Greek Life at UIUC: Is racial segregation an issue?
By Janir Nuno da Cruz

Introduction
The University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign has the largest Greek System in the world by membership. It contains a diverse group of 95 Chapters and about 6850 students, representing almost one fourth of the student body; in addition, it is seen as one of the most life enriching experiences in life at the university. However, most of the fraternities and sororities at the University of Illinois are predominately white and there is not much racial diversity within each Chapter. Some people claim that this racial disparity has been a constant throughout the years and that nothing much has been done to overcome this situation. However, it is important to notice that when the Greek System was introduced in higher education, the universities were mostly white, in times where people were separated by their differences. Thus, the goal of this project is to understand how the racial based fraternities and sororities developed and what can be done in the future to form a more diverse, cultural comprehensive, and racial integrated Greek System at the University of Illinois, if in fact that is a goal.

Methodology
For this project, I conducted six interviews. First, I interviewed the President of the Black Greek Council to understand the vision and mission such cultural based organization and learn about the role of this organization to promote the integration. Second, I interviewed two African Americans in a predominant Black Fraternity, two White Americans and an African in a predominant White Fraternity to learn about the factors that influenced them to join their fraternities and their own opinion about the racial segregation in the Greek System. I also used research papers published on IDEALS that deal with similar topics to use as secondary sources.

Sample Interview Questions
Do you feel the Greek System is segregated along racial lines?
What that your organization has been doing to decrease this segregation?
‘UIUC has a program called ‘Inclusive Illinois’ to promote diversity on campus, do you feel that it has succeeded in its goals?
Did you ever consider joining a majority white/black fraternity?

“I didn’t think about joining a black fraternity because they have different interests and I wouldn’t fit in. It’s not a bad thing; they just do different stuff…”

Preliminary Findings
At this point of the research some preliminary findings are that, overall, from observation and interviews, the campus is racially segregated, which is reflected not only in the Greek System but in many other aspects of Campus Life. Diversity does exist, there are different people from different backgrounds and ethnicities; however, they tend to segregate themselves starting from their freshmen year due to being minorities on a predominantly White campus. People join the Greek System because they want to make the most of their University Life; however, the existence of stereotypes and the fact that the people who had joined the fraternities and sororities in the past somehow influence who joins them in the present and the future seem to be key factors in the segregation in the Greek System. In order to solve this “problem” the university has a program called Inclusive Illinois; however, this program is not well known and understood by the students. Finally, since last year, the four Greek Councils have put some effort to start working together because they realized that they have more things in common than expected so that they can reach outside their executive board members and spread the word to the whole Greek System, which can be a great start for a more integrated Greek System at UIUC.

Encourage exchanges not only between all the Greek Councils but also to all Greeks.
Promote the Inclusive Illinois to all the student body, focusing on the freshmen.