

Former student sues Allegheny College for damages related to December 2019 armed rape

Ethan Woodfill, Editor-in-Chief | July 30, 2020



Trigger warning: Sexual assault, gun violence

A former student is suing Allegheny College for \$75,000 in damages related to the December 2019 armed rape in Ravine-Narvik Hall.

The lawsuit was filed Friday, July 24, by Kline & Specter law firm of Philadelphia in the United States Western District Court in Erie. First reported by the Erie-Times News, the lawsuit claims that the College was negligent and reckless in providing secure housing to the defendant listed in the lawsuit as Jane Doe.

Doe was assaulted by an armed man in Ravine-Narvik Hall at approximately 1:30 a.m. on Tuesday, Dec. 10. The lawsuit states that after Doe went to bed, she answered a knock at the door, which “had no peephole ... or other mechanism to allow the room occupant to observe who was on the other side of the door.”

“As a result of unsecured entrances to Ravine-Narvik Hall and Jane Doe’s inability to identify the individual on the other side of the door,” the lawsuit states, “an assailant entered Jane Doe’s room with a firearm and proceeded to forcibly penetrate her at gunpoint. At no time did Jane Doe consent to sexual intercourse with the assailant.”

Meadville Police Chief Michael Tautin told the Meadville Tribune Thursday that the investigation into the assault remains ongoing and that no one has been charged. Police described Doe’s attacker as approximately 20 years old with light brown skin, more than 5 feet, 7 inches tall, wearing a gray hooded sweatshirt and a red, white and blue hat and carrying a handgun.

Among the allegations of negligence and recklessness include a failure to secure residence hall exterior and interior doors and a failure to provide peepholes on students’ residence doors. The lawsuit indicated that the card entry systems for Ravine’s exterior entrances



“regularly failed to operate or function,” causing students to prop open doors.

The lawsuit also claims that the College was aware that multiple on-campus forcible sex offenses, suspicious persons and trespassers had occurred prior to the incident and made no attempts to improve security systems.

From 2016 to 2019, the College’s Daily Crime and Fire Log reported multiple forcible sex offenses at Ravine-Narvik Hall. In 2018, the College reported 24 forcible sex offenses and nine in 2019, according to the lawsuit.

During a Dec. 11 meeting with students and administrative officials, students raised concerns about the security of residence hall doors. Multiple students indicated their doors did not lock properly, were broken or regularly propped open. The College increased security measures after the incident, including hiring additional security personnel for the remainder of the fall 2019 semester.

The College declined a request from The Campus for comment. Susan Salton, Vice President for College Relations, issued the following statement: “Allegheny College is not at liberty to discuss any specific case or situation, directly or indirectly, nor can we comment on pending litigation. The College continues to remain steadfast in its comprehensive efforts to provide a safe and secure campus for the entire campus community.”

About the Writer



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Ethan Woodfill is a junior from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. He is an Environmental Science & Sustainability and Political Science double major with an...

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