

# SYSTEMS STATS

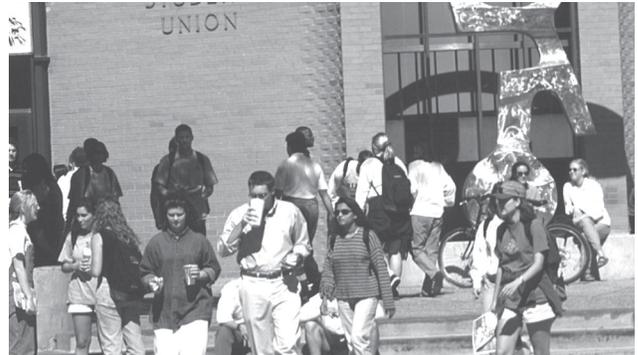
North Carolina Criminal Justice Analysis Center

Governor's Crime Commission

## An Examination of Reported Criminal Offenses and Disciplinary Actions at North Carolina Public Institutions of Higher Education

The homicide of University of North Carolina student Faith Hedgepeth in September 2012 again raises the question of student safety on college campuses across the state. It is clouded by the fact that college campuses are composed of numerous buildings surrounded by open spaces and many students reside off campus. Any violent crime related to a college or university student, whether it occurs on or off campus, raises public awareness of college students as possible crime victims. Those that come to attention most often are homicides and violent assaults; however, research in this area has been limited (Volkwein, Szelest, & Lizotte, 1995; Drysdale, Modzeleski, & Simons, 2010). A study conducted by the Federal Bureau of Investigation, in conjunction with the Department of Education and the U.S. Secret Service, examined a number of cases of campus crime gleaned from the news media from the early 1900s through 1990 and from mandatory reports from 1990 forward. The majority of incidents reported occurred in the 1990s and 2000s. The increase in incidents reported in this time frame may be attributed to increased enrollment, mandatory reporting requirements and the increase in media coverage and digital reporting over the past two decades. While the goal of the research was to determine which factors were common to reported incidents and how those commonalities could be used to prevent future incidents, it also produced information on campus-related crimes. It indicated that 20 percent of offenses actually occur off campus, 36 percent happen in campus offices or classroom buildings, 28 percent took place in residential buildings on campus and 27 percent happened on campus grounds or parking lots (Drysdale, Modzeleski, & Simons, 2010).

Incidents such as the one that occurred at Virginia Tech in 2007, where five faculty members and 27 students were killed, are the exception rather than the rule. In North Carolina, the most notable crimes, including the homicides of Eve Carson, Abhijit Mahato, Denita Monique Smith, Irina Yarmolenko and now, Faith Hedgepeth, occurred off campus. A study conducted



by Volkwein, Szelest and Lizotte (1995) suggests that crime rates reported by institutions of higher education nationwide overestimate crimes directed against students on campus, while disregarding student victims of crime off campus. Evidence shows that, overall, the crime rate on college campuses is low in comparison to that of local communities (Cornell, 2010).

### Introduction

The Clery Act, a federal statute signed in 1990, requires all colleges and universities that participate in federal financial aid programs to keep and disclose certain timely and annual information about campus crime and security policies. The U.S. Department of Education enforces the Act and is the agency that handles complaints of alleged violations.

Schools are required to publish an annual report each year by October 1. The report contains three consecutive years of campus crime statistics and certain security policy statements, the law enforcement authority of campus police, and where students should go to report crimes. The report is to be made available to all current students and employees.

Crimes are reported in two categories, either violent or property offenses. Violent offenses include homicide—comprised of murder and manslaughter, sex offenses including forcible and non-forcible sex offenses, robbery and aggravated assault. Property offenses include burglary, motor vehicle theft and arson. In addition, schools are required to report liquor law

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and drug law violations and illegal weapons possession if the incident results in either an arrest or disciplinary referral.

