

Behind closed doors

Sexual assault remains unseen problem on college campuses

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News Editor

He stifled her frantic screams with a pillow and restrained her flailing limbs with brute force. She could barely breathe as he raped her. When he pulled her body on top of his and pushed her head between his legs, she managed to slip her wrist from his grasp and swiftly struck him in the genitals. Pain clouded his consciousness as she retrieved her clothes and fled into the night.

"I called my friends crying and they met me outside the dorm and helped me in and then called the Elon Police," said a former Elon University student who was granted anonymity by The Pendulum because of the sensitive nature of her experience. "The Elon Police took my statement, and then my friends took me to the hospital to get a rape kit done."

The attack ripped into her life like a violent storm and eroded nearly every aspect of her existence. Her health suffered, her relationships frayed and her spirit crumbled. Though the bruises she sustained eventually faded, the memory of that night never did.

The former student's attack was not an isolated incident. A 2009 study conducted at two large universities found 19 percent of college-aged women had experienced attempted or completed sexual assault since entering college. A national survey conducted in 2010 by the Center for Disease Control and Prevention found nearly 40 percent of female adult rape victims were first raped between ages 18 and 24.

The results of the 2009 college study echoed the findings of national studies conducted in 2000. And 1995. And 1986. The incidence of sexual assault at American colleges and universities has remained constant for nearly 30 years, a trend that many national, state and local lawmakers have tried to reverse with legislation such as the Clery