

Rape survivor shares her story

Liz Securro, a victim's advocate, survived gang rape during her freshman year at the University of Virginia in 1984. Twenty years later, her attacker's letter allowed her to build a case and receive some semblance of justice.

Securro spoke at the University of Toledo on April 19 as part of the ongoing events for Sexual Assault Awareness month about these events in her life and the general issues of sexual assault against women.

The author vividly described the events that transpired on the night she was gang-raped. Securro was attending a Phi Kappa Psi party, where she received a questionable drink that made her arms and legs go numb.

"There is no worse feeling than when you cannot move at all," Securro said. "He also beat me, not that that matters, because I was not behaving or cooperating, so he hit me in the ribs and on the face and in the head, and anywhere he could land a fist, despite my screams."

After receiving medical treatment, Securro met with the Dean of Students, Robert Canevari, to convey her story and get help. Even with her visible bruises, she said she received a prompt dismissal.

"He said, 'Well, what you're telling me is that you had sex with a young man, and you don't want your parents to know you're not a good girl,'" Securro recalled.

In addition to giving her false information, the dean accused her of lying and said she needed mental help, Securro said.

"A lot of the time, the finger is pointed before events are

fully found out," said Rachel Stewart, third-year pharmacy major. "That's sad because, if there's situation like this, the last thing a person should do is make the victim feel worse."

Still determined, Securro worked with the campus police, giving statements and answering questions to move her case forward; however, her efforts led nowhere.

The tables turned in September 2005, though, when one of her attackers, William Beebe, wrote her a letter to apologize. Hungry for answers, Securro responded to his apology with questions about her rape.

"I corresponded with him via email in order to find out what had happened to me that night," Securro said.

After sharing his letters with law enforcement, Beebe was arrested in 2006 and was sentenced to ten years in prison, said Securro. Even though he served less than six months, she felt justice was served since many rape victims do not come forward at all.

"I pretty much found more justice than 99.99 percent of rape victims will ever see," Securro said.

Securro also provided steps that universities can take to assist victims of sexual assault. She advocated for transparent sexual assault policies, providing victims with the choice of campus investigation versus local law enforcement and increased involvement of the campus administration.

Securro emphasized the importance for staff to attend talks like the one she was giving so that they can indicate their interest in these issues to students.

"The topic was interesting. I think it's really relatable because it's something that's very common on campus and

something that goes unnoticed,” said Macey Shock, second-year nursing student. “I like how she pointed out about the staff and how it’s important for them to be here.”

The audience gave Securro a standing ovation at the end of her lecture.

[Christine Brennan to give 2017 commencement address](#)

Christine Brennan, a sports columnist for USA Today, once sat in the stands of the Glass Bowl as a child next to her dad, watching the Rockets win some of their biggest victories.

Brennan will be returning to the Glass Bowl once again as commencement speaker for the second time to share her experiences as an award-winning journalist and how UT has played a role in getting her there.

The audience at the commencement can look forward to a speech discussing dreams, how Toledo launched her and how that affected her life, Brennan said.

“It’s a great honor because UT is such a great part of my childhood, so it’s just wonderful to come back,” Brennan said. “I’m thrilled to be able to do that.”

Having grown up on Barrington Street, she could see the stadium lights and hear the dings of the clock tower from her house, Brennan said.

“We would cross Bancroft, and we would just walk onto the campus and in a couple minutes we were at the football stadium; it was magical to me,” Brennan said. “So all my early

experiences as a child were sports because of the University of Toledo.”

The 1969-1971 Rocket football teams had a 35-0 record; Brennan said she recalls going to every game and credits that team for showing her how wonderful sports could be.

“It was just amazing. We had season tickets on the 40-yard line and right under the press box,” Brennan said. “It’s so rewarding for me that...[that] sports would give back in this manner, so I don’t think it’s any surprise I became a sports journalist.”

Brennan, a Northwestern alumna, has received many awards and honors for her work. According to Brennan’s website, she has twice been named one of the country’s top 10 sports columnists by the Associated Press sports editors, and she has been honored by the NCAA and the Women’s Sports Foundation, among other awards.

Along with her many accomplishments, Brennan said she funds a scholarship at UT in honor of her late parents.

“My parents were certainly my inspiration and started me on this path,” she said. “They encouraged me and gave me every opportunity to have the experiences I have today. I am the luckiest person on earth.”

Brennan said the secret to success is that there is no secret to success; it’s all about hard work and dedication.

“I am very proud to be a journalist; it’s an adventure of a lifetime,” she said. “I’ve never worked a day in my life. I love what I’m doing today more than the day I started back in April of 1981.”

Dr. Gaber, UT president, said that the Toledo native brings both small and big town perspectives.

“She’s a nationally known figure in journalism, and her

growing up in Toledo shows that someone from Toledo can go on and do great things," Gaber said.

Brandon Hill, a third-year communication major, said Brennan can inspire graduates not to give up on their dreams and try to make a difference in whatever line of work they are going into.

"It's really cool that someone of her stature in the industry would be willing to come back to Toledo," he said.

Tobacco 21 initiative gains movement at the University of Toledo

An initiative started at the University of Toledo is working to raise the legal age to use tobacco products from 18 to 21 in Toledo.

"Research tells us that 90 percent of those who provide cigarettes to kids under 18 are themselves under 21, so if