Statistics are broken down geographically into on-campus with a subset that includes residential facilities for students on campus, non-campus buildings that are owned by the university, and on public property such as streets and sidewalks that are adjacent to campus. On-campus property refers to property owned or controlled by the college. It includes the geographic area used for educational purposes, residence halls, administrative buildings, classrooms and labs. Also included are college-controlled fraternity and sorority houses, food vendors, bookstores, and other retail stores.

Non-campus property refers to any buildings not on the main campus, but controlled by the college to support educational purposes. One example would be a university-owned hospital. Public property refers to those streets, sidewalks, public parking facilities on-campus, or immediately adjacent to and accessible from campus, and public parks adjacent to and accessible from the campus. It does not include private homes and businesses.

The following analysis primarily concentrates on the 16 public, four-year institutions within the University of North Carolina system for the period 2006-2010. In addition, a section lists reported offenses and disciplinary actions occurring in public, two-year institutions that comprise the North Carolina community college system.

**Overall Reported Crime**

From 2006 to 2010, 3,754 offenses were reported by the 16 public four-year universities. During the five-



*Table 1. North Carolina Public, Four-Year Institutions and Total Enrollment, 2009*

<b>Institution Name</b>	<b>Enrollment</b>
Appalachian State University	16,968
East Carolina University	27,654
Elizabeth City State University	3,264
Fayetteville State University	6,283
North Carolina A & T State University	10,614
North Carolina Central University	8,587
North Carolina State University at Raleigh	33,819
University of North Carolina at Asheville	3,897
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill	28,916
University of North Carolina at Charlotte	24,701
University of North Carolina at Greensboro	21,306
University of North Carolina at Pembroke	6,661
University of North Carolina at Wilmington	12,924
University of North Carolina School of the Arts	872
Western Carolina University	9,429
Winston-Salem State University	6,427

*Source: U.S. Department of Education*

year period, property crimes were reported almost four times as often as violent crimes.

The overwhelmingly, most commonly reported offense at public, four-year institutions in North Carolina was burglary (64.9 percent), followed by motor vehicle theft (12.2 percent). Aggravated assault (8.3 percent), robbery (7.2 percent), sex offenses (5.7 percent), arson (1.6 percent), and homicide (less than 1 percent) cumulatively comprised less than one-quarter of the remaining reported offenses.

**Violent Offenses by Location**

Of the 796 violent crimes reported between 2006 and 2010, more than three-quarters (76.3 percent) took place on campus. The remainder of offenses occurred on adjacent public property (16.6 percent) and university controlled non-campus property (7.2 percent).

The type of violent crime reported varied by location. Sex offenses were highly prevalent on campus, yet were seldom reported for public and non-campus properties. The majority (65.9 percent) of robberies occurred on-campus. In addition, more than half (56.8

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percent) of public property offenses were robberies. Aggravated assaults comprised at least one-third of offenses regardless of the location.

A substantial percentage of total violent crimes (42.9 percent) occurred in residence halls. A high prevalence was noted pertaining to reported sex offenses; almost three-fourths (74.3 percent) occurred in residence halls. One-third of on-campus aggravated assaults and slightly less than one-quarter of on-campus robberies (23.0 percent) occurred in residence halls. Of violent offenses occurring in residence halls, more than half (53.5 percent) were sex offense related followed by aggravated assault (30.8 percent) and robbery (15.8 percent).

**Property Offenses by Location**

From 2006-2010, an overwhelming majority (92.3 percent) of reported property crimes occurred on campus property. Burglary accounted for the majority of property offenses occurring on campus (84.0 percent). Similarly, for non-campus areas, burglary comprised an overwhelming majority of property crime reports (92.3 percent).

