

# Sexual assault and harassment cases underreported on campus

\*Caution for readers: This story contains themes of sexual assault and sexual harassment.

**A lack of comfort in coming forward with sexual assault and harassment cases leads to decreased information and statistical evidence.**

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**H**annah Disbrow sat in her boyfriend's dorm, knee bouncing as she waited for the Zoom meeting to load. Her boyfriend, Kaden Lamb, sat off to the side as she prepared to advocate for herself.

The key she normally left in the unlocked door of her Arden Village suite stayed with her. Because for the first time since coming to Bethel, she didn't feel safe.

Since taking Intro to Bible in spring 2021, a man she met in class has been stalking her. He first got her email and phone number after asking her to record a lecture he missed.

"I guess I didn't think anything of it," Disbrow said.

From then on, he wouldn't leave her alone.

Disbrow is one of a small number of students who reported a case of sexual assault or harassment this year. That number is always smaller than the number of students who on anonymous surveys claim to have experienced sexual violence. Bethel's attempts to update how they interact with Title IX legislation have been paused due to COVID-19, but a new Title IX Coordinator has been

hired. Cara Horstman started the position part-time in April.

"It's really important to me that [the victim] doesn't get lost in the legal, logistical things," Horstman said. "Title IX is so person-focused. I want to know students as students, not just as victims of a traumatic event."

Disbrow got a result. And she needed one, because her stalker would text her, call her and come up to her in public places like the Wellness Center, even though she tried to ignore him. He would ask her to invite him over to her suite and also invite her to come to his house. Even though she asked him to leave her alone, he did not listen.

In fall 2021 Disbrow noticed him talking to other girls in the Wellness Center and in classes. After witnessing the interactions, she would go up to them and ask, "Hey, was that guy bothering you?"

The answer was always yes.

"I was more worried that he was continuing with this activity and ... I didn't want somebody else to be put in my position and then get hurt or something worse," Disbrow said.

She decided to seek assistance from former Associate Dean of Residential Life Gus Tiffer Dec. 1. Tiffer redirected Disbrow to Ryan Gunderson, who was serving as the Title IX Coordinator in an interim capacity at the time.

Gunderson and Disbrow scheduled a Zoom meeting for Dec. 3. Vice President of Student Experience Miranda Powers also sat in on the

meeting with Disbrow, Lamb and Gunderson.

“It was nice to have a female advocate there, as I was presenting vulnerable information,” Disbrow said.

After the meeting, Disbrow decided to file a no-contact order.

The order states that her harasser is prohibited from being present on Bethel’s campus without prior approval by the Title IX Coordinator, and he and Disbrow must be at least 25 feet away from each other at all times. The two of them are not allowed to interact in any capacity, whether it be in person, over social media or through other people.

Disbrow is not alone in her experience.

According to the 2021 Annual Security Report, a document Bethel must produce because of the Jeanne Clery Disclosure of Campus Security Policy and Campus Crime Statistics Act (Clery Act), two students reported cases of sexual assault on Bethel’s campus in 2018 and five reported cases classified as violating the Violence Against Women Act. In 2019, there were another two reported cases of sexual assault and two additional VAWA cases on campus. The report lists one sexual assault case and one VAWA case reported on campus in 2020. Numbers for the 2021 school year are not available in the report. But these numbers are not a fully accurate depiction of assault and harassment at Bethel.

According to the Sexual Assault Items in the annual Campus Life Survey, seven students indicated that since the beginning of the 2020-2021 school year, someone affiliated with the Bethel community sexually assault-

<b>Sexual Assault Items from Campus Life Survey</b>		
<b>Academic Year</b>	<b># of cases*</b>	<b># reported</b>
2014-15	15	1
2015-16	10	0
2016-17 <sup>§</sup>	N/A	N/A
2017-18	7	5
2018-19	13	4
2019-20	9	0
2020-21	7	1

\*Sexual assault or attempted assault

<sup>§</sup> No survey was issued for the 2016-17 academic year

This story utilizes information from the Sexual Assault Items of the Campus Life Survey, available upon request from the Office of Institutional Data and Research.

