

Campus larcenies remain high, according to police

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Incidents of larceny on campus increased this spring, according to recent UNC Asheville Campus Police crime logs.

Since January, 12 of the 22 offenses logged by campus police are occurrences of theft. The recent spike in larcenies is chiefly due to students' negligence, according to campus police.

"We've noticed more of a growing carelessness of individuals on campus," said Sgt. Joseph Jones. "They'll walk away and leave their stuff, or leave their rooms unlocked. These are almost always a crime of opportunity. If you leave something open, even someone that had no plans of stealing anything could come along and take something."

No arrests have been made in these cases, but nine of the dozen incidents are still under investigation. In accordance with this semester's campus police daily crime logs, three cases have been closed due to unfounded or exhausted leads. Jones said campus police will keep these cases open as long as possible, though.

"We'll investigate it until we can't get any more information," Jones said. "Afterwards, we'll go back periodically and check to see if the item has turned up anywhere."

The log's list of stolen items includes things like computer hardware, electronics, jewelry and sporting equipment. In their investigations, Jones said the department works closely with local pawnshops to locate UNCA residents' pilfered belongings.

"We'll take a report and see if anyone has tried to sell the item," Jones said. "The pawn shops in the area are very good at making sure individuals have identification, and take a photograph of anyone that pawns something. We check to see if the merchandise has been pawned, but without a witness or actually catching someone in the act, there's very little we can do."

The increase in reported larcenies at UNCA this semester prompted campus police to bolster efforts in theft prevention. According to Jones, the agency attempts to raise students' awareness of the recent increase of theft around campus.

"We're trying to put out the information to individuals, that people need to secure their belongings," Jones said. "We want to make sure that students, faculty, and staff lock their rooms, offices and cars."

Incidents of theft on college campuses usually involve someone stealing an unattended backpack, laptop or electronic accessory, such as a cell phone, camera or MP3 player. However, Jones said thieves will look for anything of value that can be easily lifted and immediately used or resold.

"iPods and digital devices are very high on the list," Jones said. "For the most part, when these things aren't easily sold, the thieves will simply use it for themselves."

Campus Police recommend residents take individual measures to further ensure the safety of their valuables. According to Jones, recording the serial numbers from personal electronic equipment is an effective measure.

"That's very important in helping us locate stuff, especially if it's been sold, or it's in someone else's possession," Jones said. "Recorded serial numbers definitely help speed the identification and recovery of a stolen item."

The campus buildings and grounds where these incidents occurred this year include Ashe, Karpen, Mills and Robinson Hall.

The Justice Gym and UNCA's Health and Fitness Center are also other venues where items have come up missing, according to campus police.

Jones said campus parking lots are also common larceny locations.

"We patrol the parking lots all the time," Jones said. "Believe it or not, a lot of the parking areas are targeted during the daytime hours more than at night. You have things going on during the day. A lot of individuals are in classrooms or in the offices, so with little traffic, individuals will often break into cars in the parking lots during broad daylight."

The department advises the entire UNCA community to be on the lookout for suspicious activity, and immediately report it to campus police. Despite UNCA's centralized and intimate campus atmosphere, Jones encourages everyone to diligently lock their doors and keep a



Emily Kerr- Contributing Photographer

Larcenies on campus often include items like digital music players and laptops, which have resale value, according to Campus Police.

watchful eye on their possessions.

"We're a small, close-knit campus, where everyone seems to get along for the most part," Jones said. "However, this does not stop these crimes of opportunity from happening. Stuff will disappear in a minute."

Furthermore, Jones said the university's police and Public Safety Departments are relatively undersized, which makes it even more important for students, faculty and staff do their part to protect themselves against the budding trend of thefts on campus.

"We're a small department. We don't have enough patrol to go around and be everywhere at once," Jones said. "Even if we did, the chances of us coming upon someone doing something are very slight."

The UNCA Campus Police daily crime log is available at <http://www2.unca.edu/publicsafety/>. According to the agency, individuals who notice suspicious activity or have information on these cases should visit campus police's main office, or contact them by phone at campus extension 6710.