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Thursday, March 29, 2001

Psi U faces social probation

CFSC execs, fraternity president say sanctions are too harsh

by Ithan Peltan, The Dartmouth Staff



Administrators notified Psi Upsilon fraternity

Tuesday of sanctions against the house, including two terms of social probation, stemming from a Winter term incident in which members of the fraternity shouted sexist and racist remarks at a female passerby.

Some, including the Coed Fraternity Council president and vice president, are already questioning the severity of the penalty imposed after the CFS Judicial Committee found Psi U in violation of several Standards of Conduct during a hearing earlier this month.



The Dartmouth

Psi Upsilon fraternity house

Psi U president Mike Holick '02 said he feels when deciding the verdict, the Office of Residential Life did not sufficiently consider internal action taken by the fraternity against the members involved in the incident.

"We feel that the social penalties were excessive in comparison to how more serious transgressions have been handled and inapplicable to the nature of the event," Holick said.

Holick declined to comment on the possibility that Psi U would request that the sanctions be reconsidered, noting that the fraternity's advisers and national organization have yet to receive copies of the letter the ORL sent to the house on Tuesday.

After a Judicial Committee meeting on Mar. 8, Psi U was deemed to have violated a number of conduct standards,



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CFSC President Shihwan Chung '02

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including those related to harassment and coercion, as well as College standards of leadership, behavior and recognition, Assistant Dean of Residential Life Cassie Barnhardt said.

The Judicial Committee recommended a number

of primarily program related sanctions -- such as requiring Psi U to sponsor an educational speaker -- to the Office of Residential Life which were later approved, CFSC Vice President and Judicial Committee Chair Lauren Lafaro '02 said.

The student-led Judicial Committee, however, did not recommend social probation, according to sources familiar with the case.

"I see the programming sanctions as having the purpose of educating the community at the expense of Psi U," Lafaro said.

She noted that the fraternity's quick public apology the internal disciplinary measures taken by the house influenced the overruled Judicial Committee decision not to recommend punitive measures.

Social probation -- officially known as "full social restriction," during which alcohol will be banned from parties and all public spaces in the Psi U physical plant -- was apparently added by Dean of Residential Life Martin Redman and Barnhardt after the committee's report was submitted to ORL.

"I think Dean Redman and Dean Barnhardt felt the sanctions levied by the JC, although they were constructive, they were not punitive enough," Lafaro said.

While Lafaro and CFSC President Shihwan Chung '02 expressed approval of the programming sanctions, both objected to the imposition of social probation.

"Basically, I don't think the punishment fits the crime," Lafaro said.

"Two terms probation is rather strict and there are more constructive

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ways of dealing with a problem."

Likewise, Chung said he was "troubled" by imposition of social probation. "All too often, social probation and other measure like that are used as an all-purpose band aid."

"Adjudication in an institution of higher education ... is an educational process," Barnhardt said, explaining that she and Redman felt the slate of sanctions proposed by the Judicial Committee were inadequate.

"One cannot expect folks to be completely pleased with the outcomes. And you know what? It's OK for folks to be upset. At least they're thinking about it," Barnhardt said.

Programming sanctions levied on Psi U require all house events over the next two terms to focus on building community and gender and race issues and that a hundred percent of house members attend two events on gender or race issues in the upcoming terms hosted by a group other than Psi U.

The fraternity will also be required to sponsor a presentation by T. J. Sullivan during Greek Week called "Confronting the Idiot in Your Chapter" and has been strongly advised to revamp its new member education program with guidance from the RISE consulting group.

Both Chung and Lafaro commended Psi U for its handling of the matter.

"Holick and Psi U took the matter seriously and I think that a lot of people in the Greek community appreciate that. Mike Holick and Psi U should be commended just for taking quick action," Chung said.

Barnhardt, however, was noncommittal, complimenting the leadership of Psi U executives but also saying, "Did they do everything possible ever? I don't know."

The sanctions against Psi U stem from an incident that took place Feb. 16. On that Friday evening, students standing on the Psi U lawn were reported by a female student to be chanting "Wah-hoo-wah, scalp 'em, scalp 'em" as she approached the house from the direction of Thayer Dining Hall.

As the female student -- who has remained anonymous for fear of a backlash -- passed the house, the men on the Psi U lawn paused and then began shouting, "Wah-hoo-wah, scalp those bitches."

According to the anonymous female, she then shouted at the house, "Psi U is so cool."

Although the fraternity quickly offered a public apology for the incident once it became public, it drew a storm of criticism from students, Greek leaders and administrators, including Dean of the College James Larimore.

Many students submitted letters to the Editor of The Dartmouth and much of the debate focused around whether the entire fraternity should be held responsible for the actions of a few individuals.

One Greek leader speculated that ORL administrators may have felt pressured to demonstrate to the College community that Greek infractions would not be allowed to pass without being explicitly punished.



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