

Why I Bought In.. and Why You Should, Too

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I am often asked why I continue to do all of this “fraternity stuff” and I am very honest in my response by stating, I bought in when they told me it was a lifetime commitment. I know that sounds very real, but it is. Looking back through the years, I know that my decision to join FarmHouse Fraternity has been the catalyst to just about everything that has happened in my life to date.

My story is like so many others, it is not like I went to college to work in higher education, and certainly not to work with fraternities and sororities. I do not even remember knowing what a fraternity was before I went to college. However, I joined, got involved, totally bought in to the lifestyle and made a professional commitment to helping others have the same opportunities.

My first “Greek Life” job was during the summer of my junior year. I worked for the Panhellenic Association running their computer system for sorority recruitment. Yes, that is right, my employers were the actual Panhellenic officers who were also many of my best friends. That led to a student assistantship in the Dean of Students Office, which led to enrollment in the Educational Psychology Master’s Program after graduation and, finally, to the profession of higher education.

When I look back it is very evident that all of this started with a decision I made my sophomore year – the decision to accept an offer of membership from FarmHouse Fraternity. Little did I know that what seemed like a simple decision at the time would result in so much. I can honestly say that it was the decision to join that has led to just about everything that has happened in my life.

I was initiated in January and elected Treasurer in August. Almost from day one of membership in the chapter I was involved in the business of running the chapter. Our chapter had a house. We had to manage a budget, coordinate the weekly grocery runs for our cook (no catering at the house – she gave us a list and we came home with two grocery buggies full of food!), collect rent from the members, coordinate payments to our Association and pay the monthly utility bills. I would sometimes write checks for amounts of money I did not even know existed. What better way to put an 18-year-old through a crash course of how to manage his own personal finances, much less that of a business!

Then I became Chapter President. Any president out there knows the skills that are necessary for this job. Coordinating the leadership of the chapter, chairing the weekly executive committee meetings, running the weekly chapter meeting, serving as a spokesperson for the chapter to the school and the national organization, the various responsibilities like serving as a counselor, encourager, coach and motivator to the members. Looking back I probably learned more during those twelve months than in any class or other experience. Being President would serve as preparation for skills I would need later in life.

Finally, I served as New Member Educator (yes, after serving as President). As I speak on leadership topics today, I often talk about the fact that many of us aren’t satisfied with simply being a member. We have to be involved with running the organization. That was my situation. I was the President as a junior so my senior year I had to find something to do. This is where my “educator” and facilitator” roles came out. Running weekly new member meetings, teaching the lessons of the week, coordinating their success through the program, ensuring their matriculation toward initiation were my goals.



As I look back I could continue to talk about my involvement in the Fraternity since then: eight years on the International Board early in my career, eleven years on the board of the Association of Fraternity/Sorority Advisors, five years on the board of the AFA Foundation, nine years serving on the board of the North-American Interfraternity Conference, serving on the AFLV and SYNERGOS boards and now, interesting enough, back on the FarmHouse International Board serving as President of the Fraternity. To be honest, I can look at four simple years in the chapter as an undergraduate and realize the skills I learned that I have used in that time. Fraternity was truly a living-learning experience for me. I know we are supposed to express an appreciation for academics, but no class taught me the skills I learned through the chapter. No class prepared me for the life I would lead after graduation. Granted, without the classes none of this would be possible, do not misunderstand the importance of that. However, I am one who can honestly say that my college fraternity experience was definitely the co-curricular opportunity of a lifetime.