

Alfred University Cancels Football Game; Disciplines Players for Alleged Hazing

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Alfred, NY - Alfred University President Edward G. Coll, Jr., this afternoon announced what he called "harsh measures" against students believed to have been involved in alleged hazing of freshman football players at a party Saturday evening in an off-campus residence. Alfred University became aware of a problem about 8 p.m. Saturday when a freshman student was found in a severely intoxicated condition in his residence hall, said Coll at a press conference on the University campus. In all, five students -- freshman football players who had attended the same party at a Main Street residence known as the "football house" -- had to be treated for suspected alcohol poisoning. Alfred ambulance transported two of the students to St. James Mercy Hospital in Hornell where they were treated and released, one about 3 a.m. Sunday and the other several hours later. Alfred Village Police arrested five students in connection with this incident. As part of the disciplinary actions, Coll announced the University has forfeited Saturday afternoon's game against Susquehanna University, an unprecedented action in AU's history. Head Football Coach Dave Murray suspended six players from the team for the remainder of the season for reported violations of team policies. They are co-captains Nick Mancini and Justin Moore, as well as Jason Davoli, Casey Gaughran, Stephen Rossi and Eric Schwarz. One student, who was already on disciplinary probation for earlier infractions, has been expelled by the University, pending the results of a disciplinary hearing. "I am extremely disappointed, not only for myself, but for the members of the team who were not at fault in this incident," said Murray, for whom Saturday's game was to have been his first as head football coach for the Saxons. "This is not the way I envisioned starting my career as head football coach at Alfred, but I believe this is clearly the right thing to do in these circumstances." Coll said he ordered the game forfeited "as an expression of the seriousness of this incident. I wanted our football team to know that we will not tolerate this kind of behavior." Coll called Susquehanna President Joel Cunningham this morning to apologize for Alfred's last-minute decision not to play Saturday. He has also been in contact with the National Collegiate Athletic Association to advise it of the University's actions relating to this incident. President Coll said the University will continue its own investigation. "Coach Murray has pledged to me that if our investigation... reveals that other players were involved in Saturday night's incident, he will take similar action (suspension) in their cases," the president said. The University, Coll said, will actively pursue additional disciplinary actions against all students found to be involved in the events of Saturday night. The University will also cooperate fully with the Alfred Village Police Department in its investigation into other criminal charges arising from the events of Saturday. All members of the football team are being required by the University to attend substance abuse educational classes. President Coll announced that he is convening a special Presidential Commission, to fully investigate the incident and to make recommendations on how to avoid such problems in the future. He has asked for the Commission's report by December 1. The University's first concern is the safety and well-being of its students, and keeping faith with the parents who place their trust in the University when they send their children to Alfred. "We cannot condone the type of behavior that jeopardizes the health, safety, and well being of our students," said Coll. "What we are announcing today will be called harsh by some" he added, "but I assure you, their severity pales in comparison to the tragedy that could have so easily occurred this past weekend." Just over 20 years ago, an Alfred University student died of alcohol poisoning as a result of a hazing incident," he said. "That tragedy not only hurt, beyond measure, his family, but it also hurts the entire University to this day. As president of Alfred University, I pledge to you that we will do whatever is within our power to keep another such tragedy from occurring among our students." Note to editors: a copy of Alfred University's hazing policy is available on our website: http://www.alfred.edu/aca..._policy.html Comments: goetschius@king.alfred.edu