

INVESTIGATION AND FINDINGS

Background:

On March 7, 2015 members of the Kappa chapter of Sigma Alpha Epsilon (“SAE”) were en route to the chapter’s Founder’s Day event in Oklahoma City. On one of the chartered busses, a racist chant was sung by fraternity members and was captured on video. The University became aware of the video and events on March 8, 2015 and took immediate steps to assess and address the situation. This memorandum is the result of an investigation undertaken by the Office of Student Affairs into the culture of the chapter and to determine the method by which the racist chant was learned and passed from member to member.

Investigation Process:

The Office of Student Affairs undertook its investigation in order to follow on the inquiry undertaken by the University’s Institutional Equity Office and to investigate the variety of media, press and other reports that indicated the chant had been learned within the chapter and was part of the current culture of the local SAE chapter.

Beginning on March 8, 2015, University officials in the Office of Student Affairs conducted interviews to determine how the chant came to exist at the University and the manner in which it was learned and passed from member to member. The findings of the investigation are detailed below.

Findings:

1. The origin of the racist chant at the Oklahoma Chapter of Sigma Alpha Epsilon was that it was learned by chapter members on a national leadership cruise sponsored by the national organization of Sigma Alpha Epsilon four years ago. The chant was learned and brought back to the local chapter.
2. Over time, the chant was formalized in the local SAE chapter and was taught to pledges as part of the formal and informal pledgship process.
3. Prior to the chapter’s annual Chapter’s Founder’s Day event on March 7, 2015, there was alcohol readily available at the fraternity house, and there is evidence that a significant number of chapter members were consuming alcohol prior to boarding the bus on which the chant was sung.
4. As part of the chapter’s normal recruitment activities in connection with its Founder’s Day event, the chapter had invited approximately one dozen high school students, who were present at the house and were exposed to the chant while on the bus.

5. It is clear that during the four years since the chant was brought to the University campus, its' existence was known by recent members and that it became part of the institutionalized culture of the chapter.

In addition to the fraternity being disbanded, as a result of these findings, the University has issued discipline to involved students ranging from permanent withdrawals, community service and mandated cultural sensitivity training. Officers of the fraternity have also personally met with representatives of affected student groups and apologized.



The UNIVERSITY of OKLAHOMA.
Office of the President

March 27, 2015

Eminent Supreme Recorder and
Executive Director
Blaine Ayers
1856 Sheridan Road
Evanston, IL 60201-3837

Dear Mr. Ayers:

As a result of the recent unfortunate incident involving Sigma Alpha Epsilon members during which they engaged in a racist chant, the University of Oklahoma undertook a comprehensive investigation into how the chant arrived on our campus and how it was learned and institutionalized within the local chapter. Those findings and correspondence from local chapter leaders indicate that the chant was learned by local chapter members while attending a national leadership cruise sponsored by the national SAE organization four years ago.

While there is no indication that the chant was part of the formal teaching of the national organization, it does appear that the chant was widely known and informally shared amongst members on the leadership cruise.

We recognize that the national SAE organization has taken certain steps to condemn the actions of those individuals engaged in this specific act of racism, has disbanded the local chapter and is taking steps to expel individual members of the chapter. The matter cannot be closed in our view, however, until the culture at the national level has also been addressed.

To that end, the University of Oklahoma is interested in knowing answers to the following:

- Has the national SAE organization undertaken any investigation to determine the extent to which the chant is being taught in or disseminated by individual chapters across the nation?
- If such an investigation has been conducted, what steps have been taken by the national SAE organization to remedy the situation?

Thank you so much for your attention to this matter. Only through our collective proactive efforts will we be able to achieve our shared goals of inclusiveness.

Sincerely,

David L. Boren
President