Gee abhors anti-Semitism aimed at Jewish fraternity

By Joel Hunt
Lantern staff writer

OSU President E. Gordon Gee labeled as "frightening and contemptible" the anti-Semitic graffiti smeared in red paint Nov. 27 on the exterior of the Alpha Epsilon Pi fraternity house, especially in light of recent neo-Nazi violence in Germany.

Gee, who toured the AEPi house Monday, said in a prepared statement, the vandalism "is an affront to me, to all Jewish members of the university and Columbus communities and to a civilized society."

Vandals painted swastikas on outside walls and windows of the Jewish house during the weekend, said David Harris, a member of AEPi. The vandals also destroyed a $1,500 security lock, broke several landscape lights, spray-painted walls and windows with profanities and poured tar on the front porch, he said.

"I'm from Washington, D.C., where there are a lot of skinheads, but I've never come this close to anti-Semitism," Harris said.

Harris Levinson, treasurer for AEPi, said that in a meeting Sunday night, Sigma Alpha Epsilon fraternity accepted responsibility for some, but not all, of the vandalism. The meeting was held between the advisers and presidents of the two fraternities.

But, in an interview Monday evening with the Lantern, the president of SAE would neither confirm nor deny fraternity involvement.

Andy Flick, SAE president, would not comment about what was said at the meeting Sunday. He did say, however, the two houses are continuing to discuss both the damage to the AEPi house and damage earlier in the quarter to the SAE house.

SAE, after consulting with its attorney, issued the following statement: "Sigma Alpha Epsilon as a national fraternity does not condone anti-Semitism in any form or does it chapter at The Ohio State University or any of its members. We are currently assisting Alpha Epsilon Pi to find out who is responsible for the act that happened against the house in cooperation with Alpha Epsilon Pi and the authorities."

Levinson said if the anti-Semitic graffiti was meant as a prank, "this prank crossed the line."

"In this day and age, this kind of thing shouldn't be done ... but there is nothing you can do to stop it," Levinson said.

Jim Kane, director of Student Organization Services, said if an OSU fraternity is responsible for vandalism, the university's judicial process could level sanctions on that fraternity.

Changes in the university's Code of Student Conduct approved July 5, give the university jurisdiction to handle off-campus situations when students are involved, Kane said.

AEPi filed a report Saturday morning with the Columbus Division of Police, but Kane said a grievance with the university must be filed before the university will take action.

Gee said he believes a formal grievance has been filed, but did not know by whom. He said he plans to monitor the university judicial process and the investigation by Columbus police.

Krissey Harris also contributed to this story.
Fraternity house vandalism brings vow of prosecution

By Sylvia Brooks
and Tim Doulin
Dispatch Staff Reporters

The regional director of the Anti-Defamation League said vandalism at a Jewish fraternity house in the Ohio State University area Friday night was clearly anti-Semitic, and the culprits should be prosecuted.

The Columbus city attorney and state officials vowed to oblige.

Alan Katchen, league director for the Ohio/Kentucky/Indiana region, visited the Alpha Epsilon Pi house Sunday night and found it painted with a swastika and anti-Semitic expressions.

"It is outrageous and no more a fraternity prank. There should be no slap on the wrist for this. This is a hate crime," Katchen said.

City Attorney Ron O'Brien said yesterday that Columbus police haven't identified suspects, but charges will be filed if any are linked to the vandalism. He said charges could range from felony vandalism to misdemeanor criminal damaging.

"History has taught us that no act of anti-Semitism can go uncondemned," OSU President Gordon Gee said. "The painting of a swastika and anti-Jewish vulgarity on the Alpha Epsilon Pi house is an affront to me, to all Jewish members of the university and the Columbus community, and to a civilized society."

"I have offered my support to the members of the fraternity and to their parents and am monitoring both the university judicial process and city police investigations." Gee met with members of Alpha Epsilon Pi at their house yesterday and offered to contact their parents and meet with them again.

Katchen said anti-Semitic incidents have increased in Ohio in the past several years.

"There is a nasty climate out there. There is an increased tolerance for intolerance," he said.

An Anti-Defamation League survey released Nov. 15 on anti-Semitism and prejudice found that one in five Americans, or 35 million to 40 million, holds anti-Semitic views. The majority of Americans, however, reject such beliefs.

The report concluded that "older, less-educated, blue-collar and black Americans are disproportionately more likely to hold anti-Semitic views than the general public. Those ... least likely ... are disproportionately under age 40 and college-educated."

Jonathan Pierce, the fraternity's regional adviser, said the incident appears to be an "act of ignorance."

"We see anti-Semitic incidents every day," Pierce said. "It is astonishing and disgusting. It is not just occurring here at Ohio State but at fraternities across the country."

