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FAU frat suspended pending hazing inquiry

THE ISSUE: FAU frat suspended pending hazing inquiry.

Sun Sentinel Editorial Board

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Colleges and universities across the country outlaw hazing for good reason. The practice of forcing frat members or recruits to drink to excess in short periods of time, or attempt highly dangerous stunts, in the name of a good laugh has a history of some very unfunny, and deadly, results.

One local fraternity member, if his version of events proves true, can consider himself lucky, and the fraternity brothers who put him through hell one recent October night deserve to pay serious consequences.

Nicholas Letteri, 19 and a Sigma Phi Epsilon member at Florida Atlantic University, told campus police his frat brothers "kidnapped" him, tied him up and forced him to drink a cereal bowl full of beer and liquor. Then bound with rope and forced to chug several beers, he repeatedly threw up.

Letteri's frat buddies kindly provided him with a trash can while continuing their abuse, all the while drawing on his back in permanent marker and spraying him down with a squirt gun, according to Letteri's statement.

It's a stomach-turning tale, which ended, according to Letteri, with him blacking out and waking up the next morning at a different house, with different clothes on. A friend took him to the emergency room for treatment.

What's perhaps most disturbing is that, according to a *Sun Sentinel* report, Sigma Phi Epsilon has a troubling history of hazing at various chapters across the country. Chapters at Florida State University and the University of Central Florida were suspended for hazing two years ago, and last year, the fraternity was kicked off campus at the University of Alabama after having pledges sit on a metal chair heated by a blow torch or iron. A student suffered severe burns and a collapsed lung resulting from an infection.

Then, nine months ago, the University of Arizona's chapter was closed down for hazing and alcohol violations.

Sig Ep's director of chapter services told the *Sun Sentinel* in a statement that the fraternity forbids hazing and finds it inconsistent with its values. It sure sounds, though, like the message isn't getting through.

As for the FAU allegations, university officials should be applauded for acting quickly in suspending the fraternity pending its inquiry, and for forwarding the case to the state attorney to see if criminal charges are warranted.

If Letteri's version of events proves true, FAU should not hesitate to cut its ties with such an irresponsible fraternity.

BOTTOM LINE: FAU was right to act quickly.

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