



Capt. Scott Mash discusses Clery report with App State Students in Walker Hall

By Sophia Hughes

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Capt. Scott Mash of Appalachian Police Department held a press conference in Walker Hall on Oct. 15 to discuss the annual Jeanne Clery report, also known as the Annual Security and Fire Safety report, detailing campus crime statistics.

“Every morning I go through the reports taken in the past 24 hours,” Mash said. “If there’s a Clery crime, we have to make sure it’s identified correctly because once those reports are approved, the public log is updated.”

The Clery report is a federal requirement for universities to disclose annually in order to receive federal funding. This was signed into law by President George H.W. Bush in 1990. It's vital that Mash keeps the report up to date to ensure transparency to the community. Failure to comply with the release of a Clery report can result in the loss of millions of dollars in potential federal aid for students.

While the Clery Act provides an initiative for transparency in reporting, the Violence Against Women act (VAWA), addresses an investigative side. According to the Clery report, there have been a total of 72 'VAWA' cases on App State's campus over the past four years. VAWA authorizes grants to law enforcement entities to investigate reports of dating violence, domestic violence, and stalking. There isn't a clear distinction between domestic and dating violence on a crime log, according to Mash, but the specific statute violation will determine how it appears.

"There are lots of things that could be considered dating violence that would not rise to a level of domestic violence as far as statute," said Mash.

If the incident involves a current or former spouse, or involves family or household members, it is considered [domestic violence](#). Otherwise, if the parties involved are in a dating relationship without familial ties, the incident would be considered [dating violence](#).

VAWA issues that do not include a statute violation are referred by App P.D. to the Title IX office located on campus, in the basement of the school building, I.G. Greer. However, Mash

made it clear that the department “doesn’t have a problem with having a conversation with someone all telling them to knock it off.”

Mash stated that these cases can be difficult to investigate, mostly due to lack of evidence to present to the District Attorney’s office. Rape cases prove particularly difficult, as according to Mash, it often comes down to “one person’s word against another”. These cases often require thorough investigation, sometimes including the [controversial DNA testing](#). Another factor that can be run into is when alleged victims decide to withdraw from the investigation process.

During the conference Mash spoke of some measures his team takes to prevent incidences such as these. App State student, Shannon Studer, asked during a student-led questionnaire outside of Walker Hall held prior to the press conference with Mash, what the police department does to ensure the safety of students, especially women, who walk down Rivers Street at night.

Mash stated that officers are on the road and respond to reports at all hours of the night. The University also offers a free ride service called [Mountaineer Safe Walk](#) which is noted on the Appalachian Police Department’s website. This service is available to students seven days a week between 9:45 p.m. to 2:45 a.m.

Timely warnings are another necessity to keep the community safe according to Mash. Any act taking place that could be considered a threat to person or property requires a notice to be issued to the community. Failure to provide such a notice results in a fine to the University.

“Appalachian has never been fined. Hopefully we never will. We are very transparent like that,” said Mash.

The police department offers self-defense training as another way to keep students safe.

Specifically, Mash described the [Rape Aggression Defense \(RAD\) program](#), which is available to all students, at no charge. The program consists of four night-time sessions from 6 to 9 p.m. in Mountain Laurel Hall.