However, unlike the two previous locations, motor vehicle theft on public property accounted for all but one of the total number of property offenses reported. Perhaps the low prevalence of motor vehicle theft at on-campus locations compared to public property could be a result of campus crime prevention and reduction techniques. It is possible that campus safety and security measures have brought heightened awareness to students and as a result measures have been taken to prevent motor vehicles from being stolen. Typically, security is greater inside campus parking decks where many students choose to park their cars. This may reduce the motivation of offenders to commit crime in those locations. Increased lighting and requiring payment in order to exit parking decks and lots may also help to deter motor vehicle theft.

**Property Offenses in Residence Halls**

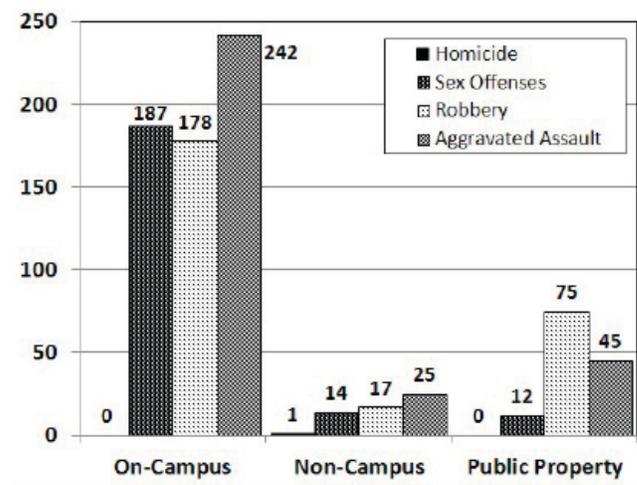
Of the 2,731 property crimes reported from on-campus locations from 2006 through 2010, 1,285 (47 percent) occurred in residence halls. Specific crime types were more likely to be reported in residence halls compared to other places on campus.

From 2006 to 2010, burglary was the most commonly reported property offense in

**Table 2: Violent and Property Offenses at North Carolina Public Four-Year Institutions, 2006-2010**

Offense	Reports	Percent of Total Crime
Homicide	1	<1%
Sex offenses	213	5.7%
Robbery	270	7.2%
Aggravated assault	312	8.3%
<b>Total Violent</b>	<b>796</b>	<b>21.2%</b>
Burglary	2,438	64.9%
Motor vehicle theft	459	12.2%
Arson	61	1.6%
Total Property	2,958	78.8%
<b>Total Crime</b>	<b>3,754</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

**Figure 1: Violent Crime by Type of Offense and Location at North Carolina Public Four-Year Institutions, 2006-2010**



**Table 3: Violent Offenses Occurring in Residence Halls of North Carolina Public Four-Year Institutions, 2006-2010**

Offense	Total On-Campus	Residence Halls*	Percent in Residence Halls
Homicide	0	0	0.0%
Sex offenses	187	139	74.3%
Robbery	178	41	23.0%
Aggravated assault	242	80	33.1%
<b>Total Violent Crime</b>	<b>607</b>	<b>260</b>	<b>42.9%</b>

\*Subset of on-campus crime

Source: U.S. Department of Education

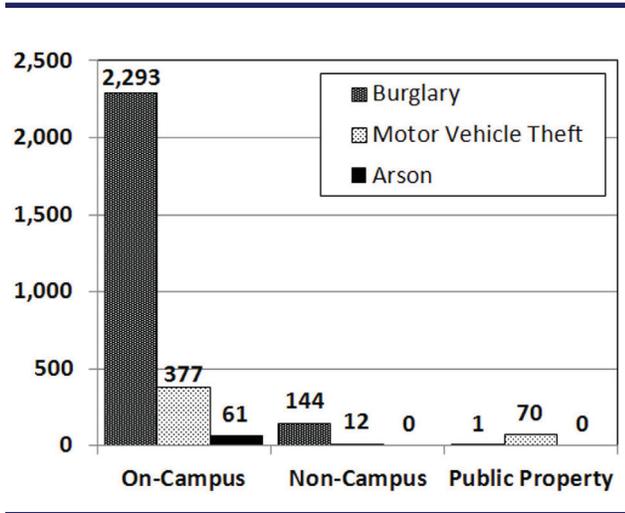
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**Table 4: Property Offenses Occurring in Residence Halls of North Carolina Public, Four-Year Institutions, 2006-2010**

