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By *Sophie Reid and Thea Gonzales*

This undertaking started with a story that broke at 5 a.m. on Jan. 31, followed by a conversation that dared to ask: What if we just keep following this?

All too often, it is easiest to begin a conversation, create an uproar and then move on with our lives. The campus emptied for spring break, pledging began for some and the momentum stalled. Many moved on.

Voices were jumbled and lost in the mix. Survivors’ voices were heard as shouts to a panel that couldn’t say what we wanted them to say. Many forgot about the people who couldn’t move on as easily.

Therefore we, the Watch-

tower Investigative Team at the Observer, sought to tell their stories with compassion, integrity and fairness. There are three core objectives of this issue: to reignite conversation, allow survivors to share their stories and to show that survivors of assault are strong, powerful and don’t want to hide anymore.

During an interview, one of our sources, senior Bennett Tomlin, said exactly what we were hoping to accomplish with this issue.

“I think the way for there to be any actual change is if enough stories get out that people realize how big the problem really is so they don’t feel like it’s just a couple of isolated cases and realize how many people on this campus this has actually affected.

I think if people realize the scale of the problem, there’ll be a larger movement on campus to demand more structural changes in the Title IX program.”

We want you to see this problem as it is – so much bigger than one person, one Greek chapter or one isolated investigation.

We want you to listen to the voices of survivors and start believing them. We want you to never stop asking critical questions and demanding that we all do more to protect each other.

Finally, as is echoed on the back page of this issue, we are not going to stop reporting. We are not going to stop investigating. We are not going to stop telling the stories that need to be told. And we are not going to stop listening to you.

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*Photo illustration on cover done by Kevin Donovan.

Trigger Warning: This issue contains content that is focused on themes of sexual assault, which may be triggering for some.

The Watchtower Team wishes to thank all those who took the time to speak with us and put their trust in us. We were not able to speak to any male survivors. However, we wanted to recognize that sexual assault happens to men, and their experiences are both different and valid.

The Observer does not typically identify people who say they are survivors of sexual assault unless they grant permission, which all of the survivors we identified have done.

Watchtower Investigative Team:

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Special thanks to Observer editor Rachel Leman for her opinion piece

The committees dealing with Title IX

Committee on Sexual Health and Violence:

- Advise the administration in selection or development and implementation of coherent, research-based programming for each academic year.
- Advise Title IX Team on matters of Title IX education and communication, including reporting processes, campus incident emails, informational website, and access to local resources.
- With Office of Student Life, educate and build peer leadership within student organizations, including SGA, athletics and Greek Life, in order to educate and empower leaders within these groups, and to advise these groups on how to incorporate strategies to prevent and respond to incidents of sexual violence and/or harassment.
- Assist the administration in engaging in an ongoing evaluation and assessment of programming.
- Meet at least twice a year with members of the Title IX Team to jointly evaluate policies, practices and procedures, as well as bolster collaboration and information-sharing among stakeholders.
- Provide an annual report to the administration with regard to its efforts.
- Assess periodic survey results concerning sexual assault.

Task Force on Sexual Assault Response and Prevention:

- Charged with finding out what students want and are concerned about.

SGA Student Advisory Committee:

- Communicate to the Title IX team how students feel the school is handling Title IX cases.
- Have student input on a regular basis.
- Update the student body on policy/procedure on campus as well as additional resources the college has.

Student Advisory Committee:

- Ensures that student voices and concerns are understood clearly.
- Draws on the perspectives of the student body to review the proposal put forth by the Task Force on Sexual Assault, as well as providing a peer educational resource on Title IX for Augustana students.
- Provides perspectives on the experience of campus culture from fellow students.
- Empowers the voices of survivors, peers, and students

Campus Victim Advocacy Group:

- Develop recommendations regarding how to best utilize peer victim advocates.
- Will report out recommendations before the end of the year.

Sustained Dialogue:

- Focusing on rape culture on campus
- Will come up with action plans.

Graphic by Tony Dzik
Information courtesy of leaders in each group