Sidney Dunn, national executive vice president of Alpha Epsilon Pi, with offices in Indianapolis, said, "I've been on the staff since 1967, and I can't remember anything happening like this in Columbus." He said no anti-Semitic incident has been directed recently at other Alpha Epsilon Pi chapters.

Education is needed to prevent similar incidents, said Steve Abrams, director of the Hillel Foundation at OSU.

"I don't think it is helpful to make a big deal out of this," Abrams said. "What is helpful is to get an education program in place that deals with multiculturalism and ethnic sensitivity." Such education must take place in the classroom and in campus dormitories and fraternities and sororities, he said.

"It is astounding," Abrams said, "that we still can't seem to break down the racial and cultural and ethnic differences."
Fraternities resolve ongoing differences

By Tim Haskett
Lantern staff writer

Two fraternities are reconciling a bitter feud that erupted with the painting of anti-Semitic graffiti on the walls of the Alpha Epsilon Pi fraternity house last winter.

The Sigma Alpha Epsilon fraternity, 1934 Indianola Ave., has accepted "some of the responsibility" for the Nov. 27 incident and will pay for damages, said fraternity President Scott Rothenbush.

Rothenbush and Harris Levinson, president of AEPi, 1945 Indianola Ave., said the act was blown out of proportion and was not because of anti-Semitic sentiment.

The incident was the culmination of differences the neighboring fraternities had for some time, Levinson said.

The differences, including the AEPi's traditional painting of the lions that sit in front of the Sigma Alpha Epsilon house, have fueled the fires of dissent between the two fraternities, Levinson said.

"The line was crossed and re-crossed, and things just went too far," Rothenbush said.

The fraternity still does not know exactly what happened that night, Rothenbush said. But he said the members have assumed some of the responsibility and are planning to pay for all of the damages done to the house.

The damages included the destruction of a security lock, the breaking of several landscape lights, the spraying of anti-Semitic symbols and profanity on the walls and the pouring of tar on the front porch.

The house, still marred by the vandals' spray paint, is scheduled for cleanup today with the cooperation of both the fraternities, provided the weather is good.

"Right now we want to be proactive instead of reactive, so something good can come out of all of this," Levinson said.

"We have realized that continuing to fight with each other will not do us or the Greek system any good, so we are trying to work together and help each other to put this behind us," Rothenbush said.

The fraternities have agreed to help each other in their upcoming trials for violations of Ohio State's Code of Student Conduct, scheduled in about five weeks, Rothenbush and Levinson said.

In addition, both Levinson and Rothenbush said their fraternities will be working to develop a program with University College to address anti-Semitism.
The president of AE Pi, Harris Levinson, said he thinks the vandalism to the AE Pi fraternity house last winter was due to the vandals' ignorance. He said he thinks they did not fully understand the gravity of painting swastikas on the fraternity house walls. Because of an error in editing, this was not made clear in the April 6 edition of the Lantern.
OSU judicial panel sets dates for frat hearings

By Stephanie Wasmith and Tim Haskett
Latern staff writers

A university panel will hear testimony Friday regarding charges that members of the Alpha Epsilon Pi fraternity poured paint on stones in front of the Sigma Alpha Epsilon fraternity house on Nov. 23 and broke a window.

The Office of Judicial Affairs learned of the incident as it investigated separate charges that have been made against the SAE fraternity. Members of SAE have been charged with vandalizing the AEPi house, including painting swastikas on the walls of the Jewish fraternity on Nov. 27.

The case against AEPi will be heard at 1 p.m. Friday by a judicial panel of students and faculty members. The case against SAE will be heard May 21. Since the vandalism, the presidents of the fraternities have settled their "organizational differences," SAE President Scott Rothenbush and AEPi President Harris Levinson have agreed to advise each other in the upcoming hearings.

The charges are against the fraternities as groups, not against individual members. The panel will determine whether the fraternities' actions were in violation of the OSU Code of Student Conduct.

The AEPi fraternity has been charged with the destruction of property "whether done intentionally or with reckless disregard."

According to the Office of Student Life, SAE members retaliated by "allegedly approached the Alpha Epsilon Pi house in a threatening manner while carrying bats in the days between Nov. 23 and Nov. 27."

SAE members have been charged with violating code provisions that prohibit infliction of bodily or emotional harm, and destruction of property.

SAE members recently wrote a letter to AEPi and took responsibility for the damages to the house, and AEPi wrote a letter to SAE and took responsibility for the vandalism.

See HEARING / Page two

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Young said a decision should be reached within 24 hours of the hearing.

