shows that some of these stereotypes were proven to be over exaggerated, the belief in the power of the Greek social networks held true. Greek students tend to hold an ingroup favoritism towards themselves and other affiliated Greek organizations. In my research, I found many connections to the current body of literature.

Throughout my two surveys, one meant to understand how individuals in ASB got involved and the other to understand what influences the general student population when voting, I found that Greek students have identifiable advantages over non-Greek students during student government elections. The advantages I identified are the

following: increased involvement, ingroup favoritism, favoritism from other groups, and increased political ambition among women. Each of these impacts student government elections at the University of Mississippi and can contribute to the success Greek candidates have, currently holding around 80% of elected positions.

The advantage Greek students have may lead to a positive feedback loop, encouraging more Greek students to run due to the success of their peers. While students should not be discouraged from running based on their Greek affiliation, it is important to consider how representative ASB should be of the actual student population, rather than a large subsection of that population. Given this, ASB needs to do more to promote its visibility, specifically when it comes to communication networks. ASB's social media presence needs to grow to reach more students, they should make a concerted effort to reach out to each RSO on campus, and hold more information sessions concerning elections and campaign regulations. Lastly, they should work to decrease the barrier to entry caused by the election budget by offering a grant or a stipend.

While ASB has a vested interest in expanding its visibility, it is important for the student body to engage as well. Students must engage in ASB's platforms to stay up to date on ASB initiatives, important dates, and events. Furthermore, non-Greek RSOs should prioritize meet and greets with other RSOs, so that their students can expand their networks and interaction with other groups. This can work to expand the networks of non-Greek students as it is commonly noted how Greek students have much larger networks. Lastly, the University should give ASB the ability to send campus-wide emails themselves, so that all opportunities can be fairly broadcasted to everyone. Faculty and staff should also help disseminate information to their students concerning the student

government. Each of these recommendations is needed to bridge the gap between Greek and non-Greek students when it comes to student government elections.

While this research helped shed some light on a widely underdeveloped topic, further research should be done to fully understand the Greek advantage in student government elections, along with the other trends that were identified. First, further research is needed into the prevalence of Greek life in student government at the University of Mississippi to identify if this is a recent trend, or a trend that has been around for many years. Furthermore, it would be beneficial to interview sorority and fraternity members to understand the inner workings of their organizations when it comes to election season and campaigning. Specifically, this research could identify if these members are influenced or forced to vote, which would highlight a stark advantage Greek students might have.

On the other hand, more research should be conducted to identify how non-Greek students feel when running against Greek candidates. This would help identify ways in which they felt advantaged or disadvantaged, which could not be identified with this research. This research could provide information on how to prepare non-Greek students for running a campaign against Greek candidates. In addition, an interesting trend to research would be political ambition among women in ASB. While many senators are Greek women, in the history of ASB there have only been eight female Presidents. So, it would be interesting to delve into the political gender gap in the United States, compared to the University of Mississippi, and identify if Greek affiliation is a main reason for that difference.

When it comes to Greek affiliation around the country, there are often varying opinions and reputations. With schools like Alabama with underground organizations like The Machine, it is relevant to discuss the advantages Greek life provides students in student government elections. While there is no fault to the candidate for being involved and affiliated with a Greek organization, it is important to recognize if this advantage leads to a less representative student government and how that can be mitigated. In the end, being a member of a Greek organization myself and serving as student body president, I recognize the advantages my membership has given me and wish to see changes implemented to make ASB a more representative body of all students at the University of Mississippi. The Associated Student Body is an organization that should fairly represent all students and with the recognition of this privilege, substantive change can be made to make ASB for all, not for one.

List of References

- Fraternity & Sorority Life. (2020). About Us. Retrieved April 13, 2022, from <https://greeks.olemiss.edu/about-us/>
- Associated Student Body. (2022.). Retrieved April 13, 2022, from <https://olemissasb.org/>
- Barnes, T. D., & Holman, M. R. (2019). Taking diverse backgrounds into account in studies of political ambition and representation. *Politics, Groups, and Identities*, 7(4), 829–841. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21565503.2018.1532916>
- Bevis, L. (2018). Opinion: it's all greek to me: greek advantages in campus elections. *The Daily Mississippian*. <https://thedmonline.com/opinion-its-all-greek-to-me/>
- Byer, J. L. (1998). *Fraternity members' perceptions of how involvement in a fraternity and involvement in student government has influenced their college experiences*. <https://go.exlibris.link/4KJXbmG5>
- Cage, M. C. (1993). Student government at U. of Alabama remains in limbo. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, 40(7), A38.
- Carnes, N. & Lupu, N. (2022). Are there social class gaps in nascent political ambition? Survey evidence from the Americas'. https://noamlupu.com/Carnes_Lupu_ambition.pdf
- Corts, D. & Wells, B. (2008). Measuring attitudes towards sorority and fraternity members: indication of implicit, ingroup favoritism. *College Student Journal*. 42. 842-846.
- Fox, R., Lawless, J. (2013). Girls just wanna not run: the gender gap in young Americans' political ambition. *School of Public Affairs, American University*.