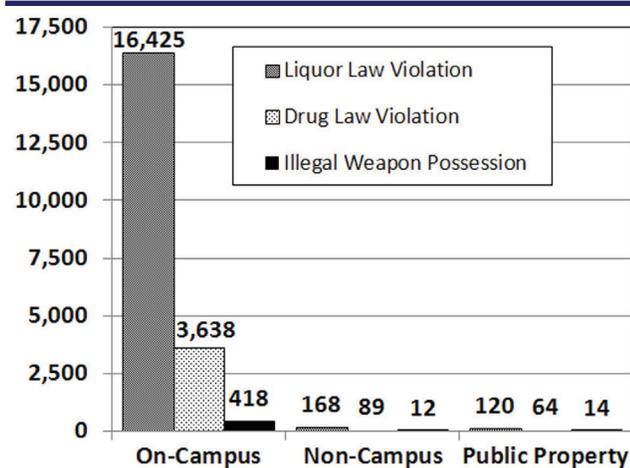
Offense	Total On-Campus	Residence Halls*	Percent in Residence Halls
Burglary	2,293	1,245	54.3%
Motor Vehicle Theft	377	4	1.1%
Arson	61	36	59.0%
Total Property Crime	2,731	1,285	47.1%

\*Subset of on-campus crime

**Figure 2: Property Crime by Type of Offense and Location at North Carolina Public Four-Year Institutions, 2006-2010**



**Figure 3: Disciplinary Actions by Type of Offense and Location at North Carolina Public Four-Year Institutions, 2006-2010**



Source: U.S. Department of Education

residence halls, accounting for the majority (54.3 percent) of all burglaries on campus property. In addition, the majority of arsons (59 percent) also took place in residence halls compared to motor vehicle theft.

**Disciplinary Actions**

Between 2006 and 2010, there were 20,948 disciplinary actions were reported for illegal weapon possession, drug and liquor law violations by North Carolina

public four-year institutions. The vast majority (79.8 percent) of these disciplinary actions were for liquor law violations, followed by drug law violations (18.1 percent) and illegal weapon possession (2.1 percent).

**Disciplinary Actions by Location**

Of the 20,948 reported disciplinary actions from 2006 to 2010, almost all (97.7 percent) took place on campus. Spanning the period between 2006 through 2010, liquor law violations were the most common disciplinary action at any location, accounting for approximately 80 percent of the disciplinary actions on campus and more than 60 percent of disciplinary actions occurring on non-campus property or public property. Drug law violations accounted for a greater proportion of disciplinary actions at non-campus (33.1 percent) and public property (32.3 percent) locations compared to locations on campus (17.8 percent). Illegal weapon possession accounted for the lowest proportion of disciplinary action reports across each of the three locations.

Of the 20,481 reported disciplinary actions taking place on-campus during the latest five reporting years, less than one-half (46.3 percent) occurred in residence halls. Liquor law violations accounted for more than 80 percent of disciplinary actions taking place in residence halls.

**Violent and Property Offenses at North Carolina Public Two-year Institutions**

During the period from 2006 to 2010, a total of 672 offenses were reported at North Carolina public two-year institutions. Of the 672 reported offenses, almost 40 percent were violent crimes while a little over three-fifths were property crimes. Compared to the number of reported violent and property offenses at the state's public four-year institutions, there was a greater proportion of reported violent offenses although

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property offenses still represented the majority of offenses reported.

**Violent Offenses by Location**

Out of the 251 reported violent crimes between 2006 and 2010, more than 70 percent occurred on campus property while more than one-quarter (28.7 percent) occurred on public property. Only three reports (1.2 percent) occurred on non-campus property.

