

Front Page Article Continues

Some victims who identify as sexual minorities and who did report sexual assault told SASS they felt guilty for doing so, and some were cut off from their community for targeting another member and not dealing with the issue in-house. Fear of being isolated can be especially great on a college campus, where some sexual minority communities are sometimes so small conflicts can be especially difficult to sort out.

Transgender people face additional barriers to reporting sexual assault. "With transgender people, unfortunately that becomes a focus. What body does this person have?" said Tash Shatz, a transgender student at Portland State University and an advocate against violence and for equal rights. "Specifically what occurs in a sexual assault, to my mind, should be less important than the fact that somebody is saying they have been assaulted. And I think the emphasis on how it happened is really detrimental to the conversation."

In Oregon, one woman did push a case of same gender sexual assault all the way to federal court. The students involved in the case were heterosexual, and the assault followed an argument between the two friends which ended in what the victim described as sexual assault and subsequent stalking. But the case was dismissed, after initially being supported by an affirmative action investigator's findings. Later reviews by a student conduct board found that the case lacked evidence despite the student's production of a love letter and three tapes of voicemails offering gifts in exchange for dropping the complaints and rekindling of the friendship.

Former University President Daniel Bernstine also declined to impose discipline, saying in a letter to both students had already experienced "a significant amount of anguish and pain." Bernstine would not comment on the decision for this story, but in the letter, he said he weighed the investigator's findings against a grand jury's decision not to prosecute and a judge's decision not to make the restraining order permanent or to approve a stalking order. The woman who brought the charges believes the alleged attacker's popularity among fellow students and teachers and her financial resources helped protect her during this process. The plaintiff said she dropped the classes she shared with her alleged attacker and tailored her schedule to avoid coursework with professors who testified against her in court. Due to circumstances surrounding the alleged assault, the plaintiff also said she lost an internship, which caused her to graduate a year late. Today, she believes Bernstine should have aided her by enforcing the school's sexual assault policy instead of concerning himself with how the case fared in court. The woman believes because the university investigator who first looked into the case found the incident violated the school's sexual assault policy, that finding alone should have been enough to bring action by the school.

She later sued Portland State University in a federal civil rights case filed in 2007 charging gender discrimination. She lost the case when a judge ruled that the university was not deliberately indifferent toward her because the university provided a student conduct hearing and investigated her allegations.

A Portland State University spokesman said the university works hard to assist sexual assault victims by providing prevention education, counseling services, a sexual assault response nurse and a coordinated approach to prosecuting cases with the district attorney and police bureau. A university-funded advocate is also on campus to assist students who choose to prosecute cases both on and off campus.

Attorney Chip Lazenby, also speaking for the university, emphasized that the plaintiff exhausted all possible processes available. He said gender was not a factor in the outcome of the case and that evidence simply did not weigh in her favor.

Paladino of Sexual Assault Support Services said she finds it noteworthy that the woman who brought the case is the only prominent example of a college student who challenged her university's response to an alleged same-gender assault.

"It's interesting that it happens to be a heterosexual woman who thought she could push the process forward," she said.

In Oregon, where laws lessen penalties for sex crimes that don't include male penetration, there is a fear that gender identity will become a focus of the investigation or perceived as the cause of the assault. Victims who have not disclosed their sexual identity to friends, family or their faith community, risk being exposed to violence or to losing employment, housing and relationships by reporting.

Resources

ACMI House 580 482-3800

Chapel 580 481-7485

Mental Health 580 481-5376

Equal Opportunity 580 481-6801

24/7 Hotline
580 649-0656



SAPR January 2011 Newsletter



Cheryl Jones—SARC
580 481-7428

24/7 Hotline
580 649-0656

Anderal Ward—Deputy SARC
580 481-7835

Community of Practice (CoP)

<https://www.my.af.mil/afknprod/community/views/home.aspx?Filter=21354>

Sexual violence on campus: not just a crime against women

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By Lee van der Voo

February 25, 2010

Sexual assault crosses all barriers, gender included, and same-gender assaults are not uncommon on college campuses or elsewhere, says Rebecca Norman, development director of the Bradley Angle House shelter in Portland.

"Sexual assault in general, on a theoretical level, is not about sex or sexual attraction at all. It's ultimately about power and control and violence," she said. "If you're looking at it like that, it doesn't matter" what the gender of the victim and perpetrator or what sexual identity those people have. Indeed, a recent study of sexual violence in the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) community in Eugene, Oregon, found that sexual minorities reported assault in numbers that at least matched those in the heterosexual community. Ten percent of gay and bisexual men reported being raped. Between 15.5 and 16.9 percent of lesbian and bisexual women reported being sexually assaulted as adults.

Maria Paladino is director of Sexual Assault Support Services (SASS) in Eugene, which conducted the study in partnership with the University of Oregon. She said university students were included in the study and do come to SASS for services. Their issues are little known in part because fewer victims who are sexual minorities report than heterosexual victims. In a campus setting, there are additional barriers to reporting for victims who are sexual minorities.

Those are plenty of our clients, but there is absolutely no incentive to (report to the university) knowing even how heterosexual survivors are being treated in university systems," Paladino said. University conduct processes tend to focus more on protecting schools from lawsuits than protecting victims of sexual assault and helping them cope with trauma, she said. Most heterosexual victims find the process unhelpful, she said.

At the University of Oregon, where vandals recently painted swastikas on the campus LGBTQ office, students who are gay or transgender are even less likely to feel comfortable. And in general, Paladino notes there are more barriers to reporting sexual assault in these communities than in the mainstream. Respondents to SASS's survey, for example, said that police, medical personnel and the criminal justice system are ill-equipped to deal with sexual violence in the gay and transgender communities.



24 Jan @ 1:00—2:30 pm
Male Bystander Intervention Training
Chapel Annex, Bldg 116, Rm 109

28 January @ 8:00 am - 12:00 pm
Men's Self Defense Class @
Fitness Center

11 January @ 1:00 - 2:30 pm
Leaders Bystander Intervention Training @
Chapel Annex, Bldg 116, Rm 109

Events of the Month

Register for all classes on the CoP!!!