The University of Texas at Austin and the Sigma Alpha Epsilon (SAE) fraternity, in response to hazing incidents that took place in fall 2006, have reached an agreement to restructure how SAE conducts its pledge and initiation processes and its social activities.

The agreement notes that SAE, “while still on probation for a prior violation of the university’s hazing rules, engaged in hazing and use of alcohol by minors during the pledging process.” Individual members of the fraternity have been disciplined. SAE’s compliance with the agreement will preclude any further action against the organization.

“It is our hope that this agreement creates a model for conduct by our fraternities and sororities,” said William Powers Jr., president of The University of Texas at Austin. “We appreciate the involvement of fraternity leadership, the SAE alumni advisory board, the house corporation and parents of SAE members in reaching this agreement. It is important that our university community—and particularly members of SAE and our other fraternities and sororities—recognize the consequences of illegal activities such as hazing or the provision of alcohol to minors.”

Under terms of the agreement SAE:

Shall be a conditionally registered student organization in good standing for five years beginning April 7, 2008. If at the end of the five years the dean of students determines SAE has fulfilled the obligations under the agreement, SAE shall be granted unconditional registration as a student organization. A number of terms of the agreement related to structural change in SAE operations shall remain in effect permanently;

Must strictly prohibit hazing. SAE shall take an active role in the development and delivery of training on the prohibition of hazing and on alcohol abuse. All members of SAE shall attend an annual educational program on hazing and alcohol awareness and abuse issues that is approved by the dean of students;

Shall permanently bar from membership any member who engages in hazing;

Shall suspend any member who provides alcohol to a minor or any member who fails to report hazing or provision of alcohol to a minor;

Shall annually inform pledges and members of the terms of the agreement prior to the pledging period;
Will limit its fall pledge period to eight weeks and include in its Pledge Education Program elements approved by the dean of students;

Will initiate a required pledges study hall from Sunday through Thursday of each week during the pledging period;

Shall provide its chapter adviser and the Dean of Students Office a written schedule of all SAE new member recruitment or rush activities;

Shall assure that all pre- and post-party and event clean-ups and other housekeeping activities during the pledge period will involve all members of SAE, not just pledges;

Shall employ a full-time resident assistant who will live in the SAE house and help chapter officers supervise the fraternity’s activities;

Is subject to “unannounced visits to the SAE house and its common areas” by the university police department, Austin Police, the Texas Alcoholic Beverage Commission or the Dean of Students Office;

Shall assure that alcohol served at any party or event must be dispensed by a third-party vendor, provider or caterer licensed by the Texas Alcoholic Beverage Commission;

Must allow a representative of its Advisory Board, the chapter adviser or a resident assistant to monitor all new member or rush activities;

Will eliminate any non-sanctioned parties or events.

The university shall promptly report to the Travis County attorney any allegation or report of hazing or provision of alcohol to a minor by SAE, the agreement says.

The agreement also establishes guidelines for future SAE parties and events. The guidelines include, among other things, giving advance notice to the university and SAE alumni advisers of large parties, limiting the attendance of guests at large parties to those named on a pre-party guest list, requiring the use of off-duty police officers to distribute tamper-proof wrist bands and to provide security, and limiting parties or events to Fridays and Saturdays with an ending time of 2 a.m.

“We must be unyielding in eliminating the abuse of students through hazing at The University of Texas at Austin,” said Juan C. González, vice president for student affairs. “Our commitment, led by President Powers, to ending hazing, to ending cruelty and to ending abuse is absolute. Identifying and prosecuting hazing violations is of paramount importance to the university. It is critical that every student, faculty and staff member be aware of the extreme danger associated with hazing. Protecting one another from harm is a responsibility we all share.”
“The agreement is intended to significantly restructure how SAE conducts its pledge and initiation processes and its social activities, and, in appropriate cases, serve as a template and catalyst for change for other fraternal organizations affiliated with UT,” the agreement says.

“We are very thankful for the efforts of the president and his office in allowing us to take a leadership role in improving fraternity life at The University of Texas at Austin,” said Jody Lane, alumni adviser for SAE.

Charlie Nettles, president of SAE at The University of Texas at Austin, said, “The Sigma Alpha Epsilon officers, members and alumni are extremely happy with the agreement. It is a great step in the right direction for all Greek organizations, and we look forward to the benefits it will reap for the fraternity and sorority community and its relations with the university.”

“We are very pleased with the efforts of The University of Texas at Austin and Sigma Alpha Epsilon to address the problem of hazing and improve fraternity life on campus,” said Roy Q. Minton, attorney for SAE.

The agreement was signed for the university by Powers, Gonzalez and Soncia R. Reagins-Lilly, senior associate vice president and dean of students, for SAE by Lane and Nettles, and by the respective attorneys for each, Patti Ohlendorf for The University of Texas at Austin and Minton for SAE.