

Fake ID, mailbag found on VU student

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Police say suspect tried to force courthouse doors

An 18-year-old freshman at Vanderbilt University was arrested early yesterday morning after he was caught trying to enter the U.S. Courthouse downtown, Metro police said.

Jared W. Whaley, of Basking Ridge, N.J., was seen about 3 a.m. at a rear loading dock "pulling on the doors trying to gain access," according to an arrest affidavit. He ran away when he was spotted by security guards, but complied with a Metro police officer who saw him running away and ordered him to stop, police said.

Police said Whaley was carrying "a large green mailbag from the U.S. Postal Service," and had a fake Rutgers University identification card.

Nashville lawyer David Raybin, who is representing Whaley, said the student was intoxicated and was merely looking for a place to eat. Whaley is unfamiliar with Nashville and was disoriented, Raybin said. "He is extremely embarrassed, and he is extremely sorry for his behavior. He knows drinking is not an excuse ... and he realizes why people were alarmed by his behavior."

The incident quickly touched off an investigation by the Middle Tennessee Joint Terrorism Task Force. Agents with the FBI and the U.S. Postal Service questioned Whaley, but no federal charges were filed yesterday.

Whaley faces charges of criminal trespass, theft of merchandise under \$500 and using false identification.

Whaley was released after he posted \$30,000 bond. Originally, bond had been set at \$900,000 but was reduced at the conclusion of interviews with federal authorities, Raybin said.

Police said the fake Rutgers identification, which listed Whaley's age as 22, had a false Social Security number.

Metro police spokesman Don Aaron said police recovered a spiral notebook that contained writing, although he would not say what was written.

Raybin said Whaley does not remember picking up the mailbag.

Whaley has lived in a Vanderbilt residence hall since he enrolled in August. University spokeswoman Liz Latt said Vanderbilt's Division of Student Life is investigating the incident.

Latt said Whaley would be able to resume his classes and other activities until he faces trial unless he was considered physically dangerous. If he is eventually convicted but does not receive a prison sentence, he could return to campus, but might face some type of punishment there.

"This is a very different situation than anything else we've dealt with before," Latt said. "It's safe to say we will investigate the entire incident and decide if any action is necessary."

Latt said Whaley has no criminal record with Vanderbilt police.

Raybin said he expects Whaley will ask the university for an "alcohol assessment," to see if he needs counseling.