

# Letter to the Editor: Unreported sexual assault is still sexual assault

Per national statistics, one out of 10 women will be sexually assaulted at some point in her lifetime. Some studies even suggest that the number is as small as one in four women on college campuses.

The University of Toledo has approximately 7,000 undergraduate female students, so this means that 1,750 will likely be victims of assault. The average student will attend school for four years, or 48 months. 1,750 divided by 48 gives us the number of 36.46.

This suggests nearly one or more rapes or sexual assaults takes place every day on the University of Toledo's campus. How can the numbers be so different? The following are four narratives from young women at the University of Toledo who, for different reasons, did not report their assaults. The names in these narratives have been changed to protect those who were involved.

Paige was 19 in the spring of 2013 when she was raped in a stairwell of Memorial Field House on campus. Her attacker was her classmate, whom she would spend time with in the building before class.

He told Paige they were going down a stairwell to sit outside. This is when her attack happened.

"I felt powerless; I told him no. He physically silenced me," Paige said.

Paige sought out help from the counseling center. A counselor told her that, if she reported, Paige would need to drop the

class. She felt embarrassed and as if no one would believe her if she reported because her attacker was so well-liked and gave tours to incoming freshmen.

Gillian was a freshman in fall of 2013, and her first assault happened the first week of classes by somebody she did not know. Gillian reported this assault to the UTPD, and she said they treated her like a criminal.

She was placed in the back of a police car and questioned for hours without bathroom or water breaks. Gillian says she has a learning disability which makes it difficult to write and was given no help when filing a written report.

After moving to a new dorm, she was raped in October of 2013 by the young man she was dating at the time. Her reasoning for not reporting this rape was due to her previous treatment by the on-campus police.

"I knew I couldn't put myself through that again, even though what he had done was wrong," Gillian said. Her assailant was a well-liked member of his fraternity and has since graduated.

Zoe was hanging out with a male friend in his on-campus fraternity house in spring 2015 when she was raped. She said that they were fooling around and he had his pants off, but she was still clothed.

"Without warning and without asking, he flipped me on my back, pulled my pants down and began having sex with me. I never consented," Zoe said.

Afterward, as he left the room and reunited with his friends, he told Zoe to leave so he could go drink with his fraternity brothers.

It was not until a few days later that she realized she had been raped. He held her down and she had not consented. She did not report because she was afraid she would be told she

shouldn't have been alone with him if she had not planned to have sex.

In November of 2016, Imogene was walking alone to her boyfriend's off-campus house after her sorority's chapter meeting for a movie night with him and a few mutual friends. The most direct route to her boyfriend's house meant walking through an alley between Bowman-Oddy and the west parking garage.

Imogene said she caught the glimpse of a man out of the corner of her eye, but she did not pay attention to him. Suddenly, he was very close to her. She was then pushed against the building and assaulted.

"I was so scared I couldn't even move, and I felt like I just let it happen. The faster he did it, the faster it would be over I thought," Imogene said.

Imogene did not report because she didn't know her assailant and said she would most likely be unable to pick him out of a lineup. She said she feared being asked intrusive questions, or, worse, be accused of lying or told she deserved it because she was wearing a nice dress.

Imogene said she disclosed this to a close friend, who reported her assault without Imogene's consent. The following weeks, Imogene says she was contacted by the Title IX office, which led her to email the Title IX office saying she did not want to be contacted by them any longer.

After this, Title IX told her they could still investigate even without her complying. Her consent had not been taken into consideration even after surviving her assault.

These stories are only a small example of what takes place on the University of Toledo's campus – just think what happens on a larger scale. Sexual assault is a real problem, one that often goes unseen. Just because it is not being reported does

not mean that it is not happening.

*Sincerely, four women and gender studies students.*