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MIT shuts down fraternity house, citing poor conduct

By **Matt Rocheleau**

| GLOBE CORRESPONDENT | OCTOBER 31, 2014



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MIT is shutting down a fraternity due to poor conduct by its members and forcing the students to move out of the organization's off-campus house in Boston this weekend, the school's chancellor said.

Officials did not specify the conduct that led to the decision to shut down the Lambda Chi Alpha house and to strip the fraternity of its university recognition as an official student group.

A woman was injured in a fall from a window during a party at the house earlier this semester and the group has faced scrutiny and activity restrictions since.

MIT said its move to close the Lambda Zeta chapter of Lambda Chi Alpha this weekend was prompted in part by a decision the fraternity's international organization announced on Thursday to suspend the MIT chapter for at least five years due to

“conduct that does not support the fraternity’s priority of providing a healthy chapter environment for its members.”

MIT Chancellor Cynthia Barnhart said the fraternity “has fallen short of the MIT community’s expectations, to our great disappointment.”

“Our decision to accept the action taken by the national of LCA is not made lightly,” she said in a statement. “It is my hope that this incident will reveal itself as a learning opportunity for those involved.”

An investigation was launched and the fraternity was suspended after a woman, who was a student but did not attend MIT, was injured when she fell from a third-story window during a rush week party at the house two months ago.

Amid concern that the party had violated rules that ban gatherings of 50 or more, the incident led MIT officials to reaffirm a year-old ban on large parties at university-affiliated fraternities, sororities, and living groups.

That ban on large gatherings was first imposed after an incident last fall when an MIT student fell four stories through a skylight at a party at another nearby fraternity.

Students living at the Lambda Chi Alpha house at 99 Bay State Road in Boston must leave by Sunday, university officials said. On-campus housing will be made available to members for the rest of this semester and campus officials will help the students relocate and to find housing for the spring semester.

“My staff will do all it can to help the members of LCA transition to new living arrangements and to manage the disruption that this may cause them,” said Barnhart.

In a message to the fraternity’s students Thursday night, MIT dean for student life Chris Colombo wrote that “making its decision to close the house swiftly, MIT was concerned with protecting the interests of the overall [Fraternity, Sorority and Independent Living Group] system.”

“Lambda Zeta chapter has demonstrated an inability to adhere to certain standards, and that has had reputational consequences for all of the other FSILGs,” he wrote. “MIT determined that allowing Lambda Zeta chapter members to continue to live in the chapter house even after having been suspended by the national chapter would introduce further risk to the FSILG system as a whole.”

Colombo also encouraged members who need emotional or academic assistance to contact MIT student support, mental health, and counseling staff.

Between now and Sunday, the fraternity is barred from having alcohol or holding any events on the property, and no visitors are allowed except for alumni of the fraternity, who will live in the house until it closes,

Colombo said.

The international fraternity organization has asked that, after it has lifted its suspension of the group, MIT consider allowing the chapter to reopen. The university said it is willing to discuss that option as long as certain conditions are met, but officials did not specify what those would be.

This past spring, another MIT fraternity, Delta Upsilon, was shut down after its international organization announced a suspension of at least two years for alcohol and hazing violations.

Amid sharply rising membership nationwide over the past several years, fraternities have come under fire for episodes of sexual violence, hazing, and dangerous, even deadly, partying. However, the groups have taken steps recently aimed at curbing bad behavior, and repairing their image.

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