FOUR-YEAR FRATERNITY SUSPENSION

Sigma Alpha Epsilon suspended, other fraternities currently under investigation

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The Office of Student Engagement and Leadership and the Office of Student Rights and Responsibilities deemed Sigma Alpha Epsilon fraternity responsible for hazing and placed the fraternity under a four-year disciplinary suspension, according to Dean of Students Margarita Perez, Ph.D.

"The interim suspension temporarily restricts their ability to operate on campus. A regular suspension removes them from campus for four years," Perez said. "They don't exist on our campus for four years. They have no operations on our campus."

Sigma Alpha Epsilon fraternity is working to appeal the disciplinary suspension, according to Perez.

According to documents released by the University of Louisiana at Lafayette, the Office of Student Rights and Responsibilities placed additional sanctions on Sigma Alpha Epsilon fraternity, including loss of privileges and mandatory “Alcohol Awareness and Decision Making” sessions with the Department of Counseling and Testing.

The documents also include an email sent Sept. 27 from Assistant Director of Student Engagement and Leadership Brandon Palmore to Assistant Director of Student Rights and Responsibilities Brandon Turner regarding allegations against Sigma Alpha Epsilon fraternity.

Palmore’s list of allegations sent to Turner include quotes from Sigma Alpha Epsilon members such as: “Look at these little b******,” “I grew up in frat culture. Earning your way into the fraternity,” “The less shots you do, the more your brothers have to do” and “We’re going to try pledge attire again in a few weeks.” They also included allegations that new members were locked in a small room and couldn’t look active members in the eye.

An Oct. 15 report from the Office of Student Rights and Responsibilities details the alleged hazing methods used by Sigma Alpha Epsilon fraternity on Bid Night.

“The pledges were then allegedly locked in a small room, forced to line up in order, forced to face the wall, all while being yelled at by active members,” the report reads, adding active members forced new members to drink alcohol at the event.

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and perform exercises, such as running.

According to the same report, the Office of Student Rights and Responsibilities found Sigma Alpha Epsilon fraternity refused to comply with the investigation.

"It has also been determined that the fraternity has colluded in withholding information and providing false information to university officials during the course of the investigation," the report reads.

According to an email contained in the documents sent from Palmore to Douglas Lee, the alumni board president of Louisiana Alpha, Palmore found Sigma Alpha Epsilon fraternity threw a jersey party that was not registered with the Office of Student Engagement and Leadership and facilitated underage drinking on Aug. 13.

"I immediately broke up the party telling everyone to get out of the house," Palmore wrote.

The Office of Student Rights and Responsibilities is investigating Lambda Chi Alpha fraternity and Sigma Chi fraternity for hazing allegations, according to the report.

According to the documents, an anonymous informant sent an email to Perez on Oct. 25 detailing additional allegations against Sigma Chi fraternity, including kidnapping.

"They have to get points by doing crazy stuff to each other (such as) stealing road signs, being left naked in yards at night and having to find their way back home drunk, kidnapping older members, being paddled, etc.," the email reads.

The sender added Sigma Chi fraternity threw a "suspension party" at a Mexican restaurant and provided photo evidence of the kidnapping allegation taken a few years ago. According to the sender, new members were forced to kidnap older members.

"This was sent to us after the original allegations were brought forward ... this (image) is disturbing to me," Perez said.

Perez added the photo illustrates a case of "severe" hazing.

"What this picture illustrates, this is what I would consider severe, egregious hazing," Perez said.

According to Perez, although the investigation into all allegations against Sigma Chi fraternity is still ongoing, she expects the investigation to close soon.

According to a spreadsheet in the documents, Lambda Chi Alpha fraternity was accused of burning a new member between the fingers in fall of 2017, an allegation which did not surface until Oct. 3 of this year. Lambda Chi Alpha fraternity also was accused of forcing new members to wear pledge attire on Oct. 8.

Lindsey said while Sigma Chi fraternity remains under interim suspension, Lambda Chi Alpha fraternity is not under interim suspension because the allegations against Lambda Chi fraternity did not suggest current new members are in danger.

"The 2017 allegation is under investigation currently. We did not place that chapter on interim suspension because it was a year old and we did not have any reason to believe that the current new member class was in any danger," Lindsey said.

Perez said the burning allegation did not put Lambda Chi Alpha under interim suspension because it was an allegation by a single member, unlike the multiple and "severe" allegations against Sigma Chi fraternity.

"(Kidnapping) is very severe hazing. That could lead somebody to death," Perez said. "To me, I don't care when this was, this is not OK."

Perez said although the Office of Student Rights and Responsibilities carried out hazing investigations, the UL Police Department is kept up to date and looks into the allegations because hazing is against state law.

"That information is also forwarded to university police, because ... hazing is both a violation of university policy and it's a violation of state law," Perez said.

Perez added the Office of Student Engagement and Leadership works with the Office of Student Rights and Responsibilities to determine appropriate action once the investigation is closed.

"They let us know what they found and what they're recommending. We all get together again to make sure that the sanctions that are being recommended are consistent and in line with (student) organizations," Perez said.

Perez added she expects both ongoing fraternity investigations to wrap up in two weeks and urged students to speak out if they know of any hazing activity.

"It's helpful to us to be able to have correspondence with someone so we can ask some of those detailed questions," Perez said.