



Kappa Sigma Fraternity, located on Alder Street, sits shuttered and empty after the chapter's national organization shut it down this past year.

DANIELLE HICKEY
PHOTO EDITOR

Doors close at University fraternity Kappa Sigma

Due to large debt and small membership, Kappa Sigma terminated its University chapter this August

BY KARA HANSEN
NEWS REPORTER

A University fraternity chapter shut its doors for good when it closed up for summer 2004.

Members of the University's Kappa Sigma fraternity returned this fall to boarded-up doors and a chapter that officially closed in late August, University junior and the chapter's final president Michael Sanberg said.

Lacking \$200,000 to pay off a loan used to remodel the fraternity house about seven years ago, the chapter underwent a critical trial before its national organization, which was followed by a restructuring process that reduced the fraternity to fewer than 10 active members, Sanberg said. Combined with the financial turmoil it already faced, these developments created a situation that was impossible for the fraternity to control, Sanberg said.

"We just kind of got thrown into it," he said. "It really came down to powers outside of us. It was really frustrating, but at the same time, everybody realizes there wasn't really so much we could do unless somebody hit the lottery and decided to pay off our debt."

About seven years ago, several Kappa Sigma alumni decided to

remodel the house at 1090 Alder St. with an optimistic but somewhat unrealistic financing plan, Sanberg said.

"It was financed with the optimism that we'd have at least 30 people living in our house," he said. "Basically, that never happened. The number has been gradually going down, so we couldn't cover the operating costs to pay off our debt."

Greek Life Coordinator Shelley Sutherland said the number of members in most campus fraternities has remained constant, but she noted that recent recruitment at the University's Kappa Sigma chapter had declined.

Following a hearing in Vancouver, Wash., last spring in which the chapter's five executive members explained why they should remain affiliated with the fraternity, Portland attorney and Kappa Sigma Assistant District President Matt Fisher was appointed to review the house.

Fisher said there wasn't a sufficient number of people willing to commit themselves to the fraternity's values and rules.

Sanberg said the review of fraternity members narrowed membership from about 35 to seven people.

"We would literally have had to rush like 30 people this fall term and

then got them to all live in (the house)," he said. "And if we didn't get that 30 people to live in, we would have been in breach of another loan and would have been foreclosed on anyway."

Fisher said after interviewing the fraternity's members, he recommended that the parent organization shut the chapter down.

"Kappa Sigma has made it very clear over the course of many years that chapters are to comply with laws of the fraternity, laws at their universities and in their states," Fisher said. "Without doing a full-scale investigation to determine whether there had been violations, we suspected there had been some. Rather than fight them to enforce the fraternity values, we decided to close the chapter down."

While Fisher said he hopes to spark another Kappa Sigma chapter at the University in the future, fraternity members said they were sad to see it close.

"I put a lot of time into my three years there and a lot of work," said University senior Drew Wedeking, a former chapter president. "It's really a disappointment to see it go."

"It's tragic," Sanberg said. "We celebrated our hundredth-year anniversary in April, and then the next month was basically the beginning of the end."

karahansen@dailyemerald.com

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