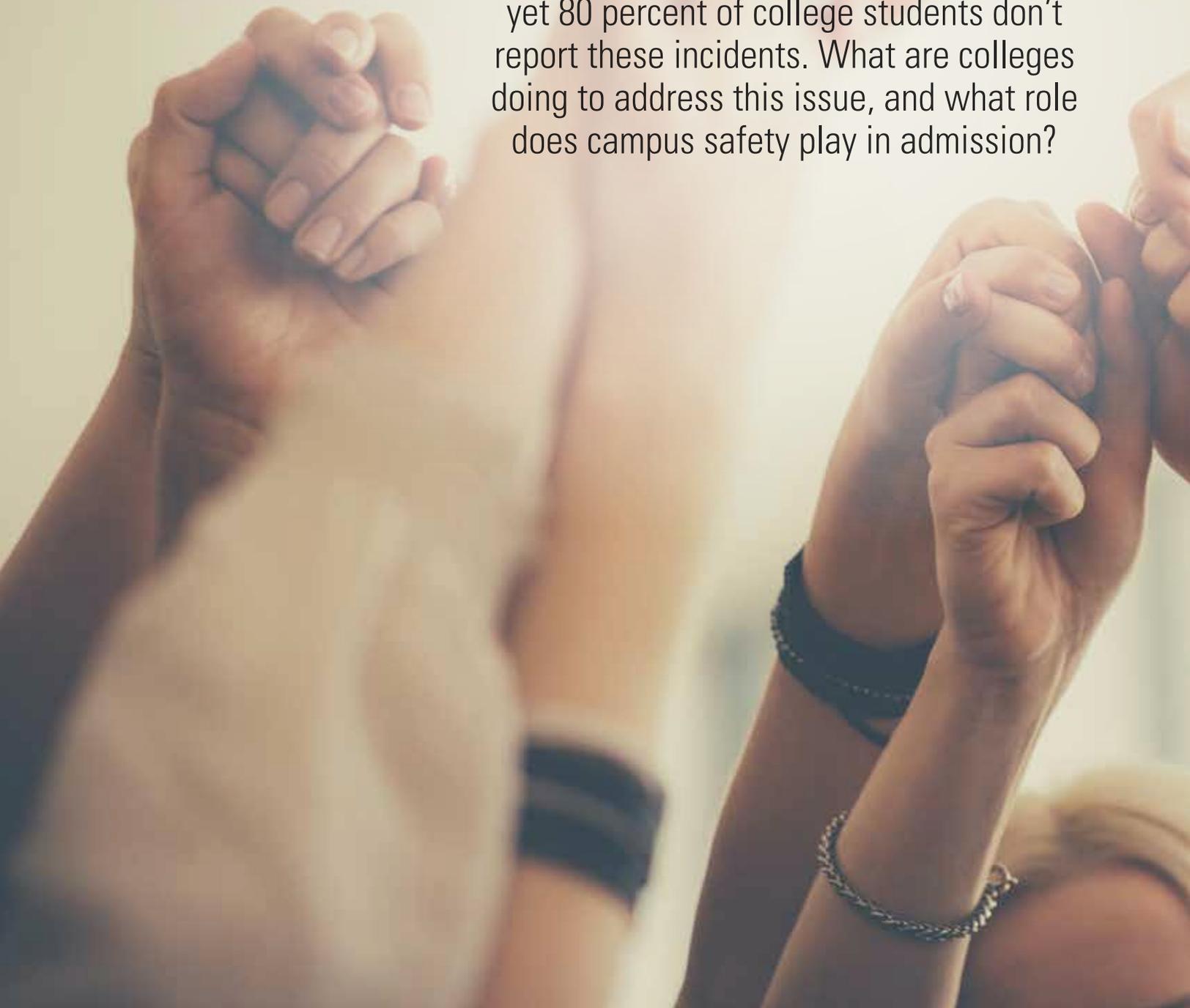


Breaking the

College-age women are the demographic most likely to be victims of sexual violence, yet 80 percent of college students don't report these incidents. What are colleges doing to address this issue, and what role does campus safety play in admission?



Silence

By Kathryn Drury Wagner



When parents of today's students were applying to colleges, they researched factors like location, financial aid, and majors. Physical safety was barely on the radar—it was assumed. A lot has changed since then, and today's prospective students and their parents are savvier about campus safety issues.

