

opinion

The lack of sorority houses at Ashland Unviersity

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In case you have not noticed, Ashland University’s campus has three fraternity houses and zero sorority houses. The sororities on campus each have a “suite” in a wing of Clark, an all female dorm building.

While the suites are nicely kept, they are extremely small compared to the fraternity houses on campus. There are only six bedrooms in each suite, along with a dining and living space. This makes it impossible for every member to have the option of living in their sorority’s suite. The sorority members are paying dues for their chapter, yet don’t even have an equal chance of living in the space designed for it.

On the other hand, the Kappa Sigma house has about 16 regular bedrooms, the Phi Delta Theta house has about 18 and the Phi Kappa Psi house has 17. There is even more space in these houses outside of that and this does not include president suites or single rooms. This means that about 12 members of a given sorority can live in their suite and over 30 members of a given fraternity can live in their house.

The reason for the inequality in Fraternity and Sorority Life (FSL) housing could stem from a variety of places. Maybe it is zoning laws in the city of Ashland, or maybe the university does not have the means to expand at this time.

Whatever the reason may be, AU does not have sorority houses for their students to live, work and hang out in like they do for a majority of the fraternities. This is a change that would make things more equal for female FSL students and inspire unity between members of the chapters. Having houses on campus may even push non-FSL members or incoming freshman to join a sorority.

It is understandable if zoning laws are why sorority houses are not available at AU, this simply means there is no room to provide this type of accomodation. However, if it is a matter of laws pertaining to brothels, there is presumably a way around this if other campuses in the state of Ohio have houses. If it comes down to being a university matter alone, this should be looked into because there is certainly a housing inequality that could be addressed for the coming generations of students.

Sorority houses and Ohio law

When first joining a sorority here at Ashland, it is understandable to question why there are fraternity houses but no sorority houses. When answered, most sorority members on campus will tell you what they have been told: here at Ashland there are no sorority houses because they consider them to be brothels. It is believed that there is an Ohio state law stating that it is illegal for five or more women to live together in a house unless it is leased as a brothel. The question is whether or not this is true.

This misogynistic law is in fact a myth! People have been told and assumed that is the reasoning behind the lack of sorority houses here on campus. Any prosecutor or even the mayor of Ashland himself will tell you that this law is fake. After tirelessly trying to find anything that resembled such a law anywhere online or in state law records, it was ultimately determined that this law did not exist.

While this is good news for women realizing they have the freedom to live where they please, it does not answer the question as to why the university does not clarify that there is no mysterious brothel law. It almost gives off the impression that the school simply uses it as an excuse to avoid addressing the lack of sorority houses on campus.

This also comes in to play with federal civil law, Title IX. Title IX was set in place to protect against and prevent sex-based discrimination in educational programs such as universities. By denying sororities the right to a house for their institution and granting fraternities that very right, it is almost safe to say that AU is not

protecting against a fabled brothel law, but rather breaking the very much present federal law that is Title IX.

AU should have sorority houses

When it comes down to it, it would only be fair for AU to implement sorority houses. While the suites are very nice and provide a place for girls to live and hang out, it is not like having a house. With equality being a hot topic in 2020 and previous years, equality among men and women on campus is crucial.

It is understandable that there could be space issues and zoning laws that prevent houses for sororities being built, but there should be a push to work around this. FSL on AU’s campus is different than at other schools: there is more of a community here and there is never a horror story like you may hear from other institutions.

If the FSL community at Ashland has proved itself responsible and one that can work cohesively between chapters and inspire unity, there is no reason that this should not be explored. The fraternities are trusted to keep their own houses and they have held that right on campus for years.

One of the sororities on campus, Alpha Delta Pi, has had the highest GPA on campus for FSL for 21 consecutive semesters. Not that GPA determines everything, but their academic performance should be considered when deciding who



SUBMITTED BY JARED METZ
The Phi Kappa Psi house in Fraternity Circle.

is to be trusted with houses.

Part of any sorority is becoming closer with the sisters in it. Living in the same space as your sisters and having to work together to take care of that space is a way to inspire further unity within chapters and grow closer to other members you would not see as much of otherwise.

