

Reported assaults cause concern at WSU

Floyd pledges reward for information that leads to arrest, prosecution

By Yesenia Amaro, Daily News staff writer

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Estella Lee hopes a reward being offered by Washington State University President Elson S. Floyd will help capture whoever is responsible for the assaults that have reportedly taken place on campus during the past week.

Floyd announced Tuesday that he will contribute \$5,000 out of his pocket to establish a reward for anyone who provides information that leads to the arrest and prosecution of anyone responsible for the assaults.

"I hope that's going to help find the person who is doing this, because this is serious," said Lee, a senior. "It can go bigger."

Two women have reported being assaulted on campus by a white male who stands about 5-foot-9 and has a stocky build. The incidents happened early Monday and last Wednesday evening.

A third woman reported being assaulted Monday evening, but WSU Police officers determined Tuesday the freshman had made a false statement.

Floyd addressed the incidents in a written statement released Tuesday.

"Washington State University is deeply committed to maintaining a safe campus," he wrote. "The recent alleged assaults upon female students on our campus are unacceptable and will not be tolerated."

The WSU Women's Resource Center will administer the reward in collaboration with the WSU Police Department, Floyd wrote.

WSU spokesman James Tinney said details on the reward are still being worked out, but Floyd's "plan is that this would be something that would continue into the future ... with similar situations."

Lee said she is really worried about the recent assaults.

"I'm so scared," she said. "You never know, these people can do anything."

WSU freshman Kamalpreet Jhutti said she feels secure when she is walking around campus during the day, but it's a different situation at night.

"I don't feel comfortable walking around when it's dark outside," she said. "I only go out with friends, and if not, I stay inside. Why risk it?"

She said her parents gave her good advice when they told her to avoid being outside when it's dark.

"They are kind of concerned, but they are not worried about me because they know that I listen to them," she said.

Freshman Katherine Cuthbert moved from Atlanta, Ga., to attend WSU and said she is not concerned.

"I'm not that worried," she said. "I come from the big city."

She said situations like this are more common in larger cities.

"I'm kind of surprised that it would happen here," she said.

The woman accused of making a false statement reported that a man had fondled her at about 8 p.m. Tuesday and that she was able to fight him off and escape.

Following further investigation Wednesday morning, WSU Police Lt. Steve Hansen said police were able to determine the woman had lied.

"The evidence we had did not coincide with the story we were being told ... and she recanted what she'd said," he said.

Hansen said the woman could potentially face charges for lying to police, but added that "for now, our focus is getting her some help and support."

Hansen said police have increased their foot patrols of the area around Terrell Mall, where the alleged assaults reportedly took place.

He said several people have called with further information about the suspect, but the leads "didn't pan out."

WSU police have sent e-mail reminders to students to be aware of their surroundings, not walk alone and stay in well-lit areas. Anyone with information about the assaults is encouraged to call the WSUPD at (509) 335-8548, or 911 if it's an emergency.

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