High-profile incidents, like the recent, notorious rape case at Stanford University (CT), as well as activism on campuses nationwide, are helping bring about a national discussion about sexual violence at colleges. Sometimes, though, school administrators and the public can become rattled when they hear skyrocketing numbers of assault reports. While assault is always a bad thing, administrators should keep in mind that reporting is a step in the right direction. Often when reporting goes up, it means that victims and their advocates are more confident about seeking help.

Yet much work remains to be done. In a 2016 study released by the Bureau of Justice Statistics, an average of approximately 21 percent of undergraduate women across the nine schools participating in the study reported experiencing sexual assault since entering college. But when the American Association of University Women (AAUW) looked at 2014 data of 11,000 campuses disclosing annual crime data, it found that an overwhelming majority of schools—91 percent—certified that they had not received a single report of a rape that year.

"This tells us that people are not comfortable coming forward, or that there isn't a good reporting system in place; that schools don't know what they don't know," said Anne Hedgepeth, senior government relations manager for the AAUW. "In many instances, schools aren't even acknowledging that there is a problem."

So what progress is being made?

THE IMPETUS

In 2014, the White House established the Task Force to Protect Students from Sexual Assault, which put together suggestions for best practices, campus grant programs, and reports. "The aftermath of that really lifted the veil of silence," said Phoebe Schreiner, US country director for the global human rights organization Breakthrough. The campus rape documentary *The Hunting Ground* and "It's On Us" campaign have added more momentum.

Until about eight years ago, you'd hear Title IX and think, "Access to soccer fields," but the 1972 federal law is far more comprehensive and increasingly comes up in reference to sexual violence on campus. Title IX prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex in any federally-funded education program or activity, "and has reflected various goals at different times," said Hedgepeth.

Schools are supposed to have a designated Title IX coordinator, "and as of last year, every college had to report who their Title IX coordinator was to the Department of Education," said Hedgepeth. "That was a great step forward. We also know that Title IX coordinators may not be getting all the guidance they may need. Certainly those individuals can be at different levels of experience, autonomy, and importance. The next frontier is helping with that. The Department of Education has great documents on its website, about all that Title IX covers. That information is incredibly empowering."

Tracey Tsugawa is the Title IX officer at the University of California, Santa Cruz. "Safety is our No. 1 priority, because if students aren't safe, they can't learn," she said. All incoming students, graduate, and undergraduate, receive online and in-person training on avoiding sexual violence, and there

are training requirements for faculty and staff as well. Starting in 2015, all 10 UC campuses now have CARE: the Advocate Office for Sexual and Gender-Based Violence and Sexual Misconduct, with a full-time trained staff member on campus to provide crisis intervention to survivors and help them access other campus resources such as psychological counseling, emergency housing, and academic accommodations.

"We now have minimum violation sanctions," added Tsugawa. "We really want the carrot, not the stick, but there are too many cases where students' lives are disrupted by this type of behavior. I had a student investigated within the first month of school. Now there's a dismissal on his record. So the more we can have prevention, the better."

Tsugawa took on her role in the 2014–2015 academic year. Her predecessor had gotten 85 reports of sexual violence and pursued four investigations the year before. Tsugawa got 181 reports and did 22 formal investigations her first year; her second year, she received 233 reports and did 46 investigations. That means a lot more students and responsible employees are willing to come forward. "I'm really pleased to see the numbers going up," she said. "It means we are doing something right. If someone is sitting and suffering, they aren't getting their education. There are a lot of men suffering, too." (Data suggests 1 in 16 college age men are sexually assaulted.) "Only and until the reports come up can we change the culture. That's the reality. That's the path to change."



THE CLERY ACT

Title IX is a civil rights law and revolves around gender equity, while the Jeanne Clery Disclosure of Campus Security Policy and Campus Crime Statistics Act is a consumer protection law, passed in 1990. It requires all colleges and universities that receive federal funding to share crime stats from campus; to discuss the efforts they are making to improve campus safety; and to inform the public of crime in or around campus. This information is made publicly accessible through the university's annual security report, usually found online.

