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LeMoyne-Owen College Cooperates with Investigations into Unsportsmanlike Behavior during Basketball Game Against Lane College

MEMPHIS, TN (Jan. 20, 2017) LeMoyne-Owen College enjoys a healthy rivalry with fellow HBCU Lane College of Jackson, Tennessee. During a much-anticipated game Saturday evening January 14 in Bruce/Johnson Hall, two players—one from Lane and one of our Magicians—allowed their tempers to flare during the heat of competition and a physical confrontation ensued. Regrettably, this confrontation immediately escalated and sparked members of the audience to move onto the court and engage in the conflict.

“The behavior exhibited by our student athletes and those members of the audience who engaged in the conflict is unfortunate and unacceptable,” LeMoyne-Owen College President Dr. Andrea Lewis Miller stated.

“The College does not condone this behavior. We hold all LeMoyne-Owen College students, including our athletes, to a higher code of conduct and our athletes are expected to exhibit the highest standards of sportsmanship on and off the court or field of play,” she added.

College officials have investigated the incident and have fully cooperated with the Southern Intercollegiate Athletics Conference (SIAC), Lane College and Memphis Police Department investigations to ensure appropriate disciplinary action is levied on those persons who engaged in the conflict.

The LeMoyne-Owen College athletics department was notified earlier this afternoon of the SIAC's ruling and will fully comply with the penalties levied. "The punishment handed down by the SIAC is in accordance with the values we hold at LeMoyne-Owen College and reflects our stance regarding our players' inappropriate behavior during the contest," Magicians Head Coach William Anderson said. "We expect more from our athletes and will not accept this type of behavior," he added. "Of the 15 players suspended, seven were our players and we will ensure they serve their suspensions according to the SIAC's guidelines."

The College also has identified the individual who assaulted the Lane player with a chair, has submitted this information to Lane College officials and the Memphis Police Department (MPD), and is cooperating fully with the MPD's ongoing investigation. LeMoyne-Owen College has issued a lifetime ban regarding this individual attending College events and activities, as has the SIAC, and will pursue any charges available under the law to ensure this person is punished for his behavior. "We want our fans and visitors to enjoy the spirit of competition in a safe environment," President Miller said. "Safety is our top priority and we will not tolerate behavior that endangers students, faculty, staff, visitors or competitors who visit our campus."

College officials will take additional steps to ensure spectators enjoy a safe environment at LOC sporting events. Eight security personnel are present at all games. This number has been increased to ten and special care will be taken to protect the court. "Our gymnasium allows spectators to have a very intimate experience as those sitting courtside are just a few feet from the field of play," Coach William Anderson said. "We will have additional security personnel on site during the games to ensure the fans enjoy the game from the stands and that the players are secure whenever and wherever they move about in the venue."

President Miller also is working with Lane President Dr. Logan Hampton to ensure the rivalry between their respective institutions remains healthy. "We hold our HBCU athletics traditions dear," Miller said. "I want this incident to serve as a teachable moment that will grow into interaction off the court that fosters unity between the colleges' students, student athletes and the respective communities in which we reside, learn and serve."

Details of the unifying activities that are planned will be shared at the LOC vs. Lane basketball game Feb. 11 at J.F. Lane Gymnasium in Jackson, Tennessee.

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