Supervisor explains actions; OLs face consequences

By

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In order to explain his own actions fully, he had to come clean about the rest.

The Northeastern News recently obtained an e-mail written by former Orientation Leader (OL) supervisor Marc Lo in which he explained to the 30 OLs why he filed a report subsequently causing nine of them to resign.

In the report first submitted to the New Student Orientation Office, Lo alleged the nine OLs had been drinking underage at a "gathering" at Student Government Association (SGA) President Andres Vargas' Mission Hill residence Aug. 14. The report also included the names of members of other student groups including SGA and the Kappa Sigma fraternity.

"It seemed instinctual that if I had to turn in the people that trust me, that I care so deeply about, that I might as well turn in everyone else to fully uphold my integrity," Lo said in the e-mail.

Lo told the OLs it was his own breach of contract that caused him to file the initial report. He then said he had to tell the New Student Orientation Office the "context in which the fraternization took place."

Lo allegedly kissed an Orientation Leader at the party, effectively violating his contract as a supervisor, former Orientation Leader Nina Baltierra said.

"If I had not made that final mistake that night, none of this would have come out," Lo said in the e-mail. "Yet because I did break my contract, and because word of it was traveling so quickly, I felt the need to set the example, to hold myself accountable for my own actions."

Lo said he sent the e-mail "to begin to normalize the relationship" between himself and the OLs.

As a result of his breach of contract, Lo stepped down from his position in the Orientation Office. The names of the OLs involved in the "gathering" were then sent to the Office of Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution (OSCCR).

The Orientation Leaders met with administrators from OSCCR Sept. 9 and 10.

"Everyone who went through their hearing, people have said that they're responsible for their actions," said Olivia Kim, one of the former Orientation Leaders. "Whatever happened, OSCCR did what they needed to do."

Kim said while her letter was being sent home Monday, she believed she received the minimum punishment for underage drinking -- probation, a $50 fine and an online alcohol education course.

Baltierra also said she admitted responsibility for her actions at her meeting with OSCCR. In the meeting, Baltierra had the chance to view the report that had brought her to the office, as well as others written by her former boss in the orientation office, Beth Rosenbleet, and two other former OLs.

"Guilty is guilty," Baltierra said. "I wasn't going to fight it because I'm guilty and I feel that I should deal with the consequences. It's the right thing to do I guess."

As part of their probation, the former OLs will have to resign their positions in any student group on campus.
Baltierra was set to take the position of vice president of production for the up-and-coming NUTV this fall. She will no longer be able to take that position.

Kim, who does not currently hold any leadership positions on campus, said her hopes of becoming a Resident Assistant (RA) in the coming semesters will be increasingly difficult as a result of this incident.

Kim said it was Lo’s relationship with the OLs in the summer and the way he cherished their friendship that caused him to write the e-mail. However, she said there were parts she did not understand, including why he felt he had to name other people and categorize them into student groups.

"I do feel like he did what he had to do. I also feel that it was a little irresponsible for him to put himself in that situation and also that so many people who really have no fault in this situation are taking blame for it as well," Kim said.

Lo said he crossed the line between friend and supervisor by attending the gathering with the OLs that night.

If he could change anything, Lo said "I would not have gone to that party."

In addition to the OLs, Vargas, as the alleged party host, will go before the student judicial board Sept. 22. Some of the OLs were asked to testify at Vargas' hearing.

Baltierra said she is not thrilled at the prospect of testifying.

"If it's not mandatory, I don't think I want to do it," Baltierra said. "Not that I'm hiding anything or anything, I'd kind of just like to move on now. But if it's necessary for me to bring some kind of light to the issue then I will definitely testify."

Vargas faces a minimum sanction of deferred suspension if found responsible for serving alcohol to minors.