Young said a decision should be reached within 24 hours of the hearing. If AEPi is found guilty, the penalty could be a "developmental option," such as sponsoring a workshop, Young said.

Other penalties could range between community service to the revocation of the fraternity's charter, said Lenora Barnes-Wright, director of student life services.

Prior to this case, the Office of Judicial Affairs had not released information about its investigations and hearings. However, the office agreed to release information about these cases in response to a request made by the Lantern several weeks ago.

The office has agreed to release information when charges are brought against an organization, but not when charges are brought against an individual.

The office has declined to release information about individuals, citing the federal Family Educational Right to Privacy Act. The act prevents public universities from releasing confidential information about students. Universities that violate the act could lose their federal funding.

Most cases investigated by the office deal with individuals, Young said. The office investigates about 45 cases per quarter, and nearly all of the cases are charges against individuals.

Charges may be brought in a variety of ways, through police reports and complaints from students or faculty, Young said. In these cases, the investigations began with the filing of police reports after the AEPi house was vandalized.
Hearing's first day brings admission of guilt from AEPi

By Stephanie Warsmith and Tim Haskett
Lantern staff writers

Alpha Epsilon Pi pled guilty on Friday to vandalizing the Sigma Alpha Epsilon fraternity house on Nov. 23.

A University Judicial Panel sentenced the fraternity to 250 hours of community service because of its violation of provisions set by the OSU Code of Student Conduct. The fraternity was also ordered to revise its pledge program to exclude pranks, said Harris Levinson, president of AEPi.

Levinson said this sentence is "very fair." The 250 hours of community service will mean about five hours of service per fraternity member.

Scott Kalniz, president of AEPi at the time of the incident, explained the events of Nov. 23 to the five-member panel, which included three OSU faculty and two USG members.

SAE has been charged with the vandalism done to the AEPi house Nov. 27, which included anti-Semitic graffiti. The vandalism was allegedly in retaliation for the painting of the lions.

Four members of AEPi decided to paint SAE's cement lions as a prank, Kalniz said. The members were not identified.

While they were painting the lions, they broke a window, he said. AEPi compensated SAE for the damages.

Kalniz said painting the SAE lions is a tradition at many universities and it happens many times throughout the year.

In testimony, SAE President, Scott Rothenbush, said the painting of the lions was perpetrated by fraternity pledges. He called the incident "a pledge class thing ... I believe that is what Harris told me."

In an interview after the hearing, Rothenbush said the incident "certainly wasn't a question of hazing." Hazing is prohibited under the student code, and it is illegal under state law. Hazing is defined in the Code of Student Conduct as "doing any act, or requiring or encouraging any act, of initiation into any student or other organization that causes or creates a substantial risk of causing mental or physical harm to any person."

Rothenbush said, "I can honestly tell you that, with the tension that has existed between our two houses, to ask a pledge or to ask an active member to paint our lions certainly isn't hazing because they'd be saying, 'yes, I want to do that.'"

Levinson agreed that the incident was a simple prank. He said he was not sure if any of the pledges were involved.

During the hearing, Rothenbush did not act as Levinson's adviser, despite an agreement between the two presidents that he would. Instead, Levinson was advised by John Pierce, regional adviser of AEPi.

The fraternities have been working to improve their relations, and Rothenbush was surprised by the switch.

"It was my understanding that I was going to be the adviser to Harris," Rothenbush said. "It was what we had discussed."

Asked about the change, Levinson said he told Rothenbush the evening before the hearing that Rothenbush would be called as a witness. Levinson assumed Rothenbush knew he could not act as both an adviser and a witness during the hearing.

Levinson told Rothenbush, after the hearing, that he should get an adviser from his national fraternity for an SAE hearing Friday.

As a result of the incident, AEPi has received a warning from its national fraternity, Pierce said. If there are further violations, the fraternity's charter could be revoked.

It appears the fraternity will take the warning seriously. "There will no longer be any fraternity pranks as far as AEPi is concerned," Levinson said.
Hearing postponed

The Sigma Alpha Epsilon's hearing for its vandalism of the Alpha Epsilon Pi fraternity has been postponed indefinitely by the Office of Judicial Affairs, said Scott Rothenbush, president of SAE.

The hearing will decide on SAE's involvement in the Nov. 27, 1992, vandalism of the AEPi house, which included anti-Semitic graffiti.

The vandalism, which resulted from a bitter fraternity feud between the two houses, appears to be the foremost reason why an anti-Semitism sensitivity program is being considered in a meeting this Friday.

