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# Student Government Association attends conference on sexual assault



Left to right: Sarah Currie, Caitlyn Brotherton, Emily DeVries, Anna Kulmar, Caleb Harris, Jessi Saltijeral Courtesy of Student Government Association

by Jonelle Bobak

Five members of Gardner Webb's Student Government Association traveled to Elon University to attend a sexual assault conference. They went to represent GWU and were exposed to many issues in today's society.

They heard various speakers and participated in several sessions dealing with aspects, such as, how to help a sexual assault victim and being aware of others as a bystander.

"We heard guest speakers on how the culture is now," said Jessica Saltijeral, the Executive Council Secretary. "We talked about many sensitive issues." Things like being aware of your surroundings, learning how to recognize victims of sexual assault and how to stop it before it happens, were all discussed.

Saltijeral said it was a nice conference because it brought the group back to reality. They were given a set of questions to answer about GWU's policies and guidelines for sexual assault and what steps would be taken if something happen on campus.

A week before the conference Dr. Carey Poole was hired as Assistant Vice President for Title IX Compliance.

According to [www.knowyourix.org](http://www.knowyourix.org) , Title IX is defined as, "... a landmark federal civil right that prohibits sex discrimination in education." In the [GWU's Student Handbook](#) on page 88-90 it assesses Title IX and assaults.

It explains the different forms of assault, guidelines to prevent sexual assault, what to do in the case of sexual assault (whether victim or bystander) and what to do immediately after an attack.

Saltijeral appreciated the session about bystanders. "Don't be afraid to walk up to a person who looks uncomfortable or distraught," she said.

They watched a video called "[Who Are You](#)" which places the viewer in the 'hot seat' and gives multiple scenarios of when a bystander could help a possible victim of sexual assault.

Emily DeVries, a junior member of SGA, attended the conference as well. She has seen many things from the conference that she wants to implement on campus.

"Having a clear strategy and knowing what the go-to is in the GWU Handbook and promoting it more," said DeVries. She wants students to be more aware of what the policies are.

Startling statistics were also mentioned at the conference. "Ninety percent of perpetrators are someone you know," said DeVries.

At this conference SGA brought back ideas that they may want to apply on campus. One of them was Take Back Night, a night where students raise awareness of sexual violence by walking around campus at night and speaking on the issue.

"The point is for people to have the ability to walk around campus without being afraid," said Caitlyn Brotherton, another member of SGA. They would have other survivors speak, as well. "Something that I think is important that GWU doesn't have is activists that are productive and proactive," said Brotherton.

To learn more about what the SGA members learned you can click this link: [It's On Us](#) Campaign website