

[\[back\]](#)

## Sweeps net charges for 22 at Duke, complaints

BY RAY GRONBERG, The Herald-Sun  
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DURHAM -- The first major N.C. Alcohol Law Enforcement sweeps in Durham since the onset of the Duke lacrosse case have left 22 Duke University students facing an assortment of charges related to underage drinking.

Two students were jailed briefly, and the others received tickets. All 22 also are due a lecture from administrators in Duke's Office of Judicial Affairs.

But the sweeps -- one on Aug. 30 and the other Saturday night and into early Sunday morning -- also produced complaints from students that ALE agents were rude and in some cases abusive.

Several voiced their feelings in a Duke Chronicle article published Monday, and Duke Student Government President Paul Slattery followed suit in a Thursday interview with The Herald-Sun.

"It's disturbing to me that it seems that every time there's an interaction between ALE and students, there's some kind of police conduct issue," Slattery said. "It seems to be systematic."

The Aug. 30 tickets were the work of one agent who checked the Hillsborough Road Kroger grocery store and several other businesses in the area. The agent wound up giving nine people tickets. They face charges that include two counts of underage possession, three counts of underage purchase, three counts of aiding and abetting underage purchase and a count of giving alcohol to a person under 21.

Saturday night's operation was a group effort by the ALE and it left 16 people facing charges. Allegations included 14 counts of underage possession, eight counts of possessing fake IDs, one count of possessing marijuana and five other violations.

Each evening, most of the people charged were Duke students, but there were exceptions, ALE Supervising Agent Jeff Lasater said. The marijuana charge, for example, was lodged against someone who wasn't a Duke student.

Thirteen of the 22 students caught in the dragnet crossed ALE's path in the Brightleaf area on Saturday or Sunday. Duke officials said 10 were at Shooters II and the rest at Devine's Restaurant & Sports Bar.

The two arrests -- of Emily Rose Ackerman, 19, of 93 Sharon Road, Lakeville, Conn., and Lucy Coassin, 20, of 6102 McQueen Drive, Durham -- both occurred during the weekend sweep and involved charges of resisting officers.

Arrest reports allege that Ackerman tried to walk away from agents after being asked for her ID. Coassin allegedly gave them someone else's ID and then refused to give them her real ID after agents noticed the discrepancy.

Duke officials said six more students got tickets at the Kroger store on Aug. 30.

The remaining three got tickets sometime during the two sweeps, at Metro 8 Steakhouse, Blu Seafood and Bar and in a parking lot off Gregson Street, Duke officials said.

While the students face a meeting with Office of Judicial Affairs staff, it's likely that most if not all will only get a warning. The office's director, Associate Dean of Students Stephen Bryan, has said he sees no point to asking law enforcement officers to attend disciplinary hearings to provide the corroboration necessary for sterner action.

"In the grand scheme of things these are relatively minor charges," Bryan said, adding that he's already talked to a few of the students informally.

Bryan knows students are grumbling about the conduct of ALE officers, and said that when he hears such talk, he advises the people doing it to file formal complaints. He also relays criticism to Lasater and other ALE supervisors.

But the associate dean also takes many of the complaints with a grain of salt.

"Understandably, many students are distraught when they're confronted by law enforcement, and sometimes they don't make the best decisions in reaction to that," Bryan said.

He added, "Given that a lot of these students are under the influence of alcohol, there's a propensity to question whether they have an accurate perception of what happened."

ALE agents kept a low profile around Duke during the 2006-07 school year while the lacrosse case played out. But they stayed active in both Chapel Hill and Raleigh, and have continued operations in those cities this summer even as they've stepped things up in Durham.

A sweep around N.C. State University Aug. 24-25 produced charges against 75 people, Lasater said.

The agency also worked with Chapel Hill and Carrboro police on a Sept. 6 operation around UNC Chapel Hill that produced charges against at least 36 people. Chapel Hill police independently mounted a sweep from Aug. 17-20 that produced 42 citations.

Uncorroborated complaints of rude or abusive behavior by ALE agents have surfaced in Chapel Hill occasionally, but UNC and town officials nonetheless have backed the agency's attempts to keep underage drinking in check.

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[\[back\]](#)