The meeting, which has been arranged through the cooperation of Rothenbush, and Harris Levinson, president of AEPi, will discuss the possibility of implementing some kind of anti-Semitic sensitivity program campus-wide. The meeting will be attended by Rothenbush, Levinson, Dean of Student Life Richard Hollingsworth, Dean of University College Mac Stewart, Liz Kalf, program director of the B'Nai B'Rith Hillel Foundation and David Strauss director of Greek Affairs.

Rothenbush said he is very sympathetic and has gained an understanding of the gravity and sensitivity of anti-Semitism through this experience and through his relationships with the Jewish members of his own fraternity.

— Tim Haskett
Fraternity sentenced in vandalism hearing

By Stephanie Warsmith and Tim Haskell
Lantern staff writers

OSU fraternity Sigma Alpha Epsilon was sentenced to 800 hours of community service and put on probation for a year for vandalizing the Alpha Epsilon Pi fraternity house and threatening some of its members with baseball bats last November.

The vandalism done to the AE Pi house included swastikas and anti-Semitic phrases.

Each SAE member must perform 10 hours of service between autumn 1993 and November 30. The university will notify the fraternity of the specifics of the service before Autumn quarter.

The vandalism and threats by SAE were allegedly done in retaliation for vandalism done by members of AE Pi to the SAE house a few days before. AE Pi pled "in violation" to the vandalism done to the SAE house in a university hearing May 14.

AE Pi was sentenced to 250 hours of community service and asked to review its pledge program. Each member must perform approximately three hours of community service, as stipulated by the university ruling.

In its hearing before a University Judicial Panel June 4, SAE pled "no violation" to charges of infliction of bodily harm and destruction of property. The charges were in violation of the OSU Code of Student Conduct.

Scott Rothenbush, president of SAE, said the sentence against his fraternity was fair even though he did not feel it was necessary for either fraternity to be prosecuted by the university because of positive actions taken by both fraternities. Rothenbush and AE Pi President Harris Levinson helped compile anti-Semitic awareness material that will be used in the UVC program next year.

"We wanted to put together the program so that freshmen can have some idea about anti-Semitism and other problems with the university," Levinson said.

Rothenbush said the university did not take into consideration their efforts.

Levinson said it was appropriate that SAE be given a tougher punishment than his fraternity. When members of AE Pi painted the SAE lions, it was just a prank, he said. But the vandalism done to the AE Pi house was more than a fraternity prank.

"When you draw a swastika on a Jewish fraternity – that is not a prank," Levinson said.

Both Rothenbush and Levinson hope that their fraternities' experiences will keep other university groups from making the same mistake.

"The university is giving the word to the rest of campus that it will not tolerate mischievous activity by any group," Levinson said.

See HEARING / Page two

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• Hearing

CONTINUED FROM PAGE ONE

groups," Rothenbush said.

"I hope this type of thing will not happen again," Levinson said.

During the hearing, Rothenbush and SAE chapter advisor, Robert Schuler, testified that the SAE members who committed the vandalism and threats to AE Pi members acted as individuals.

After the hearing, Levinson was upset with the SAE plea of "no violation" on the grounds that only individuals in SAE committed the vandalism. He said there was a prior agreement between the two fraternities to plead "in violation."

"If someone in your chapter did it, your fraternity is going to be held responsible," Levinson said.

Levinson said SAE should be held responsible because it has not released the names of its members who committed the vandalism.

Rothenbush testified he did not know the identity of the members of his fraternity who committed the vandalism.

Rothenbush said his only personal knowledge of SAE's guilt in the incident was his finding in the SAE house of Styrofoam nuggets and tar which were used in the vandalism done to the AE Pi fraternity.
Fraternities’ pranks lead to penalties

College pranks last year that included destruction of property and anti-Semitic graffiti resulted in probation for one fraternity and orders that two fraternities perform a total of more than 1,000 hours of community service.

The Ohio State University Judicial Panel placed Sigma Alpha Epsilon on probation for three quarters and sentenced its members to about 800 hours of community service to be performed by Nov. 30.

A swastika and anti-Semitic expressions were painted last November on the Alpha Epsilon Pi house at 1945 Indianola Ave. Tar was poured on the front porch of the house, and outside lights were broken.

Sigma Alpha Epsilon was charged with OSU student conduct code violations — bodily harm or emotional harm and destruction of property in connection with that incident. At the time, Sigma Alpha Epsilon members said some of the vandalism may have been in response to a prank by Alpha Epsilon Pi pledges earlier in the week.

Alpha Epsilon Pi members admitted to university officials that their pledges poured paint on statues of lions outside the Sigma Alpha Epsilon house at 1934 Indianola Ave. The fraternity was charged with a conduct code violation of destruction of property.

For its part, Alpha Epsilon Pi was ordered to perform 250 hours of community service by Nov. 1 and to review its pledge program.