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After 2 student deaths KU acts against underage drinking

By MARÁ ROSE WILLIAMS and LAURA BAUER
The Kansas City Star

The University of Kansas knew for more than a decade that it had an underage drinking problem. Committees were formed, reports were written.

But after the death of two students in the past two months, the university took action: It rewrote policies, implemented new rules to involve parents, and said it would assess incoming freshmen on their alcohol use.

The changes were announced Tuesday, during the last week of spring classes. From now on, the university will notify parents if their students — younger than 21 — violate the school's drug policy or an alcohol policy endangering their life or someone else's. The school will also make a call home if a student is kicked out of a residence hall or after a second alcohol violation.

"This gives us the opportunity to partner with parents and provide additional resources when students are facing difficulties," said Marlesa Roney, vice provost for student success. "The fact we had two alcohol-related deaths this spring certainly was a part of the conversation and moving forward with implementation this week."

But not everyone was happy with the new policies.

"It makes some sense that they take action, because people are dropping dead and it's scary," said Natalie Lesnikowski, 18, a freshman from Lawrence. "But they have to do it the right way."

By notifying parents after alcohol violations, "it's just like high school," Lesnikowski said.

Tuesday's announcement came less than two weeks after freshman Dalton Eli Hawkins, 18, of Shawnee, fell to his death from the roof of a university scholarship hall. A preliminary medical examiner's report indicated Hawkins had been drinking alcohol sometime before he fell.

In March, Jason Wren, 19, of Littleton, Colo., was found dead in his bed at the Sigma Alpha Epsilon fraternity house. Wren's father, Jay Wren, said this son died after a night of drinking — several pitchers of margaritas at a Lawrence restaurant and later beer and whiskey at the fraternity house.

Jason Wren had moved into the fraternity house less than two weeks after being kicked out of his KU residence hall for alcohol violations. KU housing officials had declined to tell his father about the violations because of the university's policy at the time.

"We really were deeply saddened by the loss of those two men," Roney said, "and decided to go forward and implement the changes more quickly."

Jason Wren's father, who since his son's death has been crusading for the university to tell parents when students have alcohol problems, sees the new policy as a victory.

"I commend KU for doing what they should have done a long time ago," Wren said. "But I am glad they are doing it now. I'm sure it will save lives. It is too bad these deaths had to occur before the changes were made. But maybe now Jason's death isn't going to go in vain."

Roney said she worried that students would see the changes as punitive. They aren't meant to be, she said.

Lesnikowski and Jacci Lufkin, 19, a freshman from Melbourne, Fla., said they didn't like the idea of their parents being notified over alcohol violations. Both said they would be in trouble.

"It's KU, it's a party college, you know that when you come here," Lufkin said. "... At this point I think it should be personal responsibility."

Previously, KU did not contact parents unless the student had signed a waiver to allow it.

Some schools, however, such as Kansas State University and the University of Missouri System, interpreted the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act as allowing them to notify parents.

Roney said KU's new guidelines are in compliance with the act, which shields student grades, health and behavior information.

"We're wanting to create a balance and make sure students know the university holds them accountable, but also assist them when they're not able to make it on their own," she said.

College Parents of America recently began pushing schools to share more about their underage students with parents because the law left a great deal of interpretation to colleges and universities.

Last year, K-State adopted a policy to notify parents of students younger than 21 after a second alcohol or controlled-substance violation. The University of Missouri System contacts parents if a student's behavior endangers themselves or others.

The changes announced Tuesday also encourage students to seek immediate medical help for anyone experiencing alcohol-related emergencies by promising they won't face discipline by the university or housing authorities.

"Parent notification policies as well as amnesty policies are becoming very common at colleges and universities across the country," said Thomas Workman of the National Association of School Personnel Administrators. "This isn't snitching. It is involving a parent because a parent needs to know a student is engaging in dangerous behavior."

The new policy does not deal with fraternities, sororities or other off-campus drinking.

KU said more changes to deal with the underage drinking problems were coming.

Mason Heilman, KU's new student body president, is on a university-organized committee working with members of the Lawrence community to find ways of dealing with underage drinking off campus.

One of the things the committee will be looking at is how to deal with underage students using fake identifications to get into bars.

"I just think that in any future actions, at the same time we consider the university's concern for student safety, that we take into account students' need for privacy," Heilman said.

A college student's death may help save lives

By Jessica Sidman, USA TODAY

Sam Spady was a homecoming queen, class president, cheerleading captain and honor student in high school. The Nebraska native had dreams of following in her father's footsteps in owning a car dealership and moving west after college graduation.

But those dreams never materialized. The Colorado State University student died on Sept. 5, 2004, after hours of binge drinking.

With the support of her family, two journalists have since created a documentary film, *Death by Alcohol: The Sam Spady Story*, that they hope will save others from making the same fatal mistakes.

