

CASE
at
ΣΛΛ

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Case Scenario - Character

Who ?

- Chris Rogers is a 19-year-old sophomore at Westing University, a four-year public research university with low research activity.
- Chris is a Biology major student and a member of Sigma Lambda Lambda Fraternity at Westing.
- Chris decided to go through recruitment his sophomore year after giving himself a year to adjust to college life and save money.

Case Scenario - Phase 1

When ?

- Since the day that Chris accepted his bid in Sigma Lambda Lambda he felt the organization's attitude towards their new members change.

What ?

- During recruitment, everyone was so friendly and encouraging.
- After Chris truly became a member of Sigma Lambda Lambda, he has encountered several hazing activities in the fraternity including being forced to drink alcohol, being called degrading names, and responsible for driving older members to and from parties and events on school nights, often in the late hours of the evening.
- Chris has started to feel a great deal of social discomfort, and a loss of self-esteem, but remained in the fraternity with the promise that everything would be great after he was initiated.

Case Scenario - Phase 2

When ?

- After his initiation, Chris was allowed to move into the fraternity house on campus. He and 65 other members of the fraternity lived in the house on Greek Row.

What ?

- Chris was so excited to finally be accepted into the brotherhood, but by this point Chris was neglecting himself and putting the fraternity ahead of other obligations.
- Chris had failed 2 of the 5 classes he had taken last semester, and was on the verge of failing more. He only slept 3 hours most nights trying to stay caught up with homework, and attending events for his fraternity.
- His lack of self-esteem grew and grew, when he turned to his fraternity brothers they recommended he “relax” and “take a break with them...have a beer”.

Case Scenario - Phase 3 (1)

When ?

- Through all of the parties he was attending, Chris met a young sorority woman named Amy and they started dating.
- **What ?**
- Chris soon left even less time for his academic studies and he realized that he was about to lose his scholarship.
- Chris confided in Amy one night. Instead of comforting Chris she acted as if his problems were not legitimate, and dismissed him all together.

Case Scenario - Phase 3 (2)

When ?

- Eventually their feud led to Chris and Amy got splitting up.

What ?

- Chris was so distraught with all of his problems he attempted suicide in the fraternity house that night. Fraternity brothers found him and called 911. Chris was taken to the hospital and released a short time later.
- No serious actions were taken against Chris, but he was required to complete six counseling sessions through the semester, which he was doing very well in.

Case Scenario - Phase 4

When ?

- Past week in the beginning of this new semester.

What ?

- Chris was involved in a physical altercation with another fraternity member while he lives in the Fraternity House.
- Recently, Chris has received a letter from Student Conduct regarding to the informal hearing with and administrator to discuss his alleged violation of the Student Conduct Code at Westing University.

Facts of the Case

- There is no active chapter advisor for Sigma Lambda Lambda Chapter on campus. The current advisor accepted the role because no one else would, and hasn't been involved in any way.
- Several hazing problems within Sigma Lambda Lambda have happened during this semester, not just to Chris.
- Chris experienced academic failures, prioritizations, and time management troubles since the bid day of his fraternity.
- The land of the fraternity house is owned by the university.
- Chris had one suicide attempt in the fraternity house and was required to complete 6 counseling sessions with Counseling Services on campus.
- The student was showing progress in academic, health and social life after his counseling sessions were completed.
- Student physically hit another fraternity member recently.

Issues of the Case

- Did the Greek Life office, Student Conduct and Counseling Services handle the previous suicide issue well enough without any negligence?
- Should the institution notify Chris's parents after his suicide attempt?
- Did Counseling Services follow up with Chris after he completed all six counseling sessions?
- Should Greek Life office regulate fraternities and sororities more strictly with more responsible chapter advisers?
- Is there a special relationship between the institution and the fraternity house on campus?
- What would be the next step for Student Conduct after the informal hearing with Chris?

Problem 1: Chris & ΣΛΛ

- Since there were several other hazing problems happening within Sigma Lambda Lambda, Greek Life office needs to seek for a more responsible chapter adviser for them.
- If Chris had reported the misconduct against his fraternity after his suicide attempt to related administrators, the administrators should have made new actions to improve the regulations of fraternities and sororities.
- After the investigation, if the fraternity actually held accountable for serious hazing and alcohol consuming problems, possible consequences could have included fraternity suspension, expulsion, required educational workshops that the fraternity had to adhere to in order to stay on campus.

Problem 1: Chris & ΣΛΛ

- Hazing may also be a violation of state law. More than thirty states have enacted laws prohibiting hazing (Kaplin & Lee, 2009, p. 543).
- Hazing problems is especially often reported to happen to new members when the fraternities stated that it is simply their chapter tradition. The information of their tradition is confidential and is not required to share with non-members.
- To solve this problem, the Greek Life office can require the chapter advisers to be present at all ritual events. And chapter members need to agree the adviser's presence. The adviser also has the responsibility to monitor the amount of time that members have for fraternity events to ensure an adequate study and healthy lifestyle time for all members.

Problem 2: Chris & Counseling Services

- Chris has shown significant improvement on his academic, health, and social life after completing required counseling sessions.
- For this type of incident, institution should consider adding a follow-up session in future semesters after students complete counseling sessions to prevent the similar issues coming back to the student.
- Suicide attempt is still a serious problem for young adults. The institution may consider notifying Chris's parents. According to Family Educational Rights and Private Act (FERPA), the university is able to give a student's parents or guardian information concerning the student's violation of laws or institutional policies (Kaplin & Lee, 2009, p. 271).
- Besides, Counseling Services should suggest the chapter adviser that all other members may need an investigation of mental health.

Problem 3: Chris & Injured Student

- Student Conduct needs to investigate what happened between Chris and the other fraternity member and provide sanctions accordingly.
- After Chris goes through the disciplinary process, if Chris takes the main responsibility, according the Student Conduct Handbook of Westing University, Chris will get one-year academic probation, \$200 fines and official apology to the injured student.

Problem 4: Injured Student & Westing University

- Westing University also involves institutional liability for the acts of members of fraternity. The university is partially responsible for the injury.
- Firstly, the university owned the land on which the fraternity house was located and the injury occurred in the house.
- Secondly, the university prohibited hazing and was aware of earlier hazing incidents by this fraternity. The likelihood of hazing was foreseeable as well as the likelihood of injury as a result of hazing (Kaplin & Lee, 2009, p.545).

Case Recommended Action

- Chris will get one-year academic probation, \$200 fines, and official apology to the injured student and continuous counseling sessions. Chris's parents will be notified and asked to provide feedback on Chris's behavior.
- The injured student will receive necessary counseling sessions and compensation from the institution and Chris.
- Sigma Lambda Lambda will get one-year disciplinary probation and all members are required to attend workshops regarding to alcohol abuse and hazing issues.
- All other fraternities and sororities are also required to attend some of hosted workshops.
- Greek Life office will revise the current policy to ensure the safety in the Greek House and Greek organization advisers need to be responsible for all ritual events and improve the group development.
- Westing University also needs to assess all student organizations to decide what trainings advisers need and whether more Greek advisers should be hired.

Reference

Kaplin, W. A. & Lee, B.A. (2009). A legal guide for student affairs professionals.
San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.

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