

## Nearly 100 Arrested in College Drug Bust

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SAN DIEGO (May 7) - San Diego State University has suspended six fraternities after a sweeping drug investigation that landed dozens of students in jail on suspicion of openly dealing drugs on campus.

The probe prompted by the cocaine overdose death last year of a freshman sorority member led to the arrests of 96 people, 75 of them San Diego State students. A second drug death occurred during the investigation.

Twenty-nine people were arrested early Tuesday in raids at nine locations including the Theta Chi fraternity, where agents found cocaine, Ecstasy and three guns, authorities said. Eighteen of those arrested were wanted on warrants for selling to undercover agents.

Theta Chi and five other fraternities have been suspended pending a hearing on evidence gathered during the investigation, dubbed Operation Sudden Fall.

All of the arrested students have been suspended and will be barred from attending classes or taking final exams until their cases are reviewed, San Diego State President Stephen Weber said in a statement. Those who live in university-owned housing were evicted, he added.

"If guilty, they have ruined an untold number of lives," Weber said. "We are determined to remove people from our community who have placed our students at risk."

Authorities said some fraternity members openly dealt drugs, and that one sent a mass text message advertising special

prices on cocaine. Two kilograms of cocaine were seized in all, along with 350 Ecstasy pills, marijuana, psychedelic mushrooms, hash oil, methamphetamine, illicit prescription drugs, several guns and at least \$60,000 in cash, authorities said.

Profits may have been used to finance fraternity operations, according to an affidavit.

A member of Theta Chi sent out a mass text message to his "faithful customers" stating that he and his "associates" would be unable to sell cocaine while they were in Las Vegas for a fraternity formal, according to the Drug Enforcement Administration. The text promoted a cocaine "sale" and listed the reduced prices on bulk quantities.

"Attn faithful customers both myself and my associates will be in Vegas this coming weekend," the 19-year-old student wrote in the text message. "So stock up, we will be back Sunday night."

Those arrested included a student who was about to receive a criminal justice degree and another who was to receive a master's degree in homeland security.

The Greek (fraternity and sorority) system at San Diego State has about 3,000 students, out of an enrollment of 34,000, but Fraternity Row plays an outsized role in campus life. It sits a block from Cox Arena, home to many college sporting events.

Dale Taylor, national executive director of Theta Chi, said he was "obviously shocked and saddened" by the allegations. Theta Chi prohibited the San Diego chapter from group activities such as parties or sports activities and will investigate additional disciplinary measures, up to expulsion of members or the entire chapter.

The San Diego chapter, founded 61 years ago, was the first national fraternity on campus and has 65 members.

The chapter declined to comment. It occupies two low-slung homes a block off Fraternity Row, with large red and white Greek symbols propped on the roof.

Theta Chi has 131 chapters in the U.S. and Canada and more than 161,000 initiates. It was founded in 1856.

Besides Theta Chi, the other suspended fraternities are Lambda Chi Alpha, Phi Kappa Psi, Phi Kappa Theta, Sigma Alpha Epsilon and Sigma Alpha Mu.

University police launched their investigation into drug sales on campus after Shirley Poliakoff, 19, died from a cocaine overdose in May 2007. Investigators discovered many students in fraternities were aware of organized drug dealing within their houses.

As the investigation continued, another student, from Mesa College, died of a cocaine overdose at an SDSU fraternity house on Feb. 26, the DEA said.

Some drugs bought and sold by students were traced to gangs linked to Mexican cartels, according to the DEA. Agents collected about \$100,000 worth of drugs that were being advertised in "resale quantities" between members of the fraternity and other students.

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