6 dead in Northern Illinois U. shooting

by UPI

DEKALB, Ill. - A gunman armed with a shotgun and two handguns opened fire in a lecture hall at Northern Illinois University in DeKalb, killing five students and then himself.University President John Peters told a news conference Thursday evening the gunman mounted the stage in the auditorium in Cole Hall about 3 p.m. and opened fire on an introductory geology class.Peters said witnesses described the incident as "a very brief rapid-fire assault." Six people were killed -- four women and two men, including the gunman. Four died at the scene and two died later after being taken to a hospital.Peters said 16 others were injured, at least two critically.The victims initially were transported to Kishwaukee Hospital. Two of those in critical condition were later transported to another regional hospital.DeKalb police said the gunman was dressed in black, the DeKalb Daily Chronicle reported.As of late Thursday, the gunman's identity had not been disclosed, but Peters said the shooter had been enrolled in NIU's graduate program in spring 2007, but was not currently enrolled at the school.Zach Seward, a sophomore at the school, said about 90 students were in the lecture hall. He described the man as "a regular-looking kid like us" and said he appeared to be picking targets by chance."You see this kind of stuff on TV and you never think it would happen to you," he said. "I don't think I could ever go into that classroom again."The university canceled classes Thursday evening and Friday.Police said the university was closed for one day in December after graffiti that included racist slurs and references to the shooting at Virginia Tech were found on campus.

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