



## Inside Greek U.: Fraternities, Sororities, and the Pursuit of Pleasure, Power, and Prestige

By Alan D. DeSantis

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Popular culture portrays college Greek organizations as a training ground for malevolent young aristocrats. Films such as *Animal House*, *Revenge of the Nerds*, *Old School*, and *Legally Blonde* reinforce this stereotype, but they fail to depict the enduring influence of these organizations on their members. *Inside Greek U.* provides an in-depth investigation of how fraternities and sororities bolster traditional, and potentially damaging, definitions of gender and sexuality. Using evidence gathered in hundreds of focus group sessions and personal interviews, as well as his years of experience as a faculty advisor to Greek organizations, Alan D. DeSantis offers unprecedented access to the world of fraternities and sororities. DeSantis, himself once a member of a fraternity, shows the profoundly limited gender roles available to Greeks: "real men" are taught to be unemotional, sexually promiscuous, and violent; "nice girls," to be nurturing, domestic, and pure. These rigid formulations often lead to destructive attitudes and behaviors, such as eating disorders, date rape, sexual misconduct, and homophobia. *Inside Greek U.* shows that the Greek experience does not end on graduation day, but that these narrow definitions of gender and sexuality impede students' intellectual and emotional development and limit their range of choices long after graduation. Ten percent of all college students join a Greek organization, and many of the nation's business and political leaders are former members. DeSantis acknowledges that thousands of students join Greek organizations each year in search of meaning, acceptance, friendship, and engagement, and he illuminates the pressures and challenges that contemporary college students face. *Inside Greek U.* demonstrates how deeply Greek organizations influence their members and suggests how, with reform the worst excesses of the system, fraternities and sororities could serve as a positive influence on individuals and campus life.

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### Editorial Review

#### Review

"This book is unique, provocative, and troubling, and it will stimulate quite a bit of conversation. It is a snapshot of four important years in the lives of those who may one day become the business, political, and legal leaders of our nation."?Cindy Griffin, *author of Feminist Rhetorical Theories*

"The strengths of this work lie in the careful presentation of the students' words, actions, and feelings, as well as the link DeSantis makes to the sheer presence of Greeks in today's business, political, and legal systems."?Cindy Griffin, *author of Invitation to Public Speaking*

"This book provides a vivid description of gender templates for identity and associated behavior in the Greek System of a University."?Peggy Reeves Sanday, *author of Fraternity Gang Rape: Sex, Brotherhood, and Privi*

"Alan DeSantis has uncovered behavior that adds to the growing evidence of troubling flaws in the American understanding of masculinity and the concomitant injustices associated with the performance of masculinity/femininity in elitist fraternity/sorority settings."?Peggy Reeves Sanday, *author of Fraternity Gang Rape: Sex, Brotherhood, and Privi*

"No other book treats the Greek system as fully as Inside Greek U . It is at once critical and sympathetic, showing an unparalleled understanding of perspectives of the young men and women in the Greek system."?Scott F. Kiesling, *co-editor of Intercultural Discourse and Communication: The E*

""[DeSantis'] book is . . . a clear and mostly readable overview that winds up with surprising conclusion that fraternities and sororities aren't so bad after all."?"New York Times

"Many books on the subject tend to fall into sensational, expose territory, but DeSantis' takes a more thoughtful, academically critical view, examining how gender roles and behaviors in particular affect and influence young men and women. It provides practical suggestions at all levels of academia to improve Greek organizations and minimize the harm they cause. A system that wields this much power needs greater scrutiny and understanding, and DeSantis is qualified to provide it – he possesses an insider's knowledge and access, and as an academic, he understands how the messages cultivated and promoted by the Greek system filter into society at large, and how our culture internalizes and reinforces those messages."?Candice Jackson, *Lexington Herald-Leader*

""Always respectful of his participants, DeSantis produces a sympathetic work that seeks to help future members of Greek organizations to critique and avoid the often harmful gender ideals that fraternities and sororities can perpetuate. This book should be required reading for college students thinking about pledging a fraternity or a sorority."?"Library Journal

""DeSantis draws upon his 25 years of experience with Greeks and argues that reforming fraternities and sororities is both possible and necessary. He delivers an account guaranteed to raise eyebrows and spark conversations in fraternity and sorority houses, as well as administration buildings across the country."?"Kentucky Alumni

"The book was a good read. Those not familiar with Greek life or the issues presented may find the book

helpful."?David S. Williams II, *Journal of College Student Development*

"This is powerful information, and for lawyers who interface with the Greek system, either as university counsel or as an attorney prosecuting or defending a particular house or member, DeSantis's book is sure to become "must reading." But even those not so employed will find it engaging and though provoking."?Robert M. Jarvis, *Journal of Law and Education*

#### About the Author

Alan D. DeSantis is professor of communications at the University of Kentucky. He has published numerous journal articles in publications such as *Health Communication*, the *International Journal of Refugee Studies*, and the *Journal of Communication and Religion*.

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