Sorority members often would not see one another much throughout the week between all of the things that pull people in separate directions. Chapter meetings are a time when sisters get to see one another, but that is within the parameters of a meeting time. As for the rest of the week, it is harder to get together. Sharing a house with upwards of 30 sisters would allow for growth in unity and give more opportunities for sisters to spend time with one another.

Along with that, there has even been a house given to different groups that are not in the FSL community. While this is a wonderful opportunity for the students granted access to living there, they were still given the opportunity to have a house before the sororities on campus were. If other organizations are being given a house, certainly it could be looked into for sororities.

Sororities are a long standing organization at the university, and if new organizations are going to be given the chance to live in a house, it is only fair to extend this opportunity to sororities as well.

Living in a house, even though it is alongside other people, also helps teach valuable life skills



SUBMITTED BY MACKENZIE GRAY
The Alpha Phi suite on the fifth floor of Clark Hall.

that college is supposed to educate its students on. Being in the classroom and learning about their desired field is the main reason students come to college. However, with that they are getting the experience of being away from home which is arguably just as useful.

Students get that experience from being in the dorms, but living in a house adds a whole new level of responsibility that is practical for the future. Living in a house now would teach responsibility of taking care of a large living space such as the one they will have later in life. It also lets students see how they live with others and in an environment outside of a dorm that can act as a stepping stone to independent and communal living in their own households one day.

Having sorority houses on campus would not become a stereotypical movie scene full of partying. In fact, the FSL community has proved itself to be a rather responsible one and adding houses would only make them more responsible and prepared for the life ahead of them.

AU vs. other schools around Ohio

It would perhaps make sense to think the reason that there are no sorority houses is because of the size of the campus itself. Some smaller schools do not have the same sort of large sorority houses that you may find on a campus such as Ohio State University or Kent State. However, this is not always the case.

In an Instagram poll, college students were asked to provide information about whether or not their campuses had sorority houses and where they went to school. Responses came in from a variety of schools in differing sizes, but even schools smaller than AU reported having sorority housing for their chapters.

Schools such as Otterbein University in Westerville, OH and Wittenberg University in Springfield, OH are reported to have sorority housing and they are smaller schools than AU. On the reverse side, smaller universities in Ohio such as Capital, Cedarville and Bluffton report having no sorority houses on their campuses, either.

That is not to say that just because a school is

larger they automatically have sorority housing. Miami University of Ohio has sorority dorms similar to what AU provides for their chapters. Miami is of similar size to the University of Akron, University of Toledo, Ohio State and Kent State which all reported having houses.

Some schools have come up with ways to meet in the middle on the sorority housing issue. Denison University reported having sorority houses, but they are solely places for sisters to hang out together as they are not allowed to take residence in them. At Ohio Northern University, there is one sorority house but it is off campus grounds. If a student there wants to live on campus with their sorority, it is the same as AU with on-campus sorority dorms.

The general consensus from the poll was that some schools do have sorority houses, even with the laws. However, the amount of campuses that do not outweigh the ones that do and even if they have housing, it is not equal between men and women. The University of Akron has sorority houses, but not as many as they have fraternity houses.

By taking a poll of college students from around the state, it helps to understand that the trend at Ashland is not completely normal. The campuses that lack sorority houses are most often on smaller campuses than AU. This is a medium-sized campus, and so there is a medium-sized student body. For this reason, it is worth looking into sorority houses in order to keep up with other institutions that provide this opportunity.

This hoax law and idea of prohibition of sorority houses does not only affect college students, but also the living situation of women in general. It is unfair that women are being denied this right.

The year is 2020 and women should not have to be dealing with this type of discrimination, especially in college where freedom and equal opportunity should be encouraged and celebrated.

Change will not be immediate, as this kind of project would take time, but on the whole, it would be worth looking into for future generations of the FSL community at Ashland.



SUBMITTED BY RAEAGAN SCHAFER
The Theta Phi Alpha suite on the fourth floor of Clark Hall.

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