In the wake of Tau Kappa Epsilon pledge Sam Mason’s death lie the fate and future of Radford University, the school’s TKE chapter and his friends and family.

Each group must await the results of separate investigations before any of them can decide on a course of action or know what to expect from others. Both RU and TKE National said their investigations hinge greatly on the findings of Radford police, which have been minimal so far.

Mason’s body was sent to Roanoke for a toxicology report to determine the cause of death. Alcohol is strongly suspected, although according to multiple friends, Mason was taking prescribed pain medication for a wrist injury and the mixing of the two substances may have contributed to his death.

According to multiple sources, including a search warrant affidavit filed in Radford Circuit Court, Mason attended a non-alcoholic TKE function at the fraternity’s Calhoun Street house on Thursday, Oct. 14 before attending a party at the same location where he was seen drinking a bottle of liquor. Mason was then walked by his friends to a house on 1100 Fairfax St. and put to bed.

According to Radford City Police, search warrants were filed for Mason’s Downey Street home and TKE’s Calhoun Street house. They were looking for the bottle of liquor Mason was said to be drinking that night, kegs and documentation of both people at the party and fraternity brothers and pledge activities that may have occurred that evening. However, their search of Mason’s home yielded only a $40 dollar receipt from an ABC store, a wallet, laptop, backpack and $350 check. The search of the Calhoun Street house found two smoking devices, a photo binder, five thumb drives, two file folder boxes and a list of names.

That’s what’s known. What’s not is what the investigation will eventually yield and what TKE National and RU will do with the results.

For now, RU’s TKE chapter is on interim suspension, as is customary when an incident of this gravity occurs. This gives the chapter limited authority, meaning if they want to participate in activities or host an event they need approval from the national organization. Members are still allowed to wear letters.

According to TKE National President Shawn Babine, decisions regarding whether or not the chapter retains its charter (the document allowing a local chapter to be a part of the national fraternity) and whether members involved in serious incidents retain membership are made on a case-by-case basis.

“You look at the incident and you try to determine was it individual circumstances that led to something this tragic or was it really a fraternity and chapter-wide situation,” Babine said.

The most extreme measures TKE National could take would be to remove the local chapter’s charter and expel select members from the fraternity. However, there are different levels of activeness for TKE members that the national organization could impose on some of its RU members of necessary.

If the charter is removed but nobody is expelled from the fraternity, RU TKE members would become alumni of the Greek organization. If the charter stays but certain members are thought to have committed reprehensible actions that are serious but not worthy of expulsion, they are listed as ‘inactive.’

Those are all possible scenarios based on the outcome of separate investigations conducted by RU, TKE National and the RCPD. Babine is quick to point out that, at the moment, no conclusion is on the horizon. He says that TKE National never ignores chapter problems, but at the moment he isn’t sure whether the investigations will lead to a removal of charter and expulsion of members or a simple restructuring of the local chapter’s ‘educational plan,’ which includes the chapter’s goals and values.

Something that may contribute to TKE National’s conclusion is that RU’s chapter was already on probation at the time of the incident.

According to RU Director for Student Affairs Dr. Mark Shanley, the chapter was put on probation by then-Greek Life Coordinator Jermisha Dodson for, among other more minor incidents, serving alcohol to minors and not checking the identification of students at their parties.

The sanctions imposed on RU’s TKE chapter prevented them from recruiting members, participating in intramurals and hosting social events. However, Dodson allowed them to recruit at the start of the Fall semester because they had complied with terms set by the sanction. They were still not allowed to participate in intramurals or host social events at the time of Mason’s death.

According to Shanley, it generally takes a calendar year for Greek organizations to come back from probation, but the ability to recruit is usually brought back sooner than that. Without the ability to recruit, Shanley said, the organization would cease to exist.

Although the university can impose sanctions on fraternities, RU and TKE National have jurisdictions over different aspects of both the local chapter and its members. RU can put a fraternity on probation, but fraternities and sororities can exist on campus without the university’s approval. Likewise, should TKE National decide to expel members of RU’s chapter from the fraternity, they have no say in whether or not they are expelled from the university.

Shanley, like Babine, is unsure where the investigations will lead, but laid out what type of repercussions students could face, should there be any.

“If there’s a very egregious act, then the individual or student is likely to be suspended,” Shanley said. If they’re suspended it’s likely to be for the duration of a semester or a year. Or, if it’s very egregious, let’s say personal violence of a profound way, then the person could be permanently dismissed from the university.”

Both Shanley and Babine said they hope the two organizations come to similar conclusions.

Awaiting those conclusions are Mason’s friends and family. According to Shanley, who spoke with Mason’s parents shortly after his passing, the family has not considered any type of legal action yet, and expressed nothing but the hope that other students would learn from their son’s death.

Babine and Shanley share that sentiment.

“I just hope that the student body uses this as a lesson to change and to reach out to my men,” Babine said. “It’s very tough to deal with this, very though.”

Shanley said he considers this a “warning shot” to the campus community and the national Greek system. He said everyone needs to be more aware than ever that alcohol is a “powerful chemical agent” that can cause great harm and then expressed the sadness he felt for Mason and his friends and family.

“As a person who had to speak with Sam’s mother and father and having two college students myself, I take this most seriously,” Shanley said. “I have a broken heart right now in terms of the potential that Sam had in life and the aspirations that Sam’s family and friends had for him and that those aspirations will never be reached.”

At time of print for *The Tartan*, no further details on the case were available.