Aggravated assault offenses accounted for more than half of the violent crimes reported at all three locations. The next most commonly reported violent crime was robbery, which accounted for at least one-third of offenses at all three locations. Sex offenses accounted for the lowest proportion of reported violent crime at any location. No reports of homicide occurred during the time period at any location.

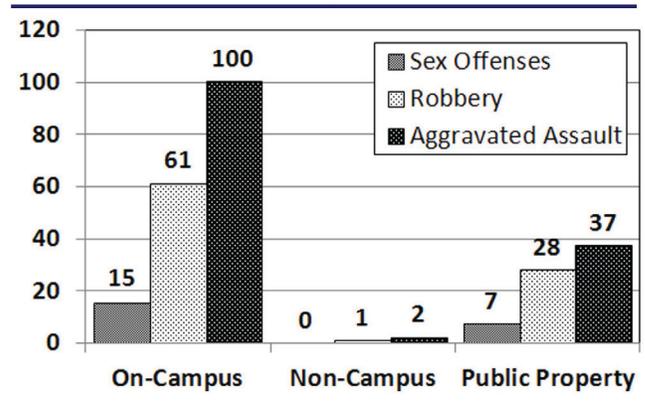
**Property Offenses by Location**

During the last five years, the majority (83.6 percent) of reported property crimes occurred on campus followed by public property (13.5 percent) and non-campus property (2.9 percent). With the exception of one incident, burglary comprised all property crime on non-campus property (91.7 percent) and represented about two-thirds (66.5 percent) of incidents occurring on-campus. There were very few incidents (n=5) of burglary reported on public property, unlike that of motor vehicle thefts (n=52). In addition, motor vehicle thefts made up a significant proportion (29.5 percent) of property crime taking place on campus.

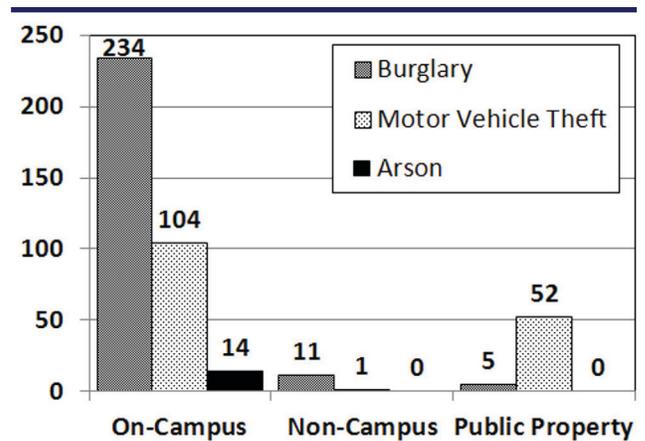
**Overall Reported Crime at North Carolina Public Two-Year Institutions**

Over the last five years, violent offenses have represented a much higher proportion of overall reported offenses in the state's public two-year institutions (37.4 percent) in comparison to public four-year institutions (21.2 percent). The most common reported offense at the two-year public universities in North Carolina was burglary (37.2 percent), followed by motor vehicle theft (23.4 percent), aggravated assault (20.7 percent) and robbery

*Figure 4: Violent Crime by Type of Offense and Location at North Carolina Public Two-Year Institutions, 2006-2010*



*Figure 5: Property Crime by Type of Offense and Location at North Carolina Public Two-Year Institutions, 2006-2010*



Source: U.S. Department of Education

(13.4 percent). Compared to the reported offenses at the public four-year universities, and possibly due to the commuter nature of community colleges, burglary represented a much lower proportion of total crime.

