

U.S.

10 Arrested in Death of L.S.U. Student After Fraternity Drinking Ritual

By STEPHANIE SAUL OCT. 11, 2017

Ten current or former students at Louisiana State University were arrested Wednesday in connection with the death last month of an 18-year-old freshman who became severely intoxicated during a fraternity hazing ordeal, the latest in a series of student deaths following such rituals.

One of the students, Matthew Naquin of Fair Oaks Ranch, Tex., faces a felony charge of negligent homicide in addition to a misdemeanor charge of hazing. The other nine face misdemeanor hazing charges, according to the university's police.

On the morning of Sept. 14, Maxwell Gruver, an aspiring sportswriter, was taken by two fellow students to a Baton Rouge hospital, where he was declared dead. He had passed out on a couch at the fraternity house around midnight.

A toxicology report on Mr. Gruver, of Roswell, Ga., revealed that his blood alcohol content was .496 percent, more than six times the legal limit for driving, and that he had aspirated vomit into his lungs. The cause of death was "acute ethanol intoxication with aspiration," according to the East Baton Rouge Parish Coroner's Office.

“Today’s arrests underscore that the ramifications of hazing can be devastating,” the university’s president, F. King Alexander, said in a statement. “Maxwell Gruver’s family will mourn his loss for the rest of their lives, and several other students are now facing serious consequences — all due to a

9

ARTICLES REMAINING

[SEE MY OPTIONS](#)[Subscriber login](#)

or prospective member, involved a question-and-answer game called “Bible study,” in which pledges were forced to drink “a pull” from a bottle of alcohol if they answered questions incorrectly, according to an arrest warrant.

Pledges had received text messages ordering them to report for Bible study at the chapter house on the evening of Sept. 13. The 18 to 20 pledges who showed up were told to get Solo cups of lemonade that would be used as chasers.

“Naquin was yelling, ‘Are you ready for Bible study?’” the warrant said.

The pledges were told to line up in a dark hallway and place their noses and toes against the wall, the warrant said. A strobe light was flashing and loud music was playing.

One member told the police that Mr. Gruver kept messing up the Greek alphabet and that Mr. Naquin, 19, forced him to drink each time he made a mistake. Mr. Naquin was behaving so aggressively that another member told him to “cut it out,” the warrant said.

Another pledge told the police that he believed Mr. Gruver was targeted because he was frequently late for events.

“During the course of the interviews, the recurring statement was that Naquin was the most aggressive and in charge of the hazing event,” the arrest warrant said.

A lawyer for Mr. Naquin, John S. McLindon of Baton Rouge, said he did

not want to discuss specifics of the case out of respect for the Gruver family, but added, “I think we should wait until all the evidence comes in” before making a final judgment.

The death resulted in the chapter’s closing and a temporary hiatus on all Greek life activities at L.S.U. On Oct. 4, fraternities and sororities were permitted to resume activities but with new limits. The university also convened a task force to study Greek life.

Of the 10 men arrested on Wednesday, eight, including Mr. Naquin, are current students. One was a student at the time but has since left, and one is a former student.

A student accountability office is conducting an investigation that could lead to disciplinary action, according to Ernie Ballard III, L.S.U.’s media relations director. Under Louisiana law, any student convicted of hazing must be expelled.

Mr. Gruver’s death followed several other highly-publicized deaths in recent years, also leading to criminal charges and the closure of fraternity chapters.

Timothy Piazza, an engineering student at Pennsylvania State University from Lebanon, N.J., died Feb. 4 after a night of hazing. That led to strict new regulations on Greek life, including a prohibition on liquor, kegs and all-day parties. In May, 18 students were charged in Mr. Piazza’s death — including eight with voluntary manslaughter — but the more serious charges were thrown out by a judge.

Also in May, four men pleaded guilty to voluntary manslaughter in connection with the 2013 death of Chun Hsien Deng, a student at Baruch College in Manhattan who was knocked out and killed during a hazing ritual that occurred on a fraternity trip to Pennsylvania.

A version of this article appears in print on October 12, 2017, on Page A13 of the New York

edition with the headline: 10 Face Charges in Deadly Drinking Ritual at L.S.U.

© 2017 The New York Times Company