"Sometimes with Clery, there's a perception that people are hiding the stats, but really campuses are using it as a framework," said Alison Kiss, executive director for The Clery Center for Security on Campus. "The annual

security report allows an institution to tell their story through the required policy statements and to tell what they are doing for response, awareness, and prevention. As an institution, someone needs to ask, 'Do we want people to report, do we want people to come forward, do we have systems in place, do people know where to go?' I've seen some annual security reports that are black and white, and I've seen others with glossy pictures where the institution has worked with the campus security as a team and done a whole presentation."

Prospective students and parents should look not just at numbers of reported crimes but also at what is being done for prevention, and factors such as residence hall security, safe-escort services, education programs such as bystander intervention training, and what activities are available that provide alternatives to drinking and drug use.

BEST PRACTICES

In 2011, the US Department of Education Office for Civil Rights sent out a 19-page letter, to institutes of higher learning. It gave statistics on sexual violence on campus, noted that it was deeply concerned about the alarming numbers, and firmly reminded schools of their responsibility to take immediate and effective steps to end sexual harassment and sexual violence under Title IX.

"The Dear Colleague Letter provided an opportunity for us to say, 'Let's ramp it up,'" said Dr. Lee Bird, Oklahoma State University Stillwater's vice president of student affairs. "We made the decision that we would require training and track that every student had a knowledge of Title IX and some of the other issues regarding sexual harassment and sexual violence. The letter helped us move that agenda forward." After all, with an onslaught of federal mandates to follow, it can be challenging for some schools to allocate monies for training and staff. Yet, as Bird said, "This is a hard climate, but we still need to do the right thing."

Bird said her students rallied to the cause. "They gathered to watch the 'It's On Us,' video and within 24 hours had produced a video of their own. So part is federal mandates and part is inspired students who want to do something about the problem—when both are in place, that's when change happens."

Campus leadership like Bird's is key, said Schreiner. "There are studies that show if campus leadership is strong, crime actually goes down." Administrators can do things like make regular public appearances, speak at Take Back at the Night, or show up at football scrimmages to talk to the players about appropriate behavior.

"Administrators need to put in place comprehensive programming—not a one-hour lecture for freshmen," said Schreiner. "It needs to be long-term and sustained, including consent education, risk-reduction education, and bystander intervention education. Have information on support services plastered all over campus. Too often we hear from survivors they don't know where to go, what to do, who to talk to. Every bathroom, every dorm room, needs that information. And conduct a comprehensive review on student conduct policies and adjudication policies. These review committees are often made up of staff who have the university's best interest at heart, not the student's."

Kiss added, "Training should be evaluated frequently. What works? What do we need to adjust?"

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Linfield College, in McMinnville, Oregon, has a standout sexual violence prevention program, one it's been refining since the early 1990s. It offers a graded, two-credit CATS (Consent Awareness Training Squad) program that not only trains students, but prepares them to be leaders in educating the campus community. Students who have completed the course give peer presentations to the fall incoming freshmen and transfer students.

Additionally, Linfield Wildcats must complete an online module, called "Campus Clarity," before they set foot on campus. This year the college has also required that all Greeks have bystander intervention training before they can throw even a single party. Said Patricia Haddeland, RN, MN, director of Linfield's student Health, Wellness and Counseling, "The training is in [students'] faces to reinforce the messaging and the expectations, throughout the campus. With adequate training, with information, and with creating a cultural climate that's moving away from sexual misconduct, sexual violence will be reduced. There will always be students who think, 'This will not apply to me,' and our message is that this can happen to anyone. A high school student may already be a survivor, so for them to have a campus that is upfront and vocal and has demonstrative programming from the day they set foot on campus, and even before—that may be the type of campus they're looking for."

With prospective students and parents increasingly asking admission directors questions like *How safe is your campus* or *What is the administration doing to keep your campus safe*, admission directors can be at the front line of communicating what their campus is doing to stay safe. Schreiner suggested, "Rather than feeling pressured to paint a rosy picture, be honest. 'We just started doing training... we just invested a half million in this... We're waiting for our campus climate survey results... We take student safety very seriously.' We encourage them to come out and say, 'This is a national problem. And here's what we're doing about it.'" 

Kathryn Drury Wagner is a freelance editor and writer based in Los Angeles.