



Edgewood College is a small liberal arts institution in Wisconsin that is known for its nationally ranked debate team. During the summer, the college hosts a competitive speech and debate camp for high school students, who come from throughout the United States. Approximately 100 students stay on campus in dorms for a month learning basic skills and researching debate topics for the upcoming year.

The students are divided into smaller groups and taught by college and graduate students with debate backgrounds and experienced high school debate coaches. The camp is sponsored and supervised by the college's speech and debate program, which uses it as a recruiting tool to draw the best students to the college each year in addition to making money for the college from the cost of attendance, and is informally led by Edgewood alum Tim Jacobs, who won the national debate tournament when he was at Edgewood and continues to judge debate competitions around the country. The camp ends with the students travelling to Illinois to compete against another group of high school speech and debate students.

Approximately halfway through the 2021 camp, Danny Kline, an 18-year-old college freshman and counselor for the camp, notices that Tim, who is in his 30s, is spending a lot of time with Caroline, a 14-year-old rising sophomore from Iowa who is in Danny's cohort. Danny sees them walking alone through the woods near campus on a Saturday afternoon. Tim asks Caroline to stay after class most days, and Caroline has begun wearing Tim's old Edgewood sweatshirt. Tim often brings Caroline a Starbucks frappuccino for early morning camp sessions. Caroline's roommate Mary notices the extra attention that Caroline receives from Tim and the fact that Caroline is not in their room for long periods of time without explanation. When Mary inquires, Caroline shrugs it off and says that she and Tim are just friends and she's spending time away from the room doing additional research for the upcoming tournament.

The last week of camp, when the students are in Illinois at the final competition, Danny, who is sharing Tim's hotel room, walks in on Tim and Caroline engaged in a sex act. Danny confronts Tim, who insists that the conduct was consensual. Danny, fearful that he could lose his job and forever fracture his relationship with Tim, says nothing further.

The camp ends the following week and Caroline returns home to Iowa. Her first week back at school, Caroline tells her school guidance counselor that she'd had a sexual relationship with Tim. She also discloses that he videotaped one of the sex acts. The guidance counselor immediately contacts Caroline's parents who report the incident to their local (Iowa) police department and Edgewood.

Because the events at issue did not take place in Iowa, the criminal investigation proceeds slowly while various law enforcement entities do or do not effectively communicate. The college begins an internal investigation of the incident, which includes interviewing various instructors, co-instructors, and students. The investigators reach a preliminary conclusion that Tim has sexually abused multiple students over the past decade in which he has taught at the camp. At this point the college consults outside counsel, concluding that the conduct is significant enough that an independent investigation is warranted and seeking help interfacing with the various law enforcement organizations with an interest in the case.

The victims, some of whom are still minors and some of whom are now adults, are contacted by various individuals and entities to give statements and discuss the conduct. Some of the victims are willing to discuss the events while others decline or deny that the conduct occurred. Eventually a search warrant is executed. Tim is arrested, and the case receives significant attention in mainstream media outlets and on social media. Some of the victims are contacted by others on social media with support while others accuse the victims of lying about a “beloved” long time teacher and coach.