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## Cal Poly changes its fraternity rush policy after Carson Starkey's death

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Starting in the fall, new students must wait at least until their second quarter to rush Cal Poly fraternities, according to a new plan agreed upon by university officials and the Interfraternity Council.

Cal Poly officials announced the move this week, which will keep freshmen and transfer students from pledging fraternities in their first quarter to allow them to adjust to their new academic and social environment.

The decision came as part of Cal Poly's widespread efforts to avoid party situations like the one that led to the Dec. 2, 2008, death of freshman Carson Starkey. He died of alcohol poisoning after an alleged alcohol-related hazing.

Starkey, of Austin, Texas, was pledging the fraternity Sigma Alpha Epsilon. He was in his first quarter when he died.

New Cal Poly students will be allowed to rush, the process of formally joining a Greek organization, starting in their second quarter at the university, or subsequent quarters.

"I think it's a good idea," said Andrew Farrell, Cal Poly's IFC president. "It will help students to establish themselves in an academic sense before they start participating in clubs or social life."

The new rule applies only to Cal Poly's 17 fraternities, which university officials claim are the source of more behavioral problems than sororities. No such rule is in place now.

Nationwide, universities have seen more problems occur with fraternities during the initiation process than sororities, said Stephan Lamb, Cal Poly's associate director of Student Life and Leadership.

Lamb said that sorority leaders at Cal Poly have discussed with university officials the idea of deferring rush as well, but Lamb noted sororities tend to have much more formal, structured approaches to rush that reduces problems.

Lamb said that the Interfraternity Council and the university collaborated closely on the latest move, adding that "the fraternity members took those conversations to heart."

"The fraternity members want to be viewed positively," Lamb said.

In addition to deferring rush, the university has conducted five retreats with Greek leaders since Starkey's death to discuss safe and responsible behavior.

Lamb said officers of Greek organizations now also must sign agreements that they may be held personally responsible by Cal Poly if a member of the group violates a state law, as alleged in the Starkey case.

Four Cal Poly students now are facing criminal charges, including hazing and furnishing alcohol to a minor, in connection with Starkey's death.

The lawyers for Zacary Ellis and Haithem Ibrahim, who were charged with a felony in Starkey's death, are planning to file an appeal to the California Supreme Court today, claiming Judge Michael Duffy ruled incorrectly by allowing charges to be upheld at a preliminary hearing. Their appeal recently was denied by the California 2nd District Court.

The lawyers allege that their clients weren't responsible for Starkey's actions and that the 18-year-old made the choice to consume the alcohol that led to his death that night.

Prosecutor Craig Van Rooyen has argued that SAE members carefully planned a night of drinking that was a "hazing ritual" and that Starkey was conditioned to obey the older fraternity members.

Sigma Alpha Epsilon members Adam Marszal and Russell Taylor are facing misdemeanor charges in the alleged hazing and have a trial-setting conference scheduled for March 15, according to the District Attorney's Office.