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Are We Done Waiting?

Katie F. Mercer
Gettysburg College

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Are We Done Waiting?

Abstract

***Trigger warning: sexual assault*

In the past month students in surrounding colleges have been protesting and challenging administrative policies regarding sexual assault, yet many of us at Gettysburg are unaware of these events. Members of our shared community have stood up to injustice they have faced on campus. On January 30, 2020 an article was published in *The Dickinsonan* newspaper titled "I'm Done Waiting for Dickinson to Take Sexual Assault Seriously," in which senior Rose McAvoy recounts not only the horrifying tale of her violent sexual assault, but also the college's incompetency and failure to take appropriate action. [*excerpt*]

Keywords

Gettysburg College, Sexual Assault, Title IX

Disciplines

Civic and Community Engagement

Comments

Surge is a student blog at Gettysburg College where systemic issues of justice matter. Posts are originally published at surgegettysburg.wordpress.com Through stories and reflection, these blog entries relate personal experiences to larger issues of equity, demonstrating that -isms are structural problems, not actions defined by individual prejudice. We intend to popularize justice, helping each other to recognize our biases and unlearn the untruths.

SURGE

[VERB] : to move suddenly or powerfully forward or upward

ARE WE DONE WAITING?

February 17, 2020

In the past month students in surrounding colleges have been protesting and challenging administrative policies regarding sexual assault, yet many of us at Gettysburg are unaware of these events. Members of our shared community have stood up to injustice they have faced on campus. On January 30, 2020 an article was published in *The Dickinsonan* newspaper titled "[I'm Done Waiting for Dickinson to Take Sexual Assault Seriously,](#)" in which senior Rose McAvoy recounts not only the horrifying tale of her violent sexual assault, but also the college's incompetency and failure to take appropriate action.

It is important to understand the significant roles that [Title IX and The Clery Act](#) play on college campuses in order to evaluate a college's response to an issue of sexual assault. The United States Department of Justice defined Title IX as a means of promoting equal opportunity by providing that no person may be subjected to discrimination on the basis of sex under any educational program or activity receiving federal financial assistance. Title IX declares that colleges must report and respond to all instances of sexual violence, and qualifies sexual violence as rape, sexual assault, sexual battery, sexual abuse, and sexual coercion.

Similarly, The Clery Act promotes campus safety by ensuring that students, employees, parents, and the broader community are well-informed about important public safety and crime prevention matters. **ALL** institutions that receive Title IX funding must disclose accurate and complete [crime statistics](#). The Clery Act has been the driving force for maintaining transparency between colleges and the public.

I hope you're still with me... it's crucial to understand the role that these policies play in the events that transpired at Dickinson College, and in similar events that occur on our own campus. Federal guidelines state that, under Title IX **a school must respond promptly and effectively to sexual harassment**. Dickinson's own policy specifies that investigations must occur within 60 days. Rose McAvoy's case took 209.

After McAvoy's attacker was found guilty, he was slapped on the wrist with a probationary sentence equivalent to an underage drinking offense. Mild consequences such as these are insulting to victims of

sexual assault, but even worse, they do nothing to protect other students from being assaulted by a confirmed predator.

Although The Clery Act requires the reporting of all specific crime statistics each year, Dickinson reported zero violent sexual assaults fitting her case's description in their annual reports.

This was not a mistake. This was a wealthy college breaking the law and manipulating statistics and disregarding the lives of students in order to maintain a stream of income and a stellar reputation. In direct response to the release of this article, 250 Dickinson College students, 10% of the student body, gathered in Holland Union Building and staged a sit-in. Over 100 students spent the night in the building and continued to Wednesday. Finally, the student representatives met with the President of the College, Margee Ensign, who agreed to start implementing 15 of the students' 17 demands.

The demands made by Dickinson students include:

1. A minimum punishment of a semester suspension for students found to have committed sexual assault, and automatic expulsion for second offenders.
2. A 60-day deadline for the completion of all case investigations.
3. Free access by the parties to all transcripts, investigative records and other reports generated in any investigation.
4. Stricter enforcement of "campus no contact" orders intended to give students who have been victimized some level of comfort while continuing to live in the same campus community as an assailant.
5. Clearer public reporting of how Title IX cases have been disposed of and what penalties resulted.

I wanted to bring to light the realities happening at Dickinson College, an institution so similar to our own, because it is important to realize the impact we as students can have, not only on campus politics, but on the lives of our peers on campus. Dickinson students took up a form of peaceful protest in order to incite change in their own community and have in turn inspired others to do the same. Recently, student protests have facilitated the reform of sexual assault policies at places like [Swarthmore College](#) and [Rhodes College](#). Social change happens when a group of motivated individuals decide to stand up to injustice. We have more power on campus than most students believe, and the events at Dickinson this past month have demonstrated that a campus is capable of uniting under a common cause.

Between 2016-2018 there were 56 rapes reported on the Gettysburg College Campus and 23 instances of other sex offenses. These numbers represent a growing yet ever-present problem on the Gettysburg College campus, one that needs to be addressed. I urge all Gettysburg students to become familiar with the methods utilized at Dickinson, consider their demands, understand your rights as a student on this campus, and work with your peers to make change on campus.

Katie Mercer '21
Contributing Writer