

## U2K: The Students Respond

## House Redistribution Not Enough U2K: Open Minds

Dear Members of the Campus Community,

As many of you are now aware, the U2K steering committee has recently issued several proposals aimed at altering social and residential life here at Union College. It is of the utmost importance that every Union student read the report because it truly affects everyone.

On the surface, no one will argue that there are urgent problems at Union College which need to be addressed. The committee has done a decent job both identifying and defining these problems. Additionally, the committee has made good recommendations with regards to both the preservation of Greek Life and the need for the development of a wider and more diverse social life at Union. These recommendations in and of themselves will do much to improve life at Union and should be supported by the campus community. However, there remains another aspect of the report which is far more controversial.

Again, not many people will argue with the fact that housing inequity does exist here at Union. However, the committee's proposal is not the correct way for the college to proceed in remedying the aforementioned inequity. During the past two weeks, and, in fact, the past two years, there have been dozens of arguments made on both sides of this issue. The committee's recommendation is greatly slanted to one side. The truth is, that the forceful displacement of any group from its housing, whether college owned or not, is wrong and unfair, provided that the group is in good standing with the college.

The forceful displacement of these groups is wrong on many levels, both for the college, and its

residential groups. This housing proposal, aside from simply being socialist in nature, is a top-down strategy. This means that the college is bringing down the level of social and residential life of some groups to satisfy others. This alienates a certain section of the college community, causing disruption, hurt feelings, and tremendous animosity. For decades, these groups have enjoyed, and funded their current housing. The buildings in and of themselves represent a second home to many alumni, and it is this relationship which will cause the hurt feelings and animosity.

The solution would be to propose a bottom-up strategy. In this model, the college would invest resources to renovate certain buildings on campus, and explore the feasibility of possible new construction. For example, the college should immediately remove the administrative services from Silliman Hall, Feigenbaum Hall, and Lamont House. These groups could be quite easily relocated in current block dorm space in North or South Colleges. There also exists at least two locations on campus which are feasible for new construction. On these lots, the college could create housing which would rival the best on campus. These free-standing, centrally located buildings could then be converted back into student housing and given to sororities, theme houses, or any other recognized functional group who desires housing. Additionally, to accommodate smaller groups of students who simply wish to live together with no higher purpose, the college should continue its Seward initiative and expand its real-estate purchases to all perimeters of campus.

If the college were to take these steps, it would make significant strides toward resolving the housing issues. This idea would move

female, coed, and non-greek groups into the middle of the campus and into wonderful housing. Simply by raising everyone else's status, the greek system will appear far less dominant, and, indeed, it will be. Furthermore, the growth of the Seward initiative would allow small groups of friends to live together simply as friends, not as organized groups charged with the burden of supporting Union's social life or providing other services to justify their use of social space. Recognized organizations, such as fraternities, sororities, and theme houses, should continue to occupy the larger buildings with social space so that they may continue to utilize these spaces, not merely for social space, but for the countless philanthropic events and other services they provide. Groups of students, who have been simply thrown together without any higher purpose, organization, or cause, will have neither the desire, drive, nor necessity to facilitate the services provided by the current occupants of these houses.

Union College, its students, its faculty, and its alumni, would all be better served by rejecting this aspect of the U2K proposal. By simply raising the standard of living for some students, and not lowering it for others, the college will make significant strides toward solving its problems without alienating anyone. We appeal to the college community to make the right decision and do what is truly best for Union.

Sincerely and respectfully,

The Brothers of the  
Sigma Phi Society

## Proposal Has Definite Faults

by Eugene D. Schultz  
Distribution Manager

On May 15 2000, the U2K Steering Committee released a report entitled *A Proposal for Residential and Social Life at Union*. The entire campus should know "the future of Greek life at Union and the transition to sophomore rush, the establishment of an all-inclusive House System to begin in the Fall of 2004, and an array of new social initiatives." (U2K Proposal, p.1) For the most part the U2K Steering Committee did a fine job in dealing with the issues that were presented to them.

However, since the members of the committee are fallible, so too are some portions of the proposal. Included in the report is the outline for what has been labeled as the "Proposal for a House System." (U2K Proposal, p.3) The House System, as outlined calls for a system "comprised of twelve houses and every Union student will be assigned randomly to membership in one of them prior to arriving as a freshman." (U2K Proposal, p.3) The committee feels that by creating this new House System they will create "a source of connection to the College, as well as a source of friendship, learning, motivation to get involved in extracurricular life, and, perhaps above all, an enjoyable and vibrant social life."

(U2K Proposal, p.3) It is the belief of the committee that by implementing this housing system, Greek presence on campus will "move Greek life more toward the periphery (literally and figuratively) while making available to every Union student some of the most valued parts of Greek life." (U2K Proposal, p.2)

The report at its core tries to deal with the inequality of housing at Union College. They want to make it so that both men and women have the same opportunities when it comes to housing on campus. Since the college has only been co-educational since 1970 there is a discrepancy when it comes to where males and females live on campus. By creating the twelve house House System the U2K Committee hopes that this will eliminate the housing issue at Union.

