Woman recants sex assault report
Duke Police consider whether charges should be filed for making false report.

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DURHAM - A woman who told Duke University Police she was sexually assaulted last week recanted her story Monday, school officials said. Now investigators are deciding whether to file criminal charges against her.

The 21-year-old woman, whose name the university did not disclose, said she left Duke Hospital just after 7:30 p.m. Thursday and was walking between the Civitan Building and the Child Guidance Clinic off Elba Street when she was grabbed, forced to the ground and assaulted.

Aaron Graves, Duke associate vice president for safety and security, wouldn't elaborate on the inconsistencies detectives found in her story. Graves said the woman conceded that she had not been raped but would not say whether she had been assaulted in any other way.

"I don't know why she did what she did," said Graves, who added that the woman is not a Duke student or employee.

There are several reasons why a rape victim would recant, said Andrea Maness, SAFE Center coordinator for Interact, a Raleigh-based organization for domestic violence and sexual assault victims.

"That doesn't mean that the rape or sexual assault did not occur," she said.

The victim might not want to deal with the criminal justice system or risk embarrassment to herself, friends and family, Maness said. Less than 6 percent of rape reports are false, she said, citing a State Bureau of Investigation statistic.

The News & Observer and other area media had reported that police were looking for a large, dark-skinned man who was either bald or had short hair with facial hair around his mouth.

Monday's admission is the most recent recanted story involving a college campus. An Appalachian State University senior faces possible criminal charges and school sanctions for making up a story last week about a masked gunman breaking into his apartment. The report led to the school being locked down.

Graves hopes Monday's withdrawal does not "deter anyone who is a victim of such a crime from reporting what happened and seeking assistance," he said in a written statement.

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