

Tallahassee Democrat
January 30, 2007

Four from FSU frat accused of hazing pledges

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Four members of a Florida State University fraternity were arrested early Saturday after 31 pledges of the Sigma Phi Epsilon Fraternity were found in a crawl space inside a house off campus.

The following men were arrested by Florida State University police: Drew Johnson, 22, FSU student; Eric Fernandez, 19, a Tallahassee Community College student; Joshua Vincent, 19, FSU student; and Nicholas Finazzo, 18, TCC student. The four fraternity members found at the house were arrested on misdemeanor charges of hazing. They were released from the Leon County Jail after posting \$500 bail each.

On Monday, FSU officials suspended the chapter. Vincent and Johnson have been suspended indefinitely by the fraternity's alumni board, which is standard procedure when a hazing allegation surfaces.

Maj. Jim Russell of the FSU Police Department said officers received a complaint of possible hazing at 1:30 a.m. Saturday. An officer in an unmarked car was sent to the reported address in the 1100 block of Bonnie Drive.

"(The officer) heard what seemed like screaming from the back of the house," Russell said, reading from the arrest report.

FSU police then called for assistance from the Tallahassee Police Department. Russell said several men ran from the house as officers approached it.

Police were able to capture the four students, who were found near the crawl space, according to reports. A further check found the 31 pledges wearing sweat pants and white T-shirts with profanity and vulgarity written on them.

Reports said the pledges were covered in "raw eggs, catfish-stink bait, flour and vinegar," and they were shivering from the 30-degree temperatures outside.

"The pledges had welts on various parts of (their) bodies from unknown objects being thrown at them," the arrest report read.

Russell said the investigation is ongoing and that two FSU officers have been assigned to the case.

"We're concerned about the safety and well-being of our students," said Courtney Barry, assistant dean of students and director of Greek Life at FSU. "We are currently cooperating with the university police department."

Barry said the fraternity has been suspended by the university's Office of Student Rights and Responsibility. The university will review police reports to determine possible disciplinary for Johnson and Vincent.

Alice Maxwell, spokeswoman for Tallahassee Community College, said there's no disciplinary action issued for Fernandez and Finazzo as of now.

Maxwell said TCC's judicial affairs department, along with FSU's dean of student affairs office, will work closely to determine the next step.

Terry Madigan, president of the chapter's alumni board, said the board learned about the incident Saturday. He said Johnson and Vincent have been suspended indefinitely from the chapter, which is standard procedure when a hazing allegation surfaces, Madigan said.

He said there are between 100 and 110 dues-paying members at the FSU chapter.

"I was very surprised to hear what allegedly happened," said Madigan, a local attorney. "This is not sanctioned conduct. That is not the way we run a fraternity."

Madigan said he isn't representing the former members, and plans are in motion to obtain other counsel.

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