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Kappa Sigma slapped with suspension

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The university released a statement Wednesday announcing the suspension of the UT chapter of Kappa Sigma fraternity by its national office.



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Loren Crabtree, vice president and provost, said in the statement that the local chapter no longer has standing as a registered student organization.

The suspension came after six Kappa Sig members allegedly painted their faces black at a university-affiliated mixer last week at RT Warehouse on the Strip.

Crabtree called the incident "racially insensitive" and a "setback" for the university.

"It's not just UT that's hurt by this kind of racial insensitivity," Crabtree said in a press conference Wednesday afternoon. "It sets back the whole community, not just Knoxville but the whole state of Tennessee and all of us who care a lot about racial sensitivity and believe in equality of people.

"It sets us all back," he said.

As of Wednesday, the fraternity is suspended from participating in all university activities, including Homecoming.

"This organization is not authorized to take part in any kind of official activity that's related to the fraternity," the statement said. "They have no standing any longer in the university."

Crabtree said UT is working with Kappa Sig's national organization to investigate the incident. Even if the national organization decides to reinstate the fraternity, he said that does not necessarily mean the university will allow the fraternity to reestablish itself on campus.

"There are standards of behavior that apply collectively toward organizations, and, in this case, the action of a few do color the entirety," he said.

Crabtree said this incident is "particularly distressing" to members of the university administration because all Greek organizations participated in a workshop a year ago to address a similar situation that had occurred at another learning institution.

"The fraternity clearly needs to go through some training on diversity and some training

on racial tolerance and racial sensitivity, and we expect that they will have to do that," Crabtree said. "That's the expectation also of the national group."

Crabtree said he did not know whether individual members of Kappa Sig will be punished, and he doubts the matter will be brought to the Office of Student Judicial Affairs.

"It's a matter that's internal to the fraternity," he said.

Members who reside in the fraternity house will be allowed to stay through the duration of their housing contracts.

Omar Jackson, a student who witnessed the blackface incident, thought the collective suspension of the organization was justifiable.

Jackson said he and other black students were frustrated at the evasive and labored responses given by the fraternity members in a meeting Tuesday night. At the meeting, Kappa Sig executives expressed their regrets and referenced their written apology in The Daily Beacon.

Jackson said the black community could not accept their apologies as sincere, because they felt Kappa Sig members fully understood the offensiveness of their actions.

According to Jackson, it is the responsibility of students to ensure that the fraternity and the university are held accountable.

"The more coverage that this incident gets, the more pressure the university feels to take action," Jackson said. "This was a first step ... (but) we want the campus and other fraternities to learn why this is wrong."

Kappa Sig refused to comment.

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