

One year later, events are still being examined

By Zach Geiger
COLLEGIAN STAFF WRITER

Joe Dado was last seen at 3 a.m. Sunday, Sept. 20, 2009, leaving Phi Gamma Delta (Fiji) fraternity, 319 N. Burrowes Rd., on his way back to his East Halls dorm.

His body was found by maintenance workers at about 6 p.m. Monday, Sept. 21, 2009 at the bottom of an exterior stairwell between the Hosler and Steidle buildings. Dado, 18, died of head trauma sustained from a 15-foot fall to the bottom of the stairwell.

And one year later, the events leading to Dado's death — more specifically, who supplied him with alcohol — are still being examined by the courts.

A toxicology report revealed that Dado had a BAC of 0.169 at the time of his death, more than twice the 0.08 legal driving limit for 21-year-olds in Pennsylvania, Centre County Coroner Scott Sayers said. No drugs or illegal substances were detected in the toxicology tests, he said.

The night of his disappearance, Dado left East Halls at about 11:30 p.m. Saturday with three other students. They then went to Alpha Tau Omega fraternity, 321 E. Fairmount Ave., and later went to Dado's sister's apartment at 119 S. Burrowes St.

The group then walked to Fiji, and at 2:20 a.m. on Sunday all three of Dado's friends left to return to East Halls. Dado remained at the fraternity with a friend he knew from high school.

Dado told his friends he was spending the night at Fiji, but was last seen leaving the fraternity at about 3 a.m. Sunday.

But Dado did not return to East Halls Sunday morning and did not answer his phone — which was on and ringing all day, his sister Natalie Dado said.

Dado's parents arrived in State College Sunday night to begin searching for their son, and police officially declared him missing.

But after hours of searching, a feeling of anxiety began to set in amongst Dado's family, the university community and the hundreds of students who organized through text message and Facebook to aid in the search.

"It was really something that we had not experienced here," Penn State spokeswoman Lisa Powers said. "The support was just tremendous. People were very hopeful but still very anxious."

At 11 a.m. Monday, Penn State Live issued an e-mail to students which alerted the campus to the search effort for Dado. Penn State officials opted to not use the PSUTXT service.

At about noon, a police helicopter began flying over the campus in an attempt to find Dado, and police also used dogs in the search, Powers said.

Police conducted interviews with members of Fiji and an eyewitness who had last seen Dado outside of the fraternity, Powers said. Police also checked his Penn State ID card and ATM cards to see if they had been used recently, she said.

The cars in the Fiji parking lot, as well as nearby manholes, were inspected by police. Penn State confirmed the FBI was contacted to aid in the search, though the bureau had very little involvement in the investigation.

Shortly after, Dado's body was found by maintenance workers called to repair a broken pipe in the Hosler Building. The workers discovered the body near the entrance of the building's mechanical room at about 6 p.m. Monday.

Though it was unclear at the time, police later said Dado was alone on the roof of a maintenance building adjacent to the stairwell before his fall.

Hosler, Steidle and Deike buildings were cordoned off by police after 6 p.m., and at 8 p.m. Penn State officials confirmed that Dado had been found dead.

"I was the person who met with Joe's parents and sisters to tell them that their son and brother had been found," Vice President for Student Affairs Damon Sims said. "I will never forget the emotion in that moment, especially for them. No Penn State family should suffer that news in that way again."

Students gathered around a makeshift memorial along Pollock Road that Monday night to pay their respects to Dado.

"They were grieving for a person they never met," Powers said. "It was a life taken too early and senselessly. There was a sudden awareness that we should think of each other."

"I really hope that's a feeling that has lasted amongst the student body," she added.

The funeral service for Dado was held at 10 a.m. Saturday, Sept. 26, 2009, at Charter Oak United Methodist Church in Unity Township, Pa.

Following the tragedy, police began investigating whether Dado had been provided with alcohol at either fraternity or another location the night he went missing.

Fiji International Headquarters issued a ban on alcohol at the fraternity on Tuesday, Sept. 22. A Fiji representative was present to oversee the removal of all alcohol from the premise.

In addition to the ban from Fiji International, the Interfraternity Council (IFC) held a private executive board meeting Tuesday night. IFC officials suspended the Penn State chapter of Fiji until the conclusion of the police investigation into Dado's death, then-IFC President Luke Pierce said. Pierce (senior-economics) also issued a request asking all fraternities to refrain from social events until Oct. 2.

Alpha Tau Omega was also suspended on Sept. 28. Both Alpha Tau Omega and Fiji were suspended after police said they were investigating two incidents of furnishing alcohol to a minor in connection with Dado's death, one incident at each fraternity.

Multiple Penn State students faced charges of furnishing alcohol to minors in connection with Dado's death.

Jennifer Clifford was charged with furnishing alcohol to Dado — the alcohol police said Dado and his friends drank in their dorm room before leaving for Alpha Tau Omega the night of Dado's disappearance.

On April 26, 2010, Clifford was sentenced to one year of probation and was enrolled in the Accelerated Rehabilitative Disposition (ARD) program in addition to one day of community service, according to court documents.



