

Survivors share their stories

“I’ve spent the last two years trying to actually believe myself because the school didn’t believe me.” - Abby Roselieb



Kevin Donovan / Observer Staff

Junior Abby Roselieb speaks about her experience in an abusive relationship and the struggles she faced reporting her story to Augustana’s Title IX board.

1. What happened?

I came to Augustana’s orientation day that you have freshman year and I met a guy, gave him my number, and by the time we came to school we were pretty much dating. We dated all of fall term to winter term. So probably a pretty serious relationship. In that time he was physically violent, emotionally abusive, and sexually abusive. It was also one of my first relationships, too, so I had a really hard time really figuring out what was going on and what happened to me.

So, basically fall term I was going through it, winter term I was denying it, and then spring term I was kind of like slowly realizing what had happened and how wrong everything had been; it wasn’t one of those stories where he beat me to crap and violently assaulted me all the time.

It would be things like pushing me into the road when a car came, just punching me or pushing me when I said something he disagreed with. One time I was sitting on my bed, I said something he didn’t like and he dumped an entire water bottle all over my lap and my homework.

It was small stuff that you don’t notice until you notice, and eventually you start to realize that

a person like this, their communication skills are so choked back that all they can do is respond with violence.

When you’re also going through sexual stuff for the first time you don’t know what’s right, what’s wrong and you don’t really know that saying “no” 15 times and then finally just agreeing to shut somebody up is not consent. That’s the part that was really hard for me in sharing my story was because I had said “yes” finally, but I didn’t really.

It was a really confusing area for me for a long time. I’m still trying to piece it together. It’s literally taken me until this year to actually say “I was raped. Multiple times.” It’s kind of a confusing time in my life still. You don’t really piece everything together ever.

But that spring term I had been told by some friends who actually knew what happened and were kind of helping me go through it. He had applied to be a CA and he had gotten the position. You know they told me if you report this to Title IX, he would probably get fired. Because he’s in a position to be a mandatory reporter, he’s hurt you and abused you. I was like that’s probably the right call. So, I went

in to Title IX, I did the investigation with Laura Schnack and the officers, and then they asked me if I wanted to go forward. I was like “Well, doesn’t that involve telling him that I filed a complaint?” And they were like “Yes, it does.”

I had just gotten him kind of off my back. After I broke up with him he spent a month trying to get me to talk to him, cornering me after classes, finding me in the dining hall, coming to my room late at night, talking and leaving me angry voicemails because I hadn’t waved at him in a hallway. That voicemail was the breaking point for me when I finally yelled at him and told him to stay away from me. I didn’t want this Title IX report to come out and have him have the chance to come at me again.

So, I said “You know what, no I don’t want to do this. I just want Res life to know that this is here, I have a report on file and that he should not be in this job.” So, Res life was made aware, but then they were able to take my case out of Title IX and investigate it as a complaint against an employee, so my identity was in no way protected. So, my abuser found out and because we’re in the same major in the same music department, everybody knew. But it wasn’t like they knew because they knew I had been assaulted. They knew because he was trying to paint me as a crazy [expletive].

So, I had to come back sophomore year. I really almost didn’t. Half of the music department believed him, half of them didn’t know what to think and I spent a long time just not talking to anybody because I didn’t feel like I had anything to prove. I’ve missed opportunities.

It’s also been everything this year with finally investigating Title IX, you know my case has come up again and they have realized what a misstep they made and you know I went in for a meeting, I’ve done everything I’m supposed to do. I’ve worked with Title IX. I went in

for this meeting with Dr. Wendy Hilton-Morrow and Chris Beyer, the head of Res life, expecting something. All they tell me is they didn’t have sufficient evidence to fire him. They investigated me and they investigated my friends. I told them everything that had happened and my experience was insufficient evidence. So, to be told that by Chris Beyer was kind of an experience. I don’t have a lot of faith in him or Dr. Wendy Hilton Morrow.

I do have some faith in Laura Schnack, she was really helpful and the Title IX advocate, Emilee Goad. She is amazing and nobody really knows what she’s doing. She’s confidential and she’ll talk to you about your case, she’ll talk to you about what you’re feeling, what steps you can take and nobody really knows she’s there which is kind of astounding to me. Her number isn’t on any of the posters.

He’s in a frat. They’ve never acknowledged my report against him or that he’s done anything wrong and in fact several of their members have harassed me over the years for trying to “Bring a good man down.”

2. What did it mean to be investigated?

I went in for a meeting with Chris Beyer, he had my Title IX investigation and he said “Can you tell me what happened?” I basically reiterated everything. He was like, “Is there anyone that can speak to this?”

So, I gave him a couple of names. But at the same time, you know it’s relationship abuse. It happens between two people. There’s not many witnesses. I gave him the name of a couple of friends who had seen me going through this, who had seen him yelling at me a lot. But a lot of the stuff that happened was very private.

Actually when I met with him this year and talked about the fact that he asked for evidence and I had nothing to give, he started talking about cellular data trails, looking at phone records, saved voicemails, and video surveil-

lance. I was like “you know, I mean we’re not the CIA. I don’t save voicemails from two years ago, I don’t save them from two months ago.” I wanted to get rid of them.

3. Did you feel believed throughout the entire process?

The only person that made me feel like I was believed was Laura Schnack. The second my case went over to Res life, which should have never happened, no, I was not believed. I didn’t have pictures of bruises. I didn’t have text messages or voicemails, so my story doesn’t exist.

You realize slowly over time how its affected you, as you date other people, as you open up to other people it’s there and it’s probably always going to be there.

4. Did they talk to you before they sent your case to Res life?

Chris Beyer told me that Res life had received my case and was looking into it. Me and everyone I sent to speak on my behalf all thought we were still talking with Title IX protection. It was never made clear cause he’s the head of Res life, but he’s also a Title IX coordinator, so it’s really very confusing about which capacity he is operating in at any given time.

I don’t think he’s trying to be duplicitous, I think he just did not make it clear and then he really did not have my best interests in mind at all.

5. How did experiencing rape affect your experience?

I think because we were dating it was harder for people to see what was going on. We also hid it pretty well. What was surprising was that nobody was surprised when I told them.

They were surprised at the extent, but they were not surprised at how exhausted I was. They were not surprised that something bad had happened.

A portion of this story was edited to adhere to Observer standards.