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The hazing hotline

By Alyssa Vincent-Hill

Nearly two months ago, the University took unprecedented steps to investigate allegations that the Alpha Pi Epsilon fraternity mistreated its members. One of the catalyst that sparked the investigation was an anonymous tip line.

The hazing hotline, or so it has been dubbed by members of GW's Greek-letter community, allows individuals to report instances of mistreatment in the community by submitting an anonymous e-mail describing the incident. The Office of Greek Life and Student Judicial Services worked together to make this service available to students.

"We reviewed the situation with the fraternity at Rider University, and we're reviewing what we do and how we operate," said Dean Harwood, director of Greek Life and assistant director of the Student Activities Center, referencing the case of a fraternity member at a New Jersey university who died of alcohol poisoning last March. New Jersey authorities suspect hazing played a part in the student's death.

"We felt that this approach could be useful," Harwood said.

The ease of submitting an anonymous e-mail should encourage more students to report suspicious behavior, he said. Previously, students brought all complaints of mistreatment to the Office of Greek Life or Student Judicial Services.

The hazing hotline has been in place since September and has received mixed reviews from students regarding its effectiveness.

"I think it's a great idea so we can take action against (hazing) as soon as possible," said Bob Kickish, president of the Inter-Fraternity Council. "We need to report it to eliminate it."

Kickish said the new method's anonymity component is crucial because it helps a student avoid fear of retribution from the individuals responsible for the mistreatment.

"The extra step for anonymity is to prevent retribution," Kickish said. "The hotline just makes the reporting anonymous."

Unlike Kickish, many GW Greeks doubt the efficacy of the new system.

"Honestly, I'm not a big fan of it," said former Tau Kappa Epsilon President Oliver Gilbert. "It's a good concept, (and) hazing is bad for the community; however, this system is inefficient because it can be used inappropriately."
Gilbert emphasized that the system's seemingly appealing anonymous component also could invite abuse.

"It's anonymous, so anyone could report anything and flood the system with false information," he said.

SJS opens an investigation into a fraternity or sorority based on the filing of complaints against that organization, not on the truthfulness of the complaints.

Gilbert said, "It promotes a witch hunt in a way."