Chloe Elmer/Collegian

Manholes outside of Phi Gamma Delta were searched for Joe Dado's body when he was missing last year.

Fiji member Jack Townsend — Dado's friend from high school and the last person to see the freshman alive — was charged with furnishing alcohol to the minor shortly before his death.

Both Fiji and Alpha Tau Omega fraternities faced charges of furnishing alcohol to minors, according to court documents.

The charges against Fiji and Townsend are still pending for resolution and are up for review again sometime in October. District Attorney Stacy Parks Miller wrote in an e-mail.

The furnishing charges against Alpha Tau Omega are pending, Parks Miller said. The trial is complete but Centre County District Judge Thomas King Kistler is waiting for both sides to complete their briefs once the court transcript is complete, Parks Miller said.

Even though the courts are still examining the details surrounding Dado's death a year later, Parks Miller said there is nothing

unusual about the timing or pacing of the cases.

Dado's death had a gripping effect on the Penn State community that will hopefully never be forgotten, Powers said.

"Joe Dado's death had an impact on the student body in a way that we had not seen before," Powers said.

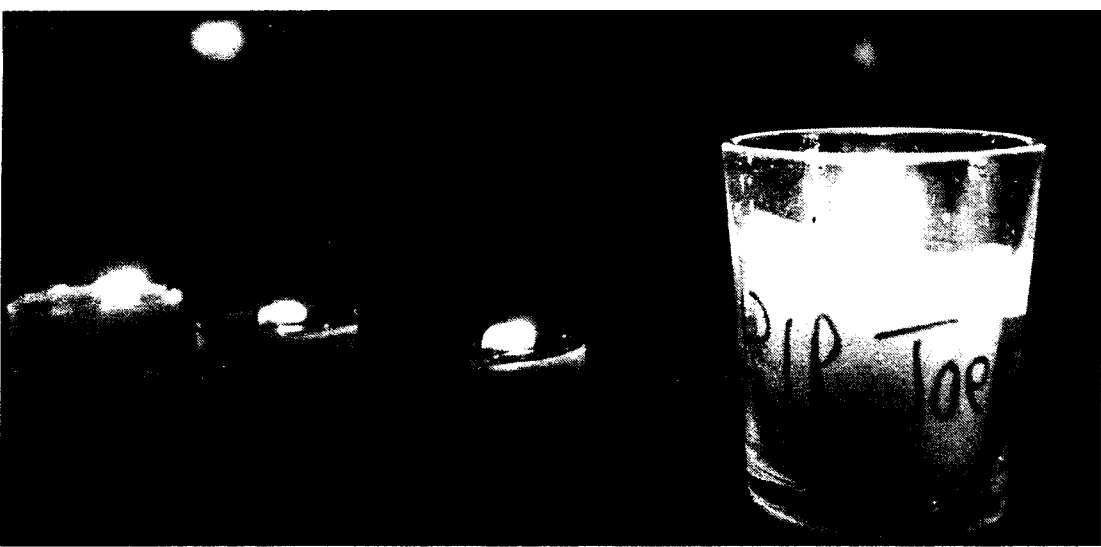
"It made [students] think about excessive drinking, being responsible for themselves and being responsible for others."

Sims echoed Powers' thoughts on the tragedy.

"Students should know that a very young man with hopes for the future, that were not at all unlike their own, died tragically in an accident that was at least partly attributable to excessive alcohol consumption," Sims said.

Representatives for Phi Gamma Delta, Alpha Tau Omega and Townsend did not return calls for comment.

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Christine Reckner/Collegian

An impromptu vigil of about 20 students gathered Monday night between the Hosler and Steidle buildings to honor the anniversary of former Penn State student Joe Dado's death.

Dado's memory lives on with friends

By Vera Greene
COLLEGIAN STAFF WRITER

After hearing that Penn State student Joe Dado was found dead, his friends sat together silently at Pasquerilla Spiritual Center and prayed.

One year later, they're still praying.

On Sunday night, 12 students walked over to the spiritual center to reflect on the last year of their lives.

Jonathan "JJ" Hue said it feels like just yesterday he found out his best friend was gone.

"Every time I walk by the spot, I flashback to breaking down in tears in the road," Hue (sophomore-chemistry) said.

After the news of Dado's death, Hue said the Penn Staters who had attended Greater Latrobe Senior High School with Dado were inseparable.

"We really got each other through it, and it brought us together," Hue said.

"I have a lot of close friends up here now."

Natalie Bower attended school with Dado since junior high and said she never thought she'd personally know someone who died at such a young age — and so suddenly.

Bower (sophomore-kinesiology) loves to run, but after Sept. 20, 2009, the Penn State cross-country team member's usual jogs around the Steidle and Hosler Buildings became a painful reminder of the past and the friend she's lost along the way.

While the campus was trying to understand what happened to Dado after he left Phi Gamma Delta fraternity, 319 N. Burrowes Road, Bower said she was coming to terms with the death of the person who helped her with

"We always make sure we have each other's back and know where people are going. If we had done something like that, it might have been able to save Joe."

Jonathan "JJ" Hue
sophomore - chemistry

homework in study hall and cracked jokes at lunch.

