



William Paterson students plead not guilty on sex assault charges

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PHOTOS/MICHAEL KARAS/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER
and Darius Singleton in court on

Five William Paterson University students charged in an alleged sexual assault in a dorm room last week pleaded not guilty Tuesday morning in a packed courtroom in Paterson, where officials announced kidnapping charges against four of them.

Superior Court Judge Marilyn Clark reduced bail for all five of the 18-year-olds to \$50,000 from the \$200,000 set when they were arrested.

Noah Williams, Garrett Collick, Termaine Scott and Darius Singleton were charged with first-degree aggravated sexual assault of a female student, and first-degree kidnapping. Jahmel Latimer was charged with first-degree aggravated sexual assault.

They appeared before the judge in green jail jumpsuits and were shackled at their wrists and ankles. Relatives and friends of the defendants looked on as lawyers entered the pleas on their behalf.

Earlier story:

Criminal complaint details alleged attack on William Paterson University student

Criminal complaints about an alleged sexual assault in a William Paterson University dorm room last week said four of the five students arrested put the woman “in a condition of involuntary servitude,” turning off the lights and television and “standing in front of the victim and blocking.”

The graphic narrative by campus police, the first to offer any details — however sparse — on the alleged attack at the Overlook South residence hall, came as Passaic County prosecutors and school officials continued to decline any comment on the case. Students interviewed at the dorm in Wayne on Monday said the five men and the female student, all freshmen, knew one another.



TARIQ ZEHAWI/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

The alleged attack took place at the Overlook South residence hall, authorities said.

Related: 5 William Paterson students charged in sexual assault, college president says

The five men, all 18, are scheduled to make their first court appearance this morning in state Superior Court in Paterson before Judge Marilyn Clark.

The new case, coupled with a reported sexual assault in a dorm room at nearby Ramapo College two weeks ago after a fraternity party, has brought the issue of campus rape – which experts say has reached epidemic proportions nationally – to the forefront locally, and led to calls for schools to reexamine prevention efforts.

Related: Some William Paterson University students uneasy after sexual assault arrests on campus

It has also brought into focus the issue of security on campuses.

While officials at William Paterson declined to answer questions Monday about security measures, students interviewed there said the school has emergency phone stations and student patrols to walk with their peers at night. And when a person enters a dorm, he or she must swipe an identification card or sign in as a guest, they said. But those measures don't necessarily protect students inside dorm rooms.

Related: Criminal complaint details alleged attack on William Paterson University student

"I am angry and dismayed that this crime was committed on our campus and allegedly by students," William Paterson President Kathleen Waldron said in a message to faculty and students Sunday night.

According to the complaint by WPU police, Jahmel Latimer of Hoboken, who is charged with two counts of aggravated sexual assault and kidnapping, used "physical force or coercion" during the attack last Tuesday. Latimer is accused of walking into a room where some of the men were talking about having sex with the woman and saying, "Oh word, can I jump on that?"

He allegedly pulled the woman by the hair and forced her into a sex act, then assaulted her a second time by coercing her into another sex act, according to the complaint.

He is the only suspect to be charged with a first-degree crime and faces a penalty of 10 to 20 years in prison if convicted. He is also charged with two counts of violating state law barring sexual penetration that is "aided or abetted by one or more other persons" and involves "physical force or coercion."

Four of the complaints are identical, claiming second-degree crimes against Garrett Collick of Paterson, Noah Williams of Camden, Darius Singleton of Jersey City and Termaine Scott of Vineland. The complaints allege they conspired to commit sexual assault, restrained another person unlawfully and exposed them to risk of serious bodily injury in addition to one count of the same statute as Latimer for aggravated sexual assault. If convicted, they face 5 to 10 years in prison.

The campus police complaints allege that Collick told the woman that "if she wanted to have sex with him, she would have to have sex with all of them."

The complaints provide no information on events leading up to the alleged attack or what followed. The woman contacted campus police about 2 p.m. last Tuesday, according to the complaints and a campus police log.

Once the victim reported the incident, university counselors and police responded, Waldron said.

All five suspects were being held Monday in the Passaic County Jail on \$200,000 bail.

Nearly 1 in 5 college students is sexually assaulted, according to the findings of a White House task force released earlier this year. The assailants are often someone known to the victims, and many cases go unreported, according to the report.

In terms of security at William Paterson, students said the dorms have a student employee who is assigned to work the front desk, monitor entrances and check the identification of everyone who enters. Students said the desk is staffed at all hours.

Every floor has at least one resident assistant, a student who acts as an adviser to about 50 students in a residence hall, they said. Those RAs cannot leave the floor while on duty and will occasionally walk the halls to check on students.

Many students said they would contact the resident assistant first if they heard or saw something suspicious. But it's unclear whether anyone reported suspicious activity to anyone in authority last Tuesday.

There is no single approach that works for every school to bulk up security, said Frank Pisciotta, president of Business Protection Specialists, a security consulting firm. But he said education and alcohol and drug awareness programs help to prevent violence, as does training students to intervene when they see something wrong.

Resident advisers, he said, should be trained on common security threats and what to do to respond to them and develop personal relationships with students. They should have procedures in place and know what to do if a student is in trouble.

"Resident life organizations have a responsibility to be the first line of security and defense inside residence halls," said Pisciotta, who has

worked on security assessments at universities.

WPU students said that, as freshmen, they received a lot of training and presentations on sex violence and the meaning of consent.

The university also has a Campus Violence Prevention Program that is financed by a federal grant that regularly invites speakers and holds awareness campaigns about sexual and domestic violence.

Patricia Teffenhart, executive director of the New Jersey Coalition Against Sexual Assault, noted that 80 percent of assaults happen in situations where people know each other and that changing those statistics requires a diverse and wide-reaching effort.

Schools need extensive prevention programs where students learn how to intervene, understand gender inequities and the role that media plays in gender and violence. But that education can't start at the university level, she said.

"If you're hearing about sex assault prevention for the first time when you're on a college campus," she said, "we've already missed the boat."

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