**Disciplinary Actions at North Carolina Public Two-Year Institutions**

During the course of five years, 246 disciplinary actions were reported at North Carolina public two-year institutions. Of the 246 reported disciplinary actions, drug law violations accounted for the greatest proportion (42.7 percent). Compared to the disciplinary actions reported at public four-year institutions, there were a much larger proportion of illegal weapon possession offenses and drug law violations at two-year institutions. Liquor law violations, which represented

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**Table 5: Violent and Property Offenses at North Carolina Public Two-Year Institutions, 2006-2010**

Offense	Reports	Percent of Total Crime
Homicide	0	0.0%
Sex offenses	22	3.3%
Robbery	90	13.4%
Aggravated assault	139	20.7%
<b>Total Violent</b>	<b>251</b>	<b>37.4%</b>
Burglary	250	37.2%
Motor vehicle theft	157	23.4%
Arson	14	2.1%
<b>Total Property</b>	<b>421</b>	<b>62.6%</b>
<b>Total Crime</b>	<b>672</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

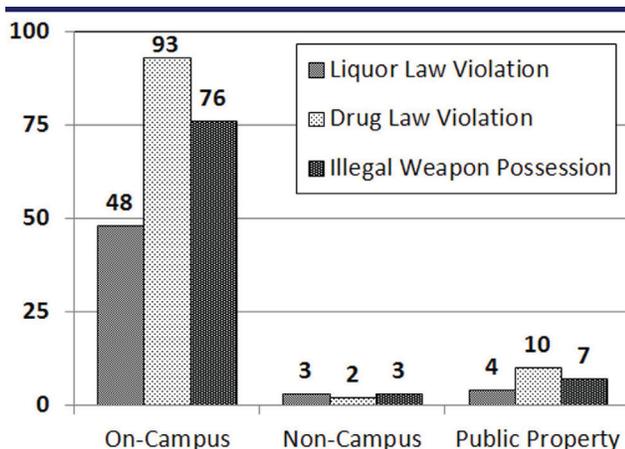
Source: U.S. Department of Education

an overwhelming majority of the disciplinary action reported at public four-year institutions, accounted for the lowest proportion of reported disciplinary actions at public two-year institutions (22.4 percent).

**Disciplinary Action by Location**

From 2006 to 2010, the vast majority (88.2 percent) of disciplinary actions reported occurred on campus. Public property violations represented approximately

**Figure 6: Disciplinary Actions by Type of Offense and Location at North Carolina Public Two-Year Institutions, 2006-2010**



Source: U.S. Department of Education

9.0 percent of disciplinary actions while non-campus accounted for the remaining 3.3 percent.

Drug law violations accounted for the highest proportion of disciplinary action both at on campus locations (42.9 percent) and on public property (47.6 percent). However, drug law violations accounted for the lowest proportion occurring on non-campus property. Surprisingly, illegal possession of a weapon represented more than one-third (n=76) of on-campus disciplinary actions for public two-year institutions over the five year period. This type of offense accounted for only two percent of disciplinary actions at public, four-year institutions (n=418), despite the fact that it occurred at a higher frequency.

**Conclusion**

North Carolina has an established reputation for a great collection of well-respected public universities and colleges within its borders. The safety and security of our state’s higher education institutions is essential for both the University of North Carolina and North Carolina Community College System in fulfilling their missions. It will be necessary to further examine the nature and extent of crime on college campuses as time passes.

The purpose of this analysis of the U.S. Department of Education dataset, obtained through the requirements of the Clery Act, is to increase public awareness of campus-related crime. It is hoped that this brief examination of the information provided will help facilitate more in-depth comparisons among individual institutions throughout the state and will assist in the creation and implementation of improved crime control measures for college campuses across the state. With this information, colleges and universities can be compared with similar institutions, both in North Carolina and in other states, and may prove beneficial to both decision makers and future students.

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The Governor's Crime Commission was established in 1977 by the North Carolina General Assembly under G.S. 143B-479. Its primary duty is "to be the chief advisory body to the Governor and the Secretary of the Department of Public Safety for the development and implementation of criminal justice policy." The Crime Commission is always open to comments and suggestions from the public as well as criminal justice officials. Please contact us and let us know your thoughts and feelings on the information contained in this publication or on any other criminal justice issue of concern to you.

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