- Hevel, M. S., Martin, G. L., & Pascarella, E. T. (2014). Do fraternities and sororities still enhance socially responsible leadership? Evidence from the fourth year of college. *Journal of Student Affairs Research and Practice, 51*(3), 233–245.
<https://doi.org/10.1515/jsarp-2014-0025>
- Hope, I. (2021). How does the machine survive at UA? *The Crimson White*. Retrieved April 13, 2022, from
<https://cw.ua.edu/84866/news/how-does-the-machine-survive-at-ua/>
- Hydrisko, J. (2021). Opinion: the case against ASB.” *The Daily Mississippian*.
<https://thedmonline.com/opinion-the-case-against-asb/>
- Jobin, A. (2022). Opinion: SGA elections disappoint yet again. *The Crimson White*. Retrieved April 13, 2022, from
<https://cw.ua.edu/97221/opinion/opinion-sga-elections-disappoint-yet-again/>
- Neundor, A., Smets, K. (2017). Political socialization and the making of citizens. *Oxford University Press*. DOI: 10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199935307.013.98
- O’Connor, C. (2018). The impact of greek affiliation on student involvement patterns. (Publication No. 10977977) [Doctoral dissertation, University of North Carolina at Greensboro]. *ProQuest Dissertations Publishing*.
- Pike, G. R. (2000). The influence of fraternity or sorority membership on students’ college experiences and cognitive development. *Research in Higher Education, 41*(1), 117–139. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40196391>
- Routon, P. W., & Walker, J. K. (2014). The impact of greek organization membership on collegiate outcomes: evidence from a national survey. *Journal of Behavioral and*

Experimental Economics, 49 (Journal Article), 63–70.

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socec.2014.02.003>

Salinas, C., Gillon, K. E., & Camacho, T. (2019). Reproduction of oppression through fraternity and sorority recruitment and socialization: reproduction of oppression through fraternity. *New Directions for Student Services*, 2019(165), 29–38.

<https://doi.org/10.1002/ss.20291>

Sansing, David (1999). *The University of Mississippi: A Sesquicentennial History*. University Press of Mississippi. ISBN 9781578060917.

The University of Mississippi 2021-2022 Mini Fact Book. Institutional Research, Effectiveness, and Planning.

https://irep.olemiss.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/98/2022/02/Mini-Fact-Book-in-Excel_2021-2022.pdf

The University of Mississippi 2022-2023 Mini Fact Book. Institutional Research, Effectiveness, and Planning.

https://irep.olemiss.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/98/2023/02/Mini-Fact-Book-in-Excel_2022-2023.pdf

Why Historically-White Sororities and Fraternities are Racially Problematic in US

Universities. (2021). Royal Historical Society.

<https://blog.royalhistoc.org/2021/07/28/why-historically-white-sororities-and-fraternities-are-racially-problematic-in-us-universities/>

Appendix A

Survey Questions for Current ASB Senators and Executive Members

1. Are you eighteen years of age or older?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
2. Year Classification?
 - a. Freshman
 - b. Sophomore
 - c. Junior
 - d. Senior
3. Which of the following best describes you?
 - a. Asian or Pacific Islander
 - b. Black or African American
 - c. Hispanic or Latino
 - d. Native American or Alaskan Native
 - e. White or Caucasian
 - f. Multiracial or Biracial
 - g. A race/ethnicity not listed here
4. ASB Position?
 - a. ASB Senator
 - b. ASB Executive Member
5. Gender Classification
 - a. Male
 - b. Female
 - c. Non-binary/third gender
 - d. Prefer not to say
6. Are you a member of any of these councils?
 - a. Interfraternity Council (IFC)
 - i. Alpha Tau Omega
 - ii. Beta Theta Phi
 - iii. Chi Psi
 - iv. Delta Kappa Epsilon
 - v. Delta Psi
 - vi. Delta Tau Delta
 - vii. Kappa Alpha Order
 - viii. Kappa Sigma
 - ix. Phi Delta Theta
 - x. Phi Kappa Psi
 - xi. Phi Kappa Tau
 - xii. Pi Kappa Phi

- xiii. Sigma Alpha Epsilon
 - xiv. Sigma Chi
 - xv. Sigma Nu
 - xvi. Sigma Pi
 - b. National Pan-Hellenic Council (NPHC)
 - i. National Pan-Hellenic Council
 - ii. Alpha Kappa Alpha
 - iii. Alpha Phi Alpha
 - iv. Delta Sigma Theta
 - v. Omega Psi Phi
 - vi. Sigma Gamma Rho
 - c. Panhellenic Council
 - i. Alpha Delta Pi
 - ii. Alpha Omicron Pi
 - iii. Alpha Pi
 - iv. Chi Omega
 - v. Delta Delta Delta
 - vi. Delta Gamma
 - vii. Kappa Delta
 - viii. Kappa Kappa Gamma
 - ix. Phi Mu
 - x. Pi Beta Phi
 - d. No
7. Years of Involvement in ASB (including FYE, other departments, etc.)?
- a. One year
 - b. Two years
 - c. Three years
 - d. Four years
8. How did you find out about the Associated Student Body?
- a. Orientation/Involvement Fairs
 - b. Social Media
 - c. Class (EDHE)
 - d. Teacher/Mentor
 - e. Peer
 - f. Another Registered Student Organization (RSO)
 - g. Other
9. How did you find out about receiving an ASB petition to run for your current position?
- a. Orientation/Involvement Fairs
 - b. Social Media

