

After sex-assault suits, police take increased role at Stockton University

[Jim Walsh](#), Cherry Hill Courier-Post Published 3:14 p.m. ET Aug. 3, 2018 | Updated 11:05 a.m. ET Aug. 4, 2018



Stockton University, facing four suits alleging sexual assaults against first-year students, said Galloway police will take part in its Welcome Week program. (Photo: Courier-Post file photo)

GALLOWAY - Stockton University, facing lawsuits from four women alleging they were sexually assaulted as freshmen, has announced local police will take part in its upcoming Welcome Week for new students.

The police role is intended "to reinforce Stockton's messages to students about how to remain safe when choosing to attend unregulated off-campus events or activities," the school said in a statement Friday.

[The statement also said](#) Stockton and Galloway police officials had met "to discuss awareness, prevention and disciplinary procedures already in place, and how they might be enhanced."

The statement made no reference to the lawsuits, [which allege the women were assaulted in separate incidents](#) after attending parties at an off-campus fraternity, Pi Kappa Phi.

But a Stockton spokeswoman on Friday emphasized the state school has no connection with the local chapter of Pi Kappa Phi.

"It is a rogue group of men who fraudulently posed as a fraternity," she said. "They are not recognized by Stockton or by the national group."

All of the lawsuits were filed last month in federal court in Camden by Toms River attorney Robert Fuggi Jr.

"It's a step in the right direction," Fuggi said of Stockton's statement. "It's a beginning, but I think Stockton has a long way to go in really remedying a systemic atmosphere of sexual assault."

Welcome Week, intended to orient Stockton's incoming class of almost 1,600 freshmen, will be held from Aug. 31 to Sept. 6.

Galloway police also will take part in additional "student awareness programs," Friday's statement said.

Galloway police Chief Donna Higbee said her officers will bolster "Stockton's messages about preventing, identifying and immediately reporting sexual assault or any criminal activity both on and off campus."

She said early reporting of crimes "is extremely important to the investigative process."

Three of the lawsuits claim victims were assaulted last year, in two cases by the same alleged assailant. A fourth asserts a Stockton freshman was raped after a Pi Kappa Phi party in 2014.

One student claimed she was assaulted at the Pi Kappa Phi frat house in an isolated area on White Horse Pike in Galloway. The others allege they were assaulted in dorm rooms on the school's campus.

The lawsuits contend fraternity members conspired to give alcohol and drugs to underage women and to sexually assault them when they were incapacitated. It alleges Stockton has failed to adequately warn students about the risk posed by the frat house.

Stockton spokeswoman Diane D'Amico has declined to comment on the litigation, but said the school's "first priority is the safety of all students."

Stockton is "fully supportive of all law enforcement personnel who are responding to and investigating these allegations," said D'Amico, who noted the school "has no frat houses either on or off campus."

D'Amico noted incoming students are required to attend programs "that specifically address topics such as sexual assault and violence prevention."

Jim Walsh: @jimwalsh_cp; 856-486-2646; jwalsh@gannettnj.com