In the hours before her death, Spady hopped between parties during one of the year's biggest social events: the CSU football game against the University of Colorado-Boulder. She drank 30 to 40 beers and shots over an 11-hour period. Then friends left her alone in an empty room in a fraternity house to sleep it off. Later, a fraternity member found her dead while giving his mother a tour of the house.

She is one of an estimated 1,400 college students between the ages of 18 and 24 who die from alcohol-related incidents each year, according to the National Institute of Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism.

"Nobody is immune," Spady's father, Rick, says. "She was a smart kid, and she was a good kid. And if it could happen to her, it could happen to anybody."

In addition to footage from Sam's childhood and her funeral, the documentary examines the drink-until-you-blackout campus culture and its dangers.

"It was very difficult to see the first time," Spady's mother, Patty, says through tears. She had never heard the 911 call before.

The producers and parents hope to distribute the film to high schools, colleges, church groups and families.

"Had Sam's friends seen this movie, I have to believe there'd be no way that she'd be dead today," producer Barry Bortnick says. "Had Sam seen this film, she would not have been dead today."

More than 100 individuals have already purchased the DVD, which is available at the [Sam Spady Foundation's website](#). The foundation will use proceeds from the film to provide schools with an alcohol education curriculum. They have already distributed more than 200,000 wallet cards on signs and symptoms of alcohol poisoning.

"It's a great springboard for discussion in a sorority house or a dorm hall," says Linda Major, the project director of NU Directions, a coalition that addresses high-risk drinking at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

According to Major, a board member of the Sam Spady Foundation, *Death by Alcohol* is one of the only documentaries that focuses on a female. Flavored liquors and advertising geared toward young females have driven more college women to binge drinking, she says.

Shortly after Spady's death, CSU expanded its alcohol education programs and donated \$100,000 in privately raised funds to the Sam Spady Foundation. The fraternity where Spady died has been disbanded, and a local church has transformed the house into a student living center dedicated to preventing alcohol abuse.

But Pastor Reza Zadeh, a former CSU student, says he hasn't seen much change in the drinking culture since Spady's death. "People still feel invincible," he says. "The bars still have 25-cent shot night and two-for-ones and no cover for girls." He nonetheless says saving even one life would make a difference.

"I'm not here to kill your college experience," Patty Spady says. "I just want you to survive it."

Coroner: Drug-Alcohol Mix Killed College Students

18-Year-Olds Found In IUP Dorm Rooms

INDIANA, Pa. -- Indiana County Coroner Mike Baker said drugs and alcohol are to blame for the deaths of two students at Indiana University of Pennsylvania.

Baker said Douglas Haney, 18, who died Feb. 10, and Brenton Croll, 18, who died March 18, both suffered multiple drug toxicity.

According to a news release from Baker's office, toxicology tests showed that in addition to ingesting marijuana, Haney had been chewing on Fentanyl patches before being found unconscious in his dorm room at Shaffer Hall.

"By chewing or cutting these patches up, you're getting a three-day dose in minutes, not seconds, and that's where it tends to be fatal," Westmoreland County Coroner Ken Bacha said.

The patches, which contain synthetic morphine, are intended to be worn on the back, releasing medication through the skin over a period of three days. Baker said drug abusers will chew the patches to receive the entire dose at once, resulting in possible loss of consciousness, respiratory failure and death.

Baker said Haney had about three times the lethal dose of Fentanyl in his system.

Croll, who was found in a friend's room in Lawrence Hall, had been drinking heavily before his death, Baker said. An autopsy revealed Croll had also been using a number of prescription medications including Xanax and Lexapro, Baker said.

According to Baker, the combined effects of using multiple drugs, even in small doses, can result in a mixture that's potentially more lethal than one drug by itself.

Indiana and campus police are investigating to determine how the students got the drugs.

"What we do is we continue to educate. We continue to be vigilant at watching our students," IUP spokeswoman Michelle Fryling said. "We wish we could prevent every tragedy like this, but unfortunately some tragedies happen. It's horrible."

College student from Hudson Valley died of alcohol intoxication

WASHINGTON (AP) -- The office of the chief medical examiner says a George Washington University sophomore found dead in her dorm room in January died of acute alcohol intoxication.

Nineteen-year-old Laura Treanor of Yorktown Heights, N.Y., was found dead in her bed after a night out with friends. A roommate called 911 after she tried to wake Treanor and realized that she was unconscious.

Treanor was a member of the Phi Sigma Sigma sorority and an editor at the Hatchet, a student newspaper, which first reported the cause of death Monday.

Hundreds of students attended a memorial service for Treanor in January. A mass was held for her at the Newman Catholic Center, where Treanor had been a lector who helped with services.