
MIZZOU

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[Home](#) » [Winter 2011](#) » [Around the Columns](#) » [It's a banner year for fraternity academics](#)

Around the Columns

It's a banner year for fraternity academics

John Dean is not going to mince words: As a group, Mizzou's fraternities turn in a grade point average (2.99) that's below the overall campus average (3.043). Dean, a retired businessman and Delta Tau Delta member who graduated from Syracuse University in 1959, thinks average is for other people, and fraternities ought to be a cut above. The Columbia man is working to pump up their GPA trend line by leading the MU Fraternity Alumni Consortium's Academic Achievement Initiative. The consortium also looks at other issues fraternities face, including recruitment, behavior, housing, Homecoming and Greek Week. The academic initiative has several parts:

- Each fraternity has a faculty or staff adviser who helps students troubleshoot problems, such as taking courses that are too difficult or are ill-fitted for a student's strengths, or indulging in too many distractions from study.
- Jim Spain, vice provost for undergraduate studies, created a course for fraternity freshmen that helps them adapt to college-level work.
- Many houses have big-brother systems, in which upperclassmen help younger students who might be struggling.
- Awarding banners to fraternities that reach campus average GPA levels. The achievement banners have become a high-profile honor among Greek houses.

Dean says strong academic performance helps assure that fraternities can keep their charters and remain in their campus homes, an option with both nostalgic and financial implications. The houses generally are owned and operated by corporations made of alumni that rent to students. "If a chapter loses its charter and the guys have to move off campus," Dean says, "the corporation can be stuck with a big mortgage and no renters." The program is already paying off, Dean says. In fall 2009, there were eight banners flying in Greektown. In spring 2010, there were 14.

[More 2011 Around the Columns](#) »

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