

students injured," said Tom Conroy, a Yale spokesman. The crash has rocked this campus, marking the start of the new semester with funerals and memorial services for the four students who died: Kyle M. Burnat, 19, of College Park, Ga., Andrew K. Dwyer, 20, of Hobe Sound, Fla., Sean R. Fenton, 20, of Newport Beach, Calif., and Nicholas G. Grass, 19, of Holyoke. Three of the injured students have been released from area hospitals but two, Brett D. Smith, 18, of Papillion, Neb., and Eric W. Wenzel, 21, of Garden City, N.Y., remained hospitalized yesterday, according to university officials. The tragedy has also highlighted the arm's-length relationship between the university and its fraternities, onetime dominant social empires that have been forced off campus and are independent of the university. While hazing is a barred activity, university officials acknowledged they are reliant on students to report activity that may be deemed inappropriate. "The fraternities are not part of the university," Conroy said. "The university does not run them, so we don't supervise fraternities."

David Easlick, executive director of Delta Kappa Epsilon, said the national umbrella of the fraternity does not monitor fraternity activities and was unaware of the Yale chapter's pledge ritual. "It's no national tradition. It's a thing that Yale students do," Easlick said.

The game began Thursday night when six freshmen captured a senior fraternity member as part of a Hell Week initiation rite that members said has been played out for six decades. The senior had been prepped in advance, and there were rules about where he could be taken and how long he could be kept hidden, according to Nicholas Sinatra, 21, a senior and president of Delta Kappa Epsilon at Yale.

The freshmen opted to take their captive to New York City by train. The senior told other fraternity members via cellphone where he was being taken, according to one freshman pledge who asked not to be identified.

Meanwhile, 16 upperclassmen had driven to New York City in three vehicles. They met up with some chapter alumni. Later, the upperclassmen "recovered" the captive senior from the freshmen and the whole group gathered at a bar, Sinatra said. Shortly after 3 a.m., the group of 23 decided to head home, Sinatra said. Because the next train back to New Haven was not leaving until 5 a.m., the six freshmen and the senior opted to split up among the three vehicles of the upperclassmen for the trip back to Yale.

Sinatra said that he, Fenton, and one other fraternity member were designated drivers. Sinatra said he had nothing to drink. The caravan departed in roughly 20-minute intervals starting at about 3 a.m., Sinatra said. The sport utility vehicle that crashed, driven by Fenton and carrying eight passengers, was the second to leave, Sinatra said.

Sinatra said his vehicle was the last to depart New York, at approximately 3:45 a.m. Sinatra said he stopped at a