1. Fraternity and sorority members of the Multicultural Greek Council gather on sorority row after the Annual Greek canned food drive. Since 2007, more than 30,000 pounds of food has been collected in partnership with local philanthropies.

2. Members of Kappa Kappa Gamma sorority pose in their famous “Kappa Picker” overalls. The Kappa Pickers song and dance troupe performs at Greek events across campus.

3. During the semiannual Interfraternity Council Bid House celebration, which concludes the end of formal recruitment, members of Sigma Phi Epsilon are excited to offer their newest pledges invitations to join their fraternity. Sigma Phi Epsilon was the first Greek organization to colonize at Texas A&M in 1973.

4. Brittany Burns ’12 and Crissa Woodruff ’11 of Chi Omega served as the Panhellenic delegates for their sorority. Each of the 12 Collegiate Panhellenic Council sororities nominates two women annually to serve as liaisons between the council, potential new members and active members. Photo by Michael Smith

5. After receiving invitations to join a sorority, women gather during Bid Day at their respective houses to celebrate. Pictured are members of Kappa Alpha Theta in 1981.

After five long days of formal recruitment, The Association of Former Students hosted Bid Day 2010 on the Haymes Ring Plaza, where hundreds of potential new sorority members waited to receive their “bids” to join various Collegiate Panhellenic Council-governed chapters.
Texas A&M University prides itself on being an institution unlike any other, and an important part of that uniqueness is “the other education”—the more than 800 student organizations that provide virtually unlimited opportunities to get involved and learn leadership skills. Over the past four decades, tens of thousands of Aggies have sought these opportunities through the A&M’s fraternities and sororities, a system of organizations collectively known as Greek Life.

The numbers speak for themselves. Membership in Greek organizations is holding at about 12 percent of the A&M student body. The number of Aggie Greek alumni now tops 25,000. And as befits A&M’s unique history and culture, the Greek system at A&M is unlike those at other educational institutions. They are not just Greeks; they are Aggie Greeks.

A&M’s fraternities and sororities are visible on campus and integrated into the University in a way that was once unimaginable. That integration came about through the hard work of hundreds of leadership-minded Aggies who took the initiative to bring values-based, national Greek organizations to campus.

**Building Leaders Of Character**

In the late 1960s, Texas A&M experienced fundamental changes to its culture and traditions. Membership in the Corps of Cadets became optional, and women were allowed full admission. The first female Aggies encountered a collegiate experience quite different from those at historically co-ed institutions.

“Women who attended A&M at that time were real trailblazers, true leaders,” said Greek Life Director and Pi Beta Phi alumnus Ann Goodman, who has spent more than 23 years working to make Greek Life at Texas A&M flourish. “The women at that time sought to create a niche, a place they could call home.”

These trailblazers quickly discovered that Texas A&M at that time offered virtually no formal organizations specifically for women, and many felt as though they were left to make connections and build networks on their own. A group of about 50 local women who had had Greek experiences at other universities sought to address that need by bringing a handful of nationally anchored Greek sororities to the male-dominated campus of Texas A&M, providing opportunities for Aggie women to get involved. With their help, nine off-campus sororities had been chartered by 1975.

The next step for these sorority women was to seek housing and meeting space, similar to “sorority rows” at other universities. In 1978, three chapters applied for and eventually received construction permits from the College Station Planning and Zoning Commission. They planned a “Greek village,” complete with Greek-themed street names such as Athens Drive and Olympia Way. A plot was eventually staked.

The Association of Former Students hosts the Aggie Greek Weekend Reunion at the Clayton W. Williams Jr. Alumni Center, giving former and current Aggie Greeks a chance to network and reconnect.
out, and today Bryan-College Station is home to 12 sorority houses. The sorority women of A&M had gained a place to meet and call home.

