FAMU spokeswoman Sharon Saunders said university officials haven't been given details about possible criminal charges.

ORLANDO, Fla. (AP) -- When prosecutors announce criminal charges Wednesday in the hazing death of a Florida A&M University band member, they will embark on a legal chess game involving multiple defendants who require different approaches for winning convictions, experts say.

Prosecutors have prepared at least five separate cases against the suspects who contributed to 26-year-old Robert Champion's death aboard a chartered bus parked outside an Orlando hotel last November.

Detectives said Champion was hazed by other band members following a performance against a rival school and witnesses told emergency dispatchers Champion was vomiting before he was

found unresponsive aboard the bus.

The medical examiner's office in Orlando ruled that Champion had bruises to his chest, arms, shoulder and back and internal bleeding that caused him to go into shock, which killed him.

Prosecutors sometime cluster defendants by case, meaning the number of defendants could be higher than five, said Bob Dekle, a University of Florida law professor. That could make the prosecution more complicated as potential witnesses may be defendants who can invoke their Fifth Amendment right not to testify for fear of incriminating themselves, he said.

"You lead with your best case and get a conviction, and that sometimes creates a domino effect on the willingness of others to go to trial," Dekle said. "It's a chess game."

The charges range from misdemeanors to felonies, said Danielle Tavernier, a spokeswoman for the State Attorney's Office in Orlando. She refused to specify the charges pending an announcement by prosecutors Wednesday.

Hazing that involves bodily harm is a third-degree felony in Florida, but legal experts said prosecutors also may file more serious charges like manslaughter and second-degree murder depending on whether it was obvious Champion was in distress while he was being hazed.

"I think it's sure-fire that they are going to charge them with the hazing," said Randy McClean, an Orlando-area defense attorney. "But if his injuries were so that when they were beating him, it became readily apparent that he was in real distress and they kept beating him, then I think they would have manslaughter, possibly second-degree murder."

Florida's hazing law was passed in 2005 following the death of another Florida college student. The law defines hazing as any act that endangers the health or safety of a student for the purpose of admission to a school group.

"I've never seen it personally used but this is the text book case for it," McClean said.

If prosecutors aim for the more serious charges, they will have to prove either premeditation or recklessness, said Robert Jarvis, a law professor at Nova Southeastern University.

"I suspect the charge will be some level of manslaughter because this obviously was a hazing gone very, very wrong," Jarvis said.

Prosecutors are better off charging the defendants separately, as opposed to charging them all together, because it will give them leverage to pressure those charged with less serious crimes to testify against those facing more serious charges, Jarvis said.

"Some of the defendants may have planned the hazing but weren't actually at the hazing. Others may have planned the hazing but participated in it," Jarvis said. "There are different actions that different defendants took."

The pending charges will bring more scrutiny to a culture of hazing at FAMU and other schools. Champion's death was ruled a homicide by medical examiners, and the case has jeopardized the future of FAMU's legendary marching band and shaken the school's Tallahassee campus.

Champion's parents, Pam and Robert, believe the filing of charges is "bittersweet," said their attorney, Christopher Chestnut.

"Obviously it's comforting to know that someone will be held accountable for Robert's murder, but it's also disconcerting to think of the impact of the future of these students," Chestnut said. "This is just unfortunate all the way around."

Chestnut said family members are disappointed that authorities didn't give them enough advance notice to travel from Georgia to Florida to attend a news conference Wednesday to announce the results of the investigation. But he said the family is also "thankful there is some

movement on this case after five months of delay."

Champion's parents have sued the company that owns the bus where the hazing took place. In a civil lawsuit, Champion's family alleges that the bus driver stood guard outside the bus while the hazing took place. The bus company owner initially said the bus driver was helping other band members with their equipment when the hazing took place.

Witnesses in the Champion case have told his parents he might have been targeted because he opposed the culture of hazing they say has long existed in the band, the parents' attorney has said. It has also been suggested to them that Champion was targeted because he was gay and a candidate for chief drum major.

In a January interview with The Associated Press, Champion's parents dismissed the notion that his sexual orientation brought on the attack, which was, to their knowledge, the first time he'd ever been hazed.

"The main reason that we heard is because he was against hazing, and he was totally against it," Champion's father, Robert Champion Sr. of Decatur, Ga., said in an interview.

FAMU has suspended the band and launched a task force to recommend steps it could take to curtail hazing.

Three FAMU band members were arrested in the Oct. 31 beating of a female band member whose thigh was broken.

Also Tuesday, a lawyer for two FAMU music professors who allegedly were present during the unrelated hazing of band fraternity pledges in early 2010 said they have been forced out.

FAMU spokeswoman Sharon Saunders said university officials haven't been given details about possible criminal charges.

The ramifications of criminal charges extend beyond the defendants. The charges could inspire civil lawsuits, result in more shake-ups at the university and make parents think twice about sending their college-bound children to FAMU, Jarvis said.

"We could just be looking at the tip of the iceberg," Jarvis said. "The criminal charges are the first of many, many shoes that will drop."