

Increased Reporting a Positive Trend

Recent news stories, including last weekend's stories in *The Register-Mail*, *Peoria Journal Star*, and *Monmouth Review Atlas*, have drawn attention to the numbers of rapes reported by colleges and universities, including Knox College. The coverage originated with two stories in the *Washington Post* on June 7, which highlighted the number of rapes reported in 2014 on the main campuses of U.S. colleges and universities with 1,000 or more students. The article used enrollment and campus crime data that every campus is mandated to provide to the U.S. Department of Education in its Annual Security Report. According to this data, Knox ranked fourth in the nation with 10 reports of rape per 1,000 students in 2014.

While at first look, this may appear to be a troubling statistic, we at Knox view our ranking as fourth in the nation in a positive light. It is the direct result of the work the College has done to support sexual assault survivors, provide a responsive environment in which to report, and disclose accurate statistics surrounding these matters.

According to a Washington Post-Kaiser Family Foundation poll, one in five women who attended college between 2011 and 2015 said they were sexually assaulted during college. One in five. If every person who was assaulted came forward our number of reports would be much higher than the 10 we received. To provide additional context, the American Association of University Women noted that 91 percent of colleges and universities reported zero incidents during this same time frame. This tells us two things: Knox is making progress in this important effort to create a safe and respectful environment for every member of our community and there is more to be done.

According to the *Washington Post* article, "Experts say that rape is an under-reported crime. In many cases, they say, it is a positive sign when schools have high report totals because that means potential victims feel comfortable stepping forward." It is also a sign

that those colleges take seriously their obligation to provide accurate and complete information. Over the past three years, Knox has revised our policies and procedures in response to the needs and powerful advocacy of our students, emerging guidance from the Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights (OCR), and new findings on the effects of sexual trauma. In response to these efforts, we've seen an increase in the number of reports of sexual assault, which is telling us our students know where to go to receive help and support. And they know if they report an assault, including via an anonymous online reporting system, Knox will take steps to support and protect survivors and hold accountable those who violate our policies.

Any incident of sexual assault on a college campus is unacceptable, and we continuously strive, through prevention education efforts, to create a culture in which a sexual misconduct response process is unnecessary. The heartbreaking truth, however, is that these incidents are occurring, and it is promising that students at Knox and other colleges are gaining trust and reporting an otherwise nationally under-reported crime.

But we can—and will—do more. We will continue to work diligently with students to better address and respond to campus sexual assault, which includes conducting annual anonymous surveys of the campus climate surrounding these issues, to further close the gap on reporting. We will follow guidance provided by the OCR and emerging best practices from other institutions. And we will reaffirm our commitment to create and maintain an environment free from acts of sexual assault and other types of sexual misconduct and to foster respect for the dignity of all members of the Knox community.

--Knox College President Teresa Amott