"I want everybody out there to know that just because something like this doesn't happen to their best friend doesn't mean it can't," she said.

And with a full year having passed since Dado's death, those who knew him said their lives have forever been changed.

"For me, I took my friends for granted," Hue said. "But now... every goofy time we have and every time we go out — it's something special."

Dado added his own spin to everything he did, Hue said. Whether it was telling jokes to his friends or dressing up like a cereal box at a basketball game for some laughs—those who knew him cherished his fun-loving antics.

"He was always optimistic and never let anything bother him," Hue said. "I try and mimic that now in my life."

Hue said he's now more aware and alert when he goes out at night with friends.

"We always make sure we have each other's back and know where people are going," Hue said. "If we had done something like that, it might have been able to save Joe."

Mike Cook, one of Dado's best friends, said not a day goes by that he doesn't think of his friend.

Coming back to Penn State this year was especially difficult —

even though Cook (sophomore-biology) was excited to reunite with his friends, he said there is always something missing.

"Joey has never left me," Cook said.

During Lauren Stout's high school graduation, one of the speakers told the Greater Latrobe Class of 2009 that they came in as a family, and were now leaving as a family.

But Stout (sophomore-kinesiology), who became close with Dado her sophomore year of high school, said part of her family is no longer with her.

"It is still hard for me everyday," Stout said.

"I just can't believe it's been a year."

After ordering 1,000 "In loving memory, Joey Dado" wristbands and organizing a sale on campus last year with Cook, Hue said he hopes to get another sale going on campus at some point this year.

This year's sale, he said, would be to sell wristbands, yes, but mostly to remind people of what happened.

Bower said she puts her wristband on every time she runs in a race.

"I look down at my left hand where the bracelet is and I'm thankful to be here," Bower said. "I think of him and it gives me strength."

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Death prompted changes in policy

By Megan Rogers
COLLEGIAN STAFF WRITER

One year after Joe Dado's death, some student leaders and administrators agreed the tragedy both heightened the issue of campus safety and prompted major risk management policy changes.

After Dado's body was found, alcohol abuse and campus safety "received particular attention," Vice President for Student Affairs Damon Sims said at Friday's Board of Trustees meeting.

And student leaders agreed that while campus safety is always a concern, Dado's death put campus safety in the spotlight.

Interfraternity Council (IFC) Vice President for Risk Management Tom Piarulli said the death prompted changes to existing social policies. The IFC social policy overhaul last December was influenced by the aftermath of the incident, Piarulli (senior-security and risk analysis) said.

"That incident did have a lot of impact — on all student organizations — and the way we think about risk management," he said.

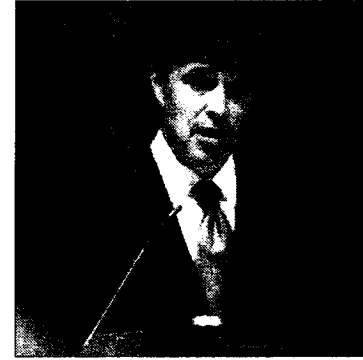
The social policy enacted in December — which instituted guest lists and bouncers and eliminated away bars and Wednesday social functions — was aimed at lowering emphasis on alcohol and raising awareness of risk management.

The tragedy was reflective of some of the problems within the greek community, former IFC President Luke Pierce said. Dado's death allowed the IFC's executive board to reflect on possible changes needed, he said.

Dado's death brought common unsafe drinking practices to light, but was not the sole reason behind social policy changes, IFC President Max Wendkos said.

"We don't say to ourselves 'Wow, we need to do this or this because a student passed away after drinking last fall,'" Wendkos (senior-marketing and psychology) said. "We say, 'We need to make change because overall the drinking culture at Penn State is problematic for a slew of different parties, including the students themselves.'"

Regardless of whether the policies were direct results of Dado's death, Wendkos said early signs show the policies imposed over the past year have been beneficial. But Pierce (senior-econom-



Amanda August/Collegian

Damon Sims talks to the Board of Trustees on Friday about alcohol initiatives he and a committee devised after Joe Dado's death.

ics) said the policy has been "softened," making it more difficult to measure its success.

Dado's death has affected more than just the greek community, with change coming at the administrative level, too.

Before detailing new alcohol mitigation policies at Friday's Board of Trustees meeting, Sims touched on the profound impact of Dado's death on the community.

Sims said the new alcohol policies he presented were crafted with the intention of preventing a similar incident.

"All students deserve what Joe did not get," he said.

University Park Undergraduate Association (UPUA) President Christian Ragland said Dado's death shed a light on the issue of campus safety.

He said he gathered with some student leaders when he heard the news of Dado's passing — and all students in the room immediately began talking about what they could do to help prevent a similar incident in the future.

UPUA responded by hosting the first "Campus Night Out" about a month after Dado's death," Ragland (senior-political science) said.

UPUA will host the second annual Campus Night Out on Sept. 30.

The event will feature speakers from safety resources including University Health Services, the Centre County Women's Resource Center and several student-led groups, Ragland said.

"Campus Night Out was a direct result of the tragedy of Joseph Dado," Ragland said.

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