- c. Class (EDHE)
 - d. Teacher/Mentor
 - e. Peer
 - f. Another Registered Student Organization (RSO)
 - i. If so, who?
 - g. Other
 - i. If so, who?
10. Were you approached about running for an ASB position?
- a. Yes
 - b. No
11. If yes, who approached you about running?
- a. A friend
 - b. A family member
 - c. A mentor
 - d. A member of a Registered Student Organization
12. Who ran your campaign?
- a. You ran it yourself
 - b. You and a campaign manager ran it
 - c. You, a campaign manager, and core team
13. If you had a campaign manager or core team, how did you choose who would run your campaign?
14. How did you fund your campaign?
- a. You funded it yourself
 - b. Your parents funded it
 - c. Support from another RSO (Greek, etc.)
 - d. Other
15. If your campaign was funded from the support of another RSO, please specify.

Appendix B

Survey Questions for General Population

1. Are you eighteen years of age or older?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
2. Year Classification?
 - a. Freshman
 - b. Sophomore
 - c. Junior
 - d. Senior
3. Which of the following best describes you?
 - a. Asian or Pacific Islander
 - b. Black or African American
 - c. Hispanic or Latino
 - d. Native American or Alaskan Native
 - e. White or Caucasian
 - f. Multiracial or Biracial
 - g. A race/ethnicity not listed here
4. Gender Classification
 - a. Male
 - b. Female
 - c. Non-binary/third gender
 - d. Prefer not to say
5. Are you a member of any of these councils?
 - a. Interfraternity Council (IFC)
 - i. Alpha Tau Omega
 - ii. Beta Theta Phi
 - iii. Chi Psi
 - iv. Delta Kappa Epsilon
 - v. Delta Psi
 - vi. Delta Tau Delta
 - vii. Kappa Alpha Order
 - viii. Kappa Sigma
 - ix. Phi Delta Theta
 - x. Phi Kappa Psi
 - xi. Phi Kappa Tau
 - xii. Pi Kappa Phi
 - xiii. Sigma Alpha Epsilon
 - xiv. Sigma Chi
 - xv. Sigma Nu

- xvi. Sigma Pi
 - b. National Pan-Hellenic Council (NPHC)
 - i. National Pan-Hellenic Council
 - ii. Alpha Kappa Alpha
 - iii. Alpha Phi Alpha
 - iv. Delta Sigma Theta
 - v. Omega Psi Phi
 - vi. Sigma Gamma Rho
 - c. Panhellenic Council
 - i. Alpha Delta Pi
 - ii. Alpha Omicron Pi
 - iii. Alpha Pi
 - iv. Chi Omega
 - v. Delta Delta Delta
 - vi. Delta Gamma
 - vii. Kappa Delta
 - viii. Kappa Kappa Gamma
 - ix. Phi Mu
 - x. Pi Beta Phi
 - d. No
6. Did you vote in last year's Spring 2022 ASB election?
- a. Yes
 - b. No
7. If yes, why did you vote in the election?
- a. I am interested in ASB/SAF (Student Activity Fee)
 - b. I had a friend running
 - c. I saw the email with the link to vote
 - d. I saw a yard sign with the QR Code on campus
 - e. I am in a Registered Student Organization (RSO) that reminded me to vote
 - f. Someone texted me the link
 - g. Other
8. If not, why did you not vote in the election?
- a. I do not care about ASB elections
 - b. I did not know about ASB elections
 - c. I forgot to vote the day of ASB elections
 - d. I did not get around to voting on the day of ASB elections
 - e. Other
9. How did you hear about the Spring ASB 2022 Election?
- a. I saw people post about it on social media (Instagram, Facebook, etc.)
 - b. I was added to a campaign Groupme

- c. I saw candidates in front of the Ole Miss Student Union
 - d. I was told about it at a Registered Student Organization meeting
 - i. If so, which RSO.
 - e. Other
10. What were your primary drivers behind your choice for who to vote for?
- a. If they were in your sorority/fraternity
 - b. If they were in the Greek community
 - c. If they were in a RSO (non-Greek) that you are/were in
 - d. If they were a close friend
 - e. If they had a strong platform
 - f. If they had a strong personality/social media presence
11. If you voted in the election or are a member of a Greek organization, did your membership in that organization play into your choice to vote in the election?
- a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. Maybe
12. If yes or maybe, please explain how.