

Liability Claims Example

Background

Alpha College has a competitive Greek system comprised of eight national sororities and seven national fraternities. The fraternities and sororities on campus do not have any fraternity or sorority housing, but instead typically associate at off-campus social and philanthropic events. The Greek groups at Alpha College have a generally favorable reputation and have run into few problems with the school's administration and faculty.

The Alpha Alpha Alpha Sorority on campus (Gamma chapter) currently has twenty-five active members and has never run into any disciplinary problems from either a Sorority or College standpoint. In March of last year, the National Sorority sent a Traveling Consultant to the chapter as a part of her normal duties in verifying that the chapter was abiding by the Sorority's risk management policies, that the chapter was not having any recruiting issues, etc. During the visit, the Traveling Consultant allegedly encouraged underage drinking and taught the chapter members several drinking games.

Scenario

Several Alpha Alpha Alpha Sorority members at Alpha College have an off-campus apartment, and they frequently hold "unofficial" Alpha Alpha Alpha parties at their apartment. On campus, the apartment is known for its regular Thursday night parties. On this particular Thursday night, Jane Smith, Alpha Alpha Alpha member, had just finished work as a waitress at a restaurant, gone out to a few bars, and then decided to join many of her sorority sisters for the traditional Thursday night party at the apartment. Around 3 am the next morning, Jane had drunk too much and asked her sisters for a ride home. Several of her sorority sisters arranged for her to ride home with Bobby Allen, a member of Beta Beta Beta Fraternity on campus, who was supposedly the Fraternity's designated driver for the evening. It turned out that Bobby Allen had also been drinking and was not fit to drive. Upon arriving at Jane's house and dropping her off, Jane fell on the driveway on her way into her house. Bobby could not see Jane and backed his car into her. Realizing what he had done, he then put the car in drive and inadvertently rolled the car over Jane a second time.

Result

Jane Smith's injuries caused paralysis to both of her legs. Jane Smith's parents sued Bobby Allen and that lawsuit is still in process. Due to the parent's mounting medical bills, the parents named the following entities and individuals in a lawsuit demanding in excess of \$2M:

- Alpha College
- Alpha Alpha Alpha Sorority
- Gamma chapter of Alpha Alpha Alpha Sorority
- Gamma's Chapter President
- Gamma's Chapter Advisor
- Alpha Alpha Alpha's National President and Executive Board
- The four individuals who lived in the apartment at which the party was held and who provided the alcohol
- Beta Beta Beta Fraternity and Chapter
- Beta Beta Beta Fraternity's Chapter President
- Beta Beta Beta Fraternity's Chapter Advisor

*The venue that originally served Jane alcohol was named in a separate suit

**The events described in this case study are based on actual events; however, the names, dates, and several other details have been changed for discussion purposes.*