

NEWS FEATURES

Student court to judge campus date rape cases

By Jennifer Wing

■ The Daily Tar Heel

U. of North Carolina, Chapel Hill

An amendment defining date rape as a campus offense punishable by the U. of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, Undergraduate Student Court went into effect this fall despite concerns by student court members.

Court Chairwoman Ruth Dowling said she is unsure if the court is capable of dealing with such a sensitive issue. "I definitely have concerns on whether or not we can deal with this."

The amendment was approved by UNC Chancellor Paul Hardin, the Student Congress and the Faculty Council because it provides a different avenue for victims who feel uncomfortable taking the case to civil

court, Dowling said.

"If it's going to allow people a place to go to solve this thing, then we want to work with this. But I'm not too sure if people will come to court with it," she said.

Court members are concerned with having the responsibility of judging guilt or innocence, in addition to sanctioning the parties found guilty.


Wilton Hyman, former court chairman, also expressed concern. "Most of the court's cases deal with academic issues, and this will require the court to go beyond its scope."

He said date rape cases are especially difficult because of the reverberating effects they can have on both parties involved. "The court really needs to do it carefully because it's the kind of thing you can't make a mistake on," he said.

The Rape Awareness Committee, made up of representatives from the campus and community, backed the amendment, saying the court would be qualified to hear cases after training.

Kathleen Benzaquin, chairwoman of the committee, said the amendment's real strength lies in the awareness it will arouse and the options it will offer victims. "I have talked to victims who said if they could have taken their case to the Undergraduate Court instead of civil court, they would have done so," she said.

Robert Byrd, chairman of the Faculty Committee on Student Conduct, said basic judicial problems are still involved in date rape cases, and the court is qualified to accept this responsibility. "Under the system we have, we are leaving student disciplinary problems to be solved under the student court system."



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Alcohol

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A student at Brown U. agrees that alcohol use is the more common of the two. "Drugs are not widespread. I don't see them at campus parties."

At Reed College, students note a similar trend toward decreased drug use. One said, "The general campus attitude is changing very much that there should be more responsibility shown, both by the administration and the students." She said that not many students use illegal drugs, but "a lot of people drink beer on Friday nights. They get a six-pack and go to a party."

One reason for the popularity of alcohol on small campuses, says a Wesleyan student, is its accessibility. "I just turned 21, and in my four years here, I don't know if I've ever been refused alcohol."

While the nation continues its conservative anti-drug education campaigns, many smaller liberal arts schools admit their measures remain liberal. Wesleyan's Dean of Student Life Denise Darrigrand said the drinking age is not strictly enforced by the administration.

"The way Wesleyan tends to view its drinking age is we treat the students as adults," she said. "We let them know what the issues are, and then they make their own decisions."

Iowa's Grinnell College follows a similar policy of self-governance. Director of Student Social Activities Steve Bialek said the alcohol policy is "an education process. At all-campus parties, where beer is served, IDs are not checked. That's how we operate. We inform students as much as possible, then each student makes his own choice."

At Dartmouth College, Drugs and Alcohol Counselor Dr. Phil Meilman said underage drinking "is not specifically a violation of college policy, but it is a violation of state law."

Sarah Westfall, assistant dean of students at Carleton College, said their policy is based on the idea that "whatever you do in your room is your own business as long as you don't infringe on the rights of others."

In contrast to the "hands-off" alcohol policies of these small liberal arts colleges, Westfall said policies at medium and large universities are tightening.

While Princeton U. Associate Dean of Students Kathleen Deiganan agrees with colleagues at smaller schools that students are adults who should be allowed to make their own decisions, she said, "You are really torn between your personal beliefs and your legal obligations." She said colleges no longer can



Residents of a Connecticut College dorm, where drug use was reported, hung this sign after administrators sent a letter stating they would begin monitoring the dorm, ignoring the school's policy of student self-regulation.

risk such permissive policies because of the growing number of liability suits.

Princeton's alcohol policy came under scrutiny after seven students were hospitalized during the 1987-88 academic year, including one who entered an alcohol-induced coma after a party at a campus eating club.

"The university needs to be able to say that we have made a reasonable effort to prevent underage drinking without interfering with individuals' rights," Deiganan said. She said students are rarely prevented from consuming alcohol in their dorm rooms, but purchasing large quantities of alcohol to serve underage drinkers is prohibited under the revised policy.

Deiganan said this change is the result of New Jersey state laws, which do not outlaw the consumption of alcohol by minors in private, but do prohibit the serving of minors in private.

Princeton and Harvard U. have banned kegs on campus, although Harvard's rule applies only to freshman dorms. Upperclassmen at Harvard must use a "beverage authorization team" made up of graduate students at all parties. The team checks IDs and stamps hands at the door to mark who can drink. In addition, groups may not advertise their parties if they plan to serve alcohol.

"We have been trying to spend more time on alcohol abuse," explained Associate Dean of Students Tom Dingman.