

PRESS RELEASE

DATE: February 12, 2026

TO: News Director / City Editor

FROM: Latah County Prosecutor's Office
Moscow Police Department

RE: September 24, 2025, University of Idaho Incident

The Moscow Police Department and the Latah County Prosecutor's Office issue this joint statement regarding an incident that occurred on the University of Idaho campus on September 24, 2025, involving Austen Dawson and Arath Chavez.

As part of the investigation, the Moscow Police Department interviewed numerous witnesses and both parties to this incident. The evidence collected included witness statements, videos and audio of the incident, medical records and consultation with medical professionals. The results of the investigation indicate the following:

This incident occurred on the University of Idaho campus near the Phi Delta Theta fraternity. Austin Dawson was 26 years old and worked as a DoorDash driver. Arath Chavez was 21 years old and a student at the University of Idaho and a member of Phi Delta Theta fraternity. Dawson was 6' tall, Chavez was 5' 5" tall and both weighed approximately the same.

On September 24, 2025, Chavez was playing basketball with three friends on the Phi Delta Theta property. Chavez' friend missed a basketball shot and the basketball went into the road hitting the vehicle Dawson was driving which belonged to his girlfriend. Dawson exited his vehicle and spoke to Chavez. Chavez reported Dawson asked if the basketball caused any damage to which Chavez stated "no." Dawson appeared concerned about his girlfriend's car and asked about the damage multiple times (law enforcement did not locate any damage to the vehicle in question). There was another witness to this exchange. That witness reported Dawson challenged Chavez to a fight. The same witness asked Dawson if insurance information needed to be exchanged. Dawson said "no" and continued to challenge Chavez to fight, which Chavez refused. Dawson then drove to the corner of Idaho Avenue and Elm Street and parked.

Dawson then delivered his DoorDash order to a member of the Kappa Kappa Gamma (KKG) sorority. During the DoorDash delivery, Dawson told the KKG member that a basketball from the fraternity dented his car and advised her he was going to fight the guy for it. Dawson left KKG then walked down the road and started yelling at Chavez. The KKG member heard Dawson state "let's fight" and Chavez stated he didn't want to fight. The KKG member pulled out her cell phone and began to record the incident.

During this time, a device belonging to Dawson was active on an online video game which recorded audio of the events as they occurred.

Dawson reengaged with Chavez. During this exchange both parties confirmed Dawson was angry about the ball hitting Dawson's girlfriend's vehicle. Dawson and Chavez argued with each other. A witness reported Dawson provoked Chavez telling him multiple times to swing. The same witness attempted to deescalate the situation and asked Dawson to leave. Chavez told Dawson multiple times he did not want to fight. Two other witnesses reported Chavez was clearly trying to leave it alone and Dawson kept verbally attacking Chavez, insisting they fight.

Chavez eventually stated he would fight Dawson but stated they needed to leave fraternity property. Chavez walked to the middle of the street. A witness reported someone stated they would not press charges and they agreed to fight. Three witnesses reported that Chavez and Dawson agreed to fight but Dawson was the primary aggressor and approached Chavez. Multiple witnesses reported the two males shook hands in the street and began fighting. A witness reported Chavez took off his shoes (sandals) and stuck out his hand as if to shake Dawson's hand. Multiple witnesses reported that Dawson swung first. Both parties exchanged blows and struck each other. Chavez wrapped his arms around Dawson's mid-section and tackled Dawson to the ground. Dawson's head hit the pavement. On the ground Chavez was seen hitting Dawson at least four times over a four second time frame (three witnesses also reported Chavez struck Dawson four times while he was on the ground).

One witness reported Chavez was on top of Dawson and could not tell if Dawson was unconscious. It appeared Chavez had one arm pinned under Dawson and Chavez punched Dawson a couple of times with his free arm. Two witnesses reported that someone told Chavez to stop and he immediately got up and walked away.

Multiple witnesses reported Dawson attempted to push himself off of the ground but later went back into a recovery position on his side. Dawson started to seize and then came out of it. Witnesses administered first aid and called 911.

The fight, according to recovered video and audio, lasted for approximately 15-20 seconds.

Dawson was transported for medical attention based on his condition.

Moscow Police Department consulted with medical professionals and were advised that the major injuries Dawson sustained were determined, to a reasonable degree of medical certainty, to be the result of the sudden impact with the ground, and the subsequent punches to Dawson's head after he was on the ground were likely not the cause of the major injuries sustained.

In order to support a charge of Aggravated Battery, Idaho law requires that the evidence must prove beyond a reasonable doubt that a battery (unlawful touching or use of force against another) occurred and that the victim sustained "great bodily injury" as a result of the unlawful touching or use of force. The evidence indicates that the parties engaged in mutual combat and that the injuries sustained by Dawson that would legally support a finding of "great bodily

injury” were a result of Dawson's head hitting the pavement during the fight and not the subsequent punches.

After careful consideration and scrutiny of the facts of this case, the Moscow Police Department and the Latah County Prosecutor’s Office have determined that charges for Aggravated Battery in this matter cannot be sustained and therefore, no criminal charges will be filed. The Moscow Police Department and the Latah County Prosecutor’s Office have met with the parties involved and advised them of this decision.

This investigation is now closed. If you seek additional information, public records requests can be made on the City of Moscow website at www.ci.moscow.id.us/1032/MPD-Public-Records-Request.