Union does have a problem when it comes to where men and women live on campus. Do not get me wrong, this must change. However, the way the committee recommends how this should be handled is where I personally have a problem.

The committee believes that in order to make housing equal on this campus the current residents of Fero House, Sigma Phi, Smith House, Chi Psi, Psi Upsilon, Phi Delta Theta, 1248 Lenox Rd, 1294 Lenox Rd, 1320 Lenox Rd, and Wells House all must vacate in or-

der to help initiate this plan. By enacting this plan the committee hopes that it "will give every student access to social space and funding to host programs." (U2K Proposal, p.6) By taking these twelve houses the committee feels that they will be a more even playing field for all the students on campus.

This is where the *Proposal for Residential and Social Life at Union* runs into major problems. They view that these houses will be a bastion of academia, a center for social life, and the training ground for the future leaders of the country. Freshmen will be assigned and become a member of one of these houses. If you choose you can participate in any aspect of the house that you want. The freshmen will even get to have Freshman Preceptorial in their assigned house. The question that arises is: What will bring these freshmen back after their freshman year? Once that class joins other organizations, whether it be a Greek organization, a Theme house, or even a club why will freshman want to come back to these house? As shown in the past the school has seen that apathy runs rampant at Union. Why will the creation of these houses change the apathy level on campus?

Another foreseeable problem is: What will stop certain factions within these houses from taking over the

by Gina L. Campanella  
Opinions Editor

It is human nature to fear that which we do not know. This past week fear of the unknown has infested the Union College student body. Organizations have been banding together and splitting apart over one of the biggest controversies since the semester/trimester debate. (Honestly, how many people are aware of the results of that issue?)

The U2K Proposal. All one has to do is mention the very phrase to send icy chills up any frat boy's spine. One would assume that it would bring joy and a smile to the lips of those who now live in buildings such as... Potter House, where rooms originally intended to be singles have pairs of students crammed in. However, this is clearly not the situation.

The administration is under the impression that all they need to do in order to equalize housing is to allow all students to have access to the 'good' housing as well as the 'not so good' housing. I believe I am not the first student to question WHAT the people who decided that this would be fair were thinking. Let me play Devil's Advocate for just a minute. Couldn't one argue that this plan, in addition to improving housing for many students, will be worsening housing for many students at the same time? Unless every student can live in equally nice housing, then the system will never be fair. Therefore, the redistribution will be accomplishing nothing other than making different students be subjected to the class 'B' (the lowest ranking) housing. At this time, I would just like to add that three Greek organizations and one theme house are the current occupants of this, so-called, lowest class housing. The two buildings that fall into this category are Raymond House and Potter House. I make this point not to emphasize the bad housing on this campus but to point out that this is not a plan attacking fraternities. Yes, the top five 'A+' houses on campus are fraternity houses; however, has anyone recognized the fact that three of the four bottom 'B' houses are also fraternity houses?

Perhaps, due to the eruption of this issue many people are failing

to recognize the possible benefits of this system. This plan does allow for the long-term preservation, and not destruction of the Greek system at Union College. In addition, the proposal does have a stipulation that if no other group would like to enter the housing lottery for a particular house then the group who is currently associated with that house will be able to stay there. The one negative aspect of this clause is that it only includes those houses listed in 'Appendix B' of the most recent U2K Report. The exact text of the proposal reads; "...we encourage them [the distribution committee] to include some element of choice, to enable some groups to remain in the current place if no one else wants it."

In addition, the committee will be appointed by Student Forum and will consist of STUDENTS. Two of these students will be nominated by the Theme House Consortium, one will be from the Interfraternity Council and the fourth will be from the Panhellenic council. This means that the theme houses and the Greek houses that are going to be most effected will be able to be the most active participants in the redistribution.

Yes, those fraternities with the biggest, nicest, most centrally located hoses will have to move. However, a TRUE Greek society WILL be able to overcome moving to a different house. The school is not telling these groups that they can no longer be members of their Greek societies, it is not telling them not to have parties or rush or pledges. All the campus is doing is moving these Greek organizations to another physical location. Those Greek organizations that are true to their Greek society will be able to survive something like a simple relocation. Yes, there are many houses that have a deep tradition and many memories within. However, the physical possessions of a Greek organization are not the important possessions of a Greek organization. All the organizations that stand to loose their current housing need to consider the long-term effects of this proposal. They must consider two possible futures for their Greek and Theme houses. If these houses are open minded and willing to make changes, then they will survive. If these organizations are rigid and refuse to compromise they will not survive.

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In the end the report included quotes from both current and past members of the Union College community. Perhaps the most appropriate comment was said by a member of the class of 1959: "The emphasis on complete symmetry in all things-perhaps is the ultimate goal of some idyllic concept of political correctness, but it is bad architecture and worse policy. Life beyond college is full of unequal spaces." (U2K Report, p.9)