But Aggie women weren’t the only ones seeking interaction and involvement opportunities outside the Corps of Cadets. Many young non-reg males also wanted similar opportunities. Scott Kleberg ‘80, a founding father of Phi Gamma Delta and today a board member for The Association of Former Students, attributes the formation of his fraternity to a desire to exercise leadership skills among his pledge brothers. “It was the first time that there was something to be involved in, other than the Corps, for young men. A real group for us to lead, all on our own,” he said. “When we first got together as a group, there weren’t very many of us, so learning how to apply people’s specific skillsets to certain leadership positions in the fraternity was vital to its success. We got together, looked around at everybody and asked, ‘Who’s going to do what?’”

At this time, the A&M fraternity and sorority chapters had little formal relationship to the University hierarchy. Meetings took place off campus, membership pushes were strictly through word of mouth, and the student leaders were self-starters with minimal support from administration. Even so, membership skyrocketed.

Seeking Respect And Recognition

A&M’s small Greek community grew to an estimated 2,000 students by the early 1980s, paralleling the growth of the entire student body to more than 20,000. But not all Aggies reacted with enthusiasm to the success of the various Greek organizations on campus.

A dominant issue was whether these fraternal organizations should be recognized as official student organizations. Fraternities, lacking the sororities’ housing and meeting spaces, were more eager for that to happen; they sought formal recognition in order to be able to use campus meeting places, to advertise on campus and to get cheaper rates for advertisements in the student newspaper, The Battalion. Sororities were less enthusiastic about formal recognition, unsure about giving up ultimate financial oversight to the A&M’s Student Finance Center.

“When I joined Alpha Delta Pi, it was fall of 1984 and sororities were already well-established,” said Jennifer Lindsay ‘88, a member of The Association of Former Students Board of Directors. “They had been around for nearly 10 years and had a ‘sorority row’ of houses to live and meet in. There wasn’t quite the negative vibe toward us that surrounded the fraternities. The University was incredibly accepting of women at that time and wanted them to have a place to get involved, whereas the main activity for men was the Corps of Cadets.”

She recalled the slogan on a popular T-shirt seen all over campus: “Rent a Friend, Join a Frat.”

The same year of Lindsay’s sorority initiation, other nontraditional student organizations were struggling to gain official recognition on campus. Favorable court rulings emboldened fraternity leaders who hopefully and enthusiastically sought formal recognition as well. In 1985, the National Pan-Hellenic Council—an organization of traditionally black fraternities—applied for and received recognition. The Interfraternity Council was recognized in 1987, followed in 1991 by the Collegiate Panhellenic Council, the governing body for sororities.

The fight for formal recognition and then for acceptance on campus was itself a lesson in leadership. Kleberg noted that his fraternity was one of the first to have members who participated in both Greek Life and the Corps of Cadets. “I’m sure they
probably caught some flak for doing both, but they learned to be above it. We just have to remember that we are Aggies first; then cadets or fraternity brothers or whatever else.”

**Service And Excellence**

Like Aggies in other campus organizations, the members of A&M’s Greek community strive for excellence in all endeavors. “The drive to be excellent in all things comes from a desire to represent your chapter, Texas A&M and, most importantly, to represent yourself well,” Lindsay said.

Today, most Aggie Greeks are involved in service organizations outside of their fraternity or sorority. Many leadership positions in influential student organizations, including Student Government, Muster Committee, Big Event and Carpool, have been or are now held by students who also made the decision to “Go Greek!” Most chapters require involvement in supplementary student organizations as a prerequisite to participating in chapter events.

While balancing commitments in and outside their chapter, Aggie Greeks also must focus on academics. “We are proud that the all-Greek GPR is on par with the all-student GPR,” holding annually at right under a 3.0, said Nick Zuniga ’09, an alumnus of Lambda Chi Alpha and now assistant director in A&M’s Office of Greek Life. Mandatory study hours and minimum GPR requirements are nothing new for Aggie Greeks, who must meet their chapter’s academic goals in order to remain active.

