



STOP ABUSIVE AND VIOLENT ENVIRONMENTS

Working for policy reform to protect all victims, support due process, and stop false allegations

East Carolina University: College Sexual Assault Claim was False

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COTWA

Dec. 14, 2012

Here are two news stories about an alleged sexual assault at East Carolina University. The first is the report of the purported crime, the second is the report of its resolution.

DECEMBER 10, 2012

Report: ECU student sexually assaulted

A female East Carolina University student reportedly was the victim of sexual battery and assault early Monday on campus, according to a campus police report.

The reported incident occurred between 12:45 a.m. and 12:57 a.m., and an ECU alert said it was in the area of the Speight Building and Christenbury Gym.

The woman described the suspect as a white man in his mid-20s with a muscular build and brown hair. He was wearing a black tank top and black pants, according to the alert posted at 3:07 a.m. on the university's website.

No weapon was reported, and the suspect last was seen running north through campus from the scene.

The incident was reported to ECU police at 2:11 a.m., and the victim did receive medical attention. A campus police report said the victim's injuries were minor.

More information about the incident will be posted as it becomes available.

ECU encourages students, staff and faculty to walk in groups at night in well-lighted areas, use safe modes of transportation and be aware of surroundings at all times.

Anyone with information is asked to call the ECU Police Department at 328-6787.

DECEMBER 13, 2012

Police: Sexual assault fabricated

East Carolina University police have determined a student fabricated a report that she was sexually assaulted on Monday.

Chief Scott Shelton said the department will not file any charges against the student, according to a news release issued on Wednesday.

Police received a call about 12:45 a.m. that a female student was assaulted on campus near Christenbury Gym.

Investigators were unable to corroborate the woman's account after a second interview. Police determined that the crime had been falsely reported.

The student was treated for minor injuries she reported she received from the assault. Lt. Chris Sutton with ECU police said on Wednesday that he did not know how the woman was hurt.

ECU police opted to not charge her criminally and found dealing with the situation internally was more appropriate, Shelton said.

"We take every reported crime seriously," Shelton said. "Our primary concern is the safety of the ECU community. We investigate each report that comes into our department. At the same time, we must be vigilant for false reports that cause unnecessary concern and worry on campus."

"During the investigation it was determined that the best course of action was to use other avenues at the university to address the young woman's needs," Shelton said.

A similar incident occurred in August 2011, when an ECU basketball player reported she was assaulted near the stadium complex. Courtney Melvin, then-17, was charged for filing a false report and withdrew from the university.

Sutton said the student in Monday's incident faces possible sanctions from the university.

"At this time, it has been turned over to some other internal university departments where there could be some sanctions she could face," Sutton said. "They will also continue to work with her as she cooperates to give her any assistance."

Sutton said he does not know what motivated the student to make the claim, although situations like this often are a cry for help.

"Typically, it's an individual that's reaching out for some type of help or assistance," he said.

Travis Lewis, director of student safety and services in the Dean of Students Office, said the university offers several options through the Counseling Center and the Dean of Students Office for students who report being the victim of a crime on campus.

"We will work with the young woman as she wishes," Lewis said. "We can use this as an opportunity to make sure students learn from this and realize there are consequences for false reporting."

Lewis said false reports of crimes can trigger memories for students who were true victims of crime. He said the Counseling Center is available for continued support for those students as well.

False reports also can heighten unwarranted fear on campus, according to Sutton.

“We do have a safe campus, but when this happens it puts people at an unnecessary level of discomfort,” Sutton said. “False reports create an unnecessary and unwarranted alarm in individuals in this community.

“It’s best to speak out to the appropriate university officials instead of trying to file some type of report thinking that will give you any aid or assistance.”

<http://www.saveservices.org/2012/12/east-carolina-university-college-sexual-assault-claim-was-false/>