



December 14, 2007

To University of Rochester Alumni members of the Theta Chi fraternity:

As many of you have heard, as a result of a recent administrative hearing, Theta Chi fraternity faces disaffiliation from the University for a period of five years, pending the outcome of an appeal. I am writing to let you know some of the history that led to this, the steps we have taken most recently, and how things will proceed from here.

Over the past several years, there has been a series of alcohol and drug violations in Theta Chi. Our records show at least 10 such incidents since August 2006. Several of these occurred last spring, with the final two leading to a judicial hearing. That hearing resulted in the house being put on disciplinary probation. Within our system, this is the most severe form of probation for a fraternity. The letter informing the leadership of the house of this outcome stated that this status “is often an indication that the group faces disaffiliation from the University if any future misconduct occurs.” An email message to the house leadership in October reaffirmed that Theta Chi continued to be on disciplinary probation. This same message stated that the house could hold a large-scale social event at which no alcohol was served later in the Fall semester. The successful staging of this party would demonstrate the house’s ability to control behavior at its social events.

Theta Chi held a party on November 18, 2007. During that party, Rochester Police and Rural Metro Ambulance Service were called to aid a severely intoxicated student on the fraternity quad. The student reported that he had been drinking at Theta Chi. According to the security reports, RPD and UR Security then entered Theta Chi. Several security officers reported seeing many people (20-30) on the porch and inside with alcohol. They also saw a bar set up in the house where alcoholic beverages were being served. They instructed the fraternity leaders to close down the party. Security officers reported that members of the house were uncooperative. During this incident, a student attending the party confronted RPD officers on the scene and was arrested on charges of disorderly conduct. (The case has been adjourned contemplating dismissal if there is no further misbehavior within the next six months.)

Following this incident, disciplinary charges were brought against the house. An experienced administrative hearing team heard the testimony of five UR Security officers and two representatives of the fraternity. The officers presented an account of the incident conforming to the description in the security reports, as summarized above. The representatives of the fraternity described the incident quite differently. The hearing team found the fraternity responsible for violations of several provisions in the campus judicial code, including one provision regulating the possession of alcohol and one requiring compliance with reasonable requests of University officials. The hearing team’s recommended sanctions included two key points:

- Theta Chi be disaffiliated from the University for a period of five years.
- All current residents of Theta Chi be ineligible for University housing until August 2008.

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Acting Dean of Students, Matthew Burns, accepted these recommendations and communicated results to the president of the house in a letter on Friday, December 7, 2007. Dean Burns discussed this with a house leader at about 5:00pm that afternoon.

Following email correspondence with the house president over the weekend, Richard Feldman, Dean of the College met with him on Monday, December 10. At that meeting, he agreed to remove the second of the sanctions just described, leaving current residents eligible for University housing during the Spring semester. There will be room within our system for them. In addition, the fraternity has the right to appeal the decision to him. Ordinarily, students have one week to appeal judicial decisions. Dean Feldman agreed that they could have until December 23 (when campus housing closes), and that they should inform him if they want additional time. He made these changes to reduce the extent to which this matter interfered with the students' end of the semester academic work.

The students are now preparing their appeal. Our system permits appeal on three grounds: the sanction was not appropriate; new information exists, not available at the time of the hearing, that is sufficient to alter the decision; and, errors substantive enough to alter the decision were made during the hearing. Dean Feldman will carefully consider all aspects of the appeal. He will also listen to the recordings of the original hearing. It is his responsibility to determine, on the basis of the information available, whether to uphold the original findings and whether to modify or eliminate the sanctions.

No administrator at the University takes decisions such as this one lightly. We recognize that for many of you, your association with Theta Chi has been an extremely valuable part of your experience at the UR. We value the fraternity system and have expended a great deal of effort to maximize its contribution to the campus community. Our Expectations of Excellence program has served to strengthen the system. We also do not take abuse of alcohol by our students lightly. It is our responsibility to do what we can to create a safe environment for our students. A severely intoxicated student who is in need of transport to the emergency department is potentially in a life threatening situation. We are trying to minimize these occurrences.

I hope that those of you who have written or called the University will understand that we have been unable to respond individually to every message. This statement is intended to provide you with a better understanding of this unfortunate situation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Peter Lennie". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "P" and a long, sweeping underline.

Peter Lennie