

Futuristic Frathouse

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associated press

PULLMAN, Wash. (AP) — It's the frat house of the future, without a single toga in sight. Instead, it's rife with high-speed computers, cyberspace jacks and bedrooms with individual climate controls.

Greek Row may never be the same, thanks to the largess of billionaire Paul Allen.

Allen spent \$3.1 million to build a new house for Phi Kappa Theta at Washington State University in southeastern Washington. He was a member of the fraternity in the early 1970s before dropping out of WSU to join boyhood friend Bill Gates, a Harvard dropout, in founding a profitable little business known as Microsoft.

"This house is a spearhead into the 21st century," said Phil Hauck, president of the local Phi Kappa Theta chapter. "We're wired up to the world."

The four-story, red-brick house, with white trim, large windows and a white cupola on the roof, evokes college buildings of the past. But inside it is strictly the future:

—Each double bedroom has built-in jacks to transmit voice, data and cable television and link its occupants to all of cyberspace.

—Each room has a multi-line telephone system that includes an intercom.

—It's the only fraternity house on campus with an elevator, making it fully accessible to the disabled.

—The computer center contains six Gateway 2000 Pentium computers, available on a first-come basis.

—Each room has an individual climate control system, which also provides the outside

temperature so members know what to wear on a given day.

—The parking lot is heated to ward off ice in Pullman's chilly winters.

—The lighted outdoor basketball court features logos of the Portland Trail Blazers, the professional basketball team Allen owns. There is a built-in barbecue pit.

—A guest bedroom, called the Allen Room, is set aside for visiting alumni.

The 17,500-square-foot house, with a big-screen television and a pool table, will house 52 people in rooms twice as large as those in other WSU fraternity houses. But the monthly room and board of \$425 is lower than most because Allen donated the building and there is no mortgage to pay, Hauck said.

"I never thought it would be this good," said Mark Blewett, founding member of the new fraternity. "He graduated last year and now tests software for Microsoft. He was back in the frat house last month helping members move in," stated Blewett.

Phi Kappa Theta is not the only beneficiary of Allen's generosity.

He donated \$300,000 to equip the other fraternities and sororities on campus with 12-port high-speed computer connections. By the end of September, they'll be linked to WSU's fiber-optic network and its computers.

"The vision of connecting millions of people to a global network, for immediate access to information and resources anywhere in the world, is something I began thinking about when I was a student at Washington State," Allen said in a statement.

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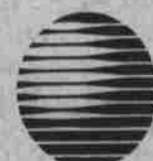
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