

Greek Life responds to campus climate

By Natalie Spahn
Watchtower Team

Augustana's Greek life community talks about the positive and negative relationships Greek life has to sexual assault through their pledging activities, traditions and parties.

After a sorority member alleged she was assaulted at an off-campus fraternity house, she went to most of the Greek chapter's meetings and told them about her situation.

This and the special Greek Council meeting brought Greek life into the sexual assault conversations.

Greek chapters have been making changes to their constitutions since the unrest in January. While the focus has mainly been problematic party culture in relation to Greek life, members agree that it continues into pledging activities and traditions each chapter has. Traditions and activities that may perpetuate rape culture are the Bell Tower Kiss and pledging songs, according to some member of the Greek and Augustana communities.

The seven fraternities on campus have all added the Rohypnol Amendment, which states that any member in possession of a date rape drug will immediately be removed from the fraternity.

Mary Therese Thomas, senior and Zeta Phi Kappa (Zeta) pres-

ident, said that her sorority has been making changes. They have written in about rape drugs and zero tolerance for possession in the same section that has sexual assault prevention.

Her sorority also reached out to Wendy Hilton-Morrow, one of the school's Title IX coordinators, because "we felt like it was important to get our members the opportunity to understand what the college's policy on sexual assault reporting was, so we invited her to one of our meetings."

The Zeta sorority is working on getting at least one of their members Safe Path certified; this would make the member an advocate for survivors. They will also be giving Safe Path training at their sisterhood retreat.

The presidents of Chi Omega Gamma, Sigma Pi Delta, and Phi Ro said they also plan on making changes to their constitutions, but have not yet.

Most Greek chapters have also talked about changing their sober brother/sister system.

Normally, there are sober members of each chapter on-call during parties. Now, there is talk of the sober members being present during the parties, multiple sober members and sober phone numbers being posted around the party house.

However, Greek life members recognize that there are still problems.

Alexander Swatek, junior

and Omicron Sigma Omicron president, said he thinks that the Rohypnol Amendment has been a positive change; however, he added that "an issue I see with that is I'm not really sure how effective that would be. A lot of people would feel pressure not to rat on their brothers because they're already together."

The Bell Tower Kiss (BTK) is a tradition within the sororities at Augustana. The pledges and seniors in each chapter,

traditionally, tell their sorority family members which guy on campus they would like to kiss under the bell tower in front of their sisters. While this activity is optional, some think it is still problematic.

"Yes, I think it does perpetuate [rape culture] in some manner," Thomas said, "but... we also notify our pledges at the beginning, on bid day, we say 'these are things you might encounter during pledging, and we also have - we call it a safe word - so if you say the word and you feel uncomfortable you're removed

from that situation."

So, for their BTK, if they feel uncomfortable they can be removed from the situation and this is similar to how most soror-

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ities do it. The actives tell the pledges they do not have to do anything they don't want to.

Junior and inactive member of the Sigma Pi Delta sorority, Carli Schwanebeck, said she thinks the BTK is problematic.

"Specifically, the one thing I'm thinking of is our BTK night. As a freshman, when I was pledging, they lined us up and blindfolded us, we sang a bunch of songs, and then they took off the blindfolds and there were men in front of us and [the sisters] were like, 'kiss them!' The whole time they were like, 'you don't have to do anything you don't want to do.' But they don't clarify what it is, you know? And so you're like, 'is this something that I don't want

to do?' And then it just happens," Schwanebeck said.

Schwanebeck also said that songs the pledges have to learn are problematic. Lyrics like, "High above her knee, lies the source of Sig Pi power, her virginity" and "lie drunk on the frat house floor."

Senior and Chi Alpha Pi member, Nelle Conley, agreed that there are problematic songs during pledging.

"There are songs we sing, specifically that are focused about our bodies, and how they are supposed to be for men, kind of.

"And it's all jokingly, but that doesn't really matter. And one of them I refused to sing during pledging, but, I think that's the nice thing about CAP too. People knew I didn't want to sing it and it was fine with them," Conley said.

She said she believes the problems are only present in Greek life during pledging. She also said she thinks that it will take everyone to fix the problems that perpetuate rape culture.

"I feel like a lot of the sororities as a whole, as a rule, I would say they work really hard to go against rape culture, but I really truly do not believe the frats work as hard.

"And that's what's horrible about the situation... nothing is ever going to be resolved until men stand up and demand change," Conley said.

Why has Title IX conversation died out on campus?

By Rachel Leman
Observer Staff

Mention Title IX to anyone on Augustana's campus, and it's bound to get a drastic response. That's sort of an inevitability after the campus-wide outburst in the second half of winter term. However, if I don't mention Title IX, neither will anyone else.

It seems there are two potential reasons for this sudden silence. The first, that the changes and promises administration has made regarding the issue actually satisfied the outraged student body. The second and more probable option, people just got tired of fighting. That can't be the case any longer.

After witnessing the Title IX forum on Jan. 29, I never thought I'd see the day that the student body was satisfied with the actions of any administrator, and I still don't think that I have.

As I mentioned earlier, if you so much as whisper the name "Title IX" at Augie, at least two people in a ten foot radius are going to fill to the brim with rage.

The Title IX taskforce and lawyers that administration have been working on setting up haven't made enough change at the moment for students to be fully calm.

Yet, here we are, with the power of administration and the outrage of students in a state of perceived equilibrium.

If satisfaction with the ad-

ministration's next steps isn't the reason for the calm, then it seems it must be apathy.

It's not to say that students don't care about anything anymore or that they lost all sense of activism.

The falsity of that statement was evident when students were most recently enraged by their student presidents during the SGA election or when several Augie students travelled to Washington D.C. for the March for Our Lives led and organized by survivors of the Parkland, Florida school shooting.

But both of those examples are very different types of outrage than what was seen during the Title IX scandal.

The Augustana Title IX out-

rage was a unique event to this campus.

While it was tied to the #MeToo movement, it was a strictly Augustana-based problem with strictly Augustana-based demands for change. It made sense for students to get so riled up so fast, but the rapid death of the protest was uncharacteristic for such an anger.

Administration has attempted to make movements on these issues, while this campus has shown a new awareness for the reality of sexual assault, but altering the functions of Title IX should not be the real goal of this protest.

The goal must be to stop rapists before they become rapists. The goal must be to put a stop to

the regular occurrences of sexual assault.

One burst of anger for a few weeks is not enough to make real change. Continuous shouting and never-ending rage is the best way to bring a real end to sexual assault.

The national #MeToo movement continues to truck along in the public eye. With the sentencing of Larry Nassar, the FBI investigation into Stormy Daniels' relationship with President Trump and the retrial of Bill Cosby, change is coming for well-known sexual assault survivors. For Augustana's survivors, they get a slow-moving taskforce and a silent group of supporters.

If Augustana's sexual assault is to end, so must its silence.