# What can you do?

## The process of reporting sexual assault or harassment cases

1. Tell someone as soon as possible, preferably within 24 hours.
2. Choose to involve or not involve law enforcement.
3. Notify Title IX Coordinator Cara Horstman or submit an online anonymous report.
4. Within 10 working days of a formal complaint, an investigation will begin.
5. Receive the opportunity to select a support person who will be present throughout the investigation process.
6. You have the right to seek orders for protection, no contact orders or restraining orders.
7. The conclusion of the investigation should happen within 30 working days and will be communicated to both the complainant and the alleged offender in writing.
8. If either party believes that the results of the investigation are unfair, they may submit a written appeal to President Ross Allen within 10 calendar days.

ed them or attempted to. Of these seven students, five were women and two were men. Only one of these students indicated that they used formal procedures to report the assault or attempted assault.

The results for the 2019-2020 school year are similar. Nine students indicated that someone affiliated with the Bethel community sexually assaulted them or attempted to. Of the nine students, none used formal procedures to report the assault.

This causes a discrepancy in the results between the Campus Life Survey and Annual Security Report, a conflict credited to these victims choosing not to come forward.

According to the survey, victims cited the following reasons for not reporting: shame and embarrassment, worry about getting the perpetrator in trouble, not thinking their case was serious enough, busyness and not believing Bethel would do anything about the report.

One such instance from the 2019-2020 school year was an assault. A recent Bethel alum was raped by another student off-campus during a university-sponsored trip while they were both still enrolled at Bethel. Though this case was between two Bethel students, the victim did not report her case.

“Because it was [off-campus], I assumed it didn’t count,” the victim said in an interview with The Clarion.

The Clarion does not run the names of victims without their consent unless they agree to be named. However, reporters verified her story through multiple sources.

The victim wishes she had been aware of the resources Title IX provides when she was a student at Bethel. For example, Title IX provides students with access to counseling, including paying for services outside of Bethel Counseling Services.

“I didn’t know that was a thing, and that’s very frustrating for me,” she said. “I just paid a bill for therapy—I had no idea Bethel would have covered that while I was a student.”

Had she known about the services provided sooner, she said she would have reported their case and sought help from within the Bethel community.

In addition to paying for counseling services, the Title IX Coordinator “will meet with the complainant and respondent separately to discuss any supportive measures that are needed or may be desirable,” according to the 2021 Annual Security Report.

The survey also reported lower ratings for the following items: the usefulness of the sexual assault training, understanding of Bethel’s formal procedures to address complaints of sexual assault and confidence that Bethel administers the formal procedures to address complaints of sexual assault fairly.

In 2019, Faculty Senate established a working group to examine how Bethel educates students about sexual assault and sexual harassment. They have not met this school year, according to task force member and philosophy professor Sara Shady. Originally, the group examined the process for filing complaints with Title IX and reviewing guidelines. Powers, a member of the task force, said

the group’s initial work led to the implementation of signage for further information in bathrooms, updating the university website and making recommendations regarding having trained faculty and staff advocates who are available to students in the processes of working with Title IX.

“Our further plans included the formation of an event that would be attended by all students, but this was not an actionable item during COVID,” Powers said. “It would be likely for a new Title IX coordinator to engage in this work once they are hired.”

Horstman, the new coordinator, began part-time April 18 and will fully assume the position, replacing Interim Coordinator Ryan Gunderson, May 16.

For resources on how to report see the infographic (left) or refer to the Sexual Misconduct and Sexual Harassment Policy on Bethel’s website. **C**

*The Clarion has done ongoing reporting on this issue because it affects all students and is difficult for the Bethel community to discuss. For this story, The Clarion referenced Bethel’s 2021 Annual Security Report, Campus Life Survey: Sexual Assault Items, one on-the-record and one anonymous interview with student victims, one original no-contact order from a Bethel case, one email interview with the Interim Title IX Coordinator and Compliance Officer, one email interview with the Vice President of Student Experience and one Zoom interview with the new Title IX Coordinator and Compliance Officer.*