

Student jailed over false rape claim

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A student who made up an allegation that she had been bound and raped in the grounds of her university was yesterday jailed for two months after a court heard she had wasted 900 hours of police time.

Rowena Jones, 21, had pleaded guilty at Exeter magistrates court. Her solicitor, Rachel Bentley, said Jones had been raped two years before her false claim, but did not report it.

Sentencing Jones, magistrate Geoffrey Harrison said officers had been taken off other serious inquiries including murder, rape and manslaughter.

“We could have sentenced you to six months' imprisonment but we give you credit for the early plea of guilty and the fact you have no previous convictions,” he said.

The court heard that Jones had made meticulous preparation to support her false claim. She used tape with which she bound her hands and ankles to add authenticity to her account that she had been assaulted by a stranger late at night on Exeter university's campus.

Jones, who graduated from the university with a degree in Greek and Roman studies, is now studying there for an MA.

Prosecutor David Bowen said just under £10,000 had been spent on the inquiry. He said that 60 officers had been put on the case after Jones made a 27-page statement. Only two months later did she admit her story was false.

Mr Bowen said that when police were called to the university campus late at night on January 26, Jones was "upset and dishevelled" and said she had been raped in the grounds.

Jones claimed the stranger then bound her ankles and left her, but she freed herself and ran back to the halls of residence to raise the alarm.

The police launched a full- scale inquiry, with officers taken off other major investigations. Part of the university was sealed off and there was huge disruption to life there, said Mr Bowen.

Over the ensuing weeks the police inquiry, involving 60 officers uncovered a number of anomalies and doubts were raised in their minds, said Mr Bowen. Jones eventually made her admission.

No one was arrested or interviewed as a suspect ,said Mr Bowen and the investigation's costs reached almost £10,000.

Miss Bentley said Jones, of previous good character, was "genuinely remorseful".

The offence was "totally out of character" for Jones who was a successful and popular student.

But she had been under "considerable stress" over family matters.

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