The members of A&M’s fraternities and sororities are also expected to demonstrate the core Aggie value of selfless service. Each year, A&M’s Greek community gives thousands of dollars and thousands of hours of service to philanthropy, often to a specific charity that is also supported nationwide by other chapters of that fraternity or sorority. “Each of us, as a chapter, has a unique philanthropic connection point, and for Alpha Delta Pi, it’s the Ronald McDonald house,” Lindsay said. “So there’s this connection with such a great philanthropy that I wouldn’t necessarily have chosen to contribute to on my own. But because of the ties back to my chapter and sisters nationwide, I have a real affinity for it.” Greek chapters at Texas A&M support a wide range of charities, from St. Jude Children’s Research Hospital and The Make-A-Wish Foundation to The Children’s Museum of the Brazos Valley and The Barbara Bush Parent Center.

The 56 chapters that make up A&M’s Greek community also serve together as one. “I think the best example of a service event Greek Life puts on, as a whole,” Zuniga said, “is the annual Aggie Greek Service Trip,” when more than 100 Aggie Greeks spend their spring break partnering with service organizations across the country and giving back to communities in need. In 2011 and previous years, the group has traveled to coastal areas in Texas, helping to rebuild communities affected by hurricanes Katrina and Rita.

Logan Campbell ’10, an alumnus of the Kappa Alpha Order and two-year leader of the Aggie Greek Service Trip alongside Brian Smith ’10 of Phi Gamma Delta, says that it was their fraternities that gave them the skills necessary to serve selflessly. “They taught us about leadership, academics, and giving back to the community,” he said. “Those core values were instilled in me when I was growing up and reaffirmed through Greek Life.”

**Loyalty To Fraternity, Friends And Alma Mater**

Through academics, selfless service and constantly striving to be better, Aggie Greeks have developed undeniably strong ties to the University.

“I think the Greek experience is and continues to be a phenomenal opportunity for students to engage in, as our Greek community is setting a cohesive vision for what we want to look like, five years, 10 years from now,” Goodman said. “Current students are thankful for the support they are getting from Greek former students, but are craving more, as we are beginning to implement formal programs that connect the current and former.”

And now A&M is experiencing its first wave of second-generation Aggie Greeks: new students attending A&M whose parents and relatives were also Aggie Greeks. “For example, part of my daughter’s decision to go Greek at A&M was because she knew my experience in a fraternal organization was positive,” said Miles Marks ’79, president of the 12th Man Foundation and a member of Beta Theta Pi. “But what was really special was getting to watch her have just as great of a time with it as I did,” he said. This developing legacy within the Greek system promotes a stronger sentiment toward Texas A&M, lending to a greater duty for current students to give back to their alma mater.

In 2010, many Aggies came together for the first Aggie Greek Weekend, an Association-hosted reunion of former students who participated in the Greek system. A key driver behind the reunion was Shelley Potter ’78, an Aggie Chi Omega charter member and the 2009 chair of The Association’s Board of Directors. The Greek reunion is intended to be an annual event, with The Association providing a place for former and current Aggie Greeks to gather, reminisce and enjoy the successes of the Aggie Greek system. The Association also provides another avenue for Greek former students to reconnect through the Greek Former Student Network, headed up by Will Oliver ’91, Sigma Phi Epsilon alumni.

Many former students agree that their positive fraternal experience inspires them to stay connected and give back to Texas A&M. “It was a support group to survive the onslaught that is a freshman year at Texas A&M, and many of my brothers still support me in my endeavors today,” said Kamal Aarris ’83, a founding father of Beta Theta Pi and a board member at The Association. “It was a fantastic experience due in part by the networking and bonding with my brothers. It is a life loyal experience, not just a college one.”

Goodman said Greek Life adds a richness to the Aggie experience as a whole. “When you get to be a member of something that’s bigger than yourself…that’s pretty special.”

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