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Judge: Former Hartnell College student must serve full sentence for brother's death

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Author: SUNITA VIJAYAN

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svijayan@thecalifornian.com

A former Hartnell College student who killed his younger brother nearly three years ago was denied early release from Monterey County Jail.

On Friday, Langston Williams III requested Superior Court Judge Terrance Duncan to grant him an earlier release date so that he could enroll in a Texas university Monday.

"I'm just ready to get back home ... start back in school and just trying to rebuild my life again," Williams III told the judge.

In April, he was sentenced to a year in county jail and four years of felony probation for the Oct. 24, 2007, fatal stabbing of 18-year-old Thaddeus Williams.

The killing happened at the Hartnell student-athletes' apartment in the 600 block of Palma Drive, during what authorities described as a quarrel over a laptop computer.

Williams III was initially charged with murder in the death of his brother. During the struggle over the laptop, authorities have said, Williams III held a steak knife. It is still unclear exactly how the steak knife ended up piercing Thaddeus' heart. Williams III had told investigators he never intended to stab his brother.

On Friday, Williams III appeared in court in custody, dressed in a striped jail uniform. He has been in jail since May. His request comes with his official acceptance to a Texas university this fall.

"He needs to get back to his family; get back to school," defense attorney Thomas Worthington said. "This young man needs to go on with his life now."

'Most minimal punishment'

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Williams III told the judge that he has a few years of classes left before obtaining a bachelor's degree in radiology.

"The sooner I can get started ... then the better chance I would have to succeed ... to get a real job," he said.

Steven Somers, a county deputy district attorney, opposed the defense's request -- stating that "there is a punishment aspect" that should be upheld.

"This is the most minimal punishment one can imagine," said Somers, referring to the sentence Williams III received.

He also pointed out that the court had previously granted a two-month delay in Williams III's sentencing so the defendant could complete a medical assistant externship. Now, Somers said, the defense was asking for an earlier release because of the requested delay.

"The irony of it cannot be lost on Mr. Worthington," he said. "He created his own problem."

Before denying the request Friday, Duncan agreed with the prosecutor -- saying the court has a responsibility to the community to hold Williams III accountable for his crime. He added that Williams III has been shown "great leniency" in his sentence.

The maximum term Williams III faced after pleading no contest to involuntary manslaughter was five years in prison.

"The fact remains ... because of Mr. Williams' conduct, someone suffered a sudden and violent death," Duncan said. "[The court] realizes there's a disturbance, but considering the situation, it's relatively minor looking at the disturbance he's caused."

Options remain

Worthington said Williams III has been doing well in his treatment at the jail, undergoing counseling sessions to gain insight into why and how the 2007 incident happened.

He said after the hearing that he plans to research several options for his client -- including a new law that could reduce Williams III's jail time by two months. Worthington said he will also investigate whether Williams III may be able to enroll in a local community college. If that happens, he said, he plans to seek home detention for his client.

Right now, Worthington said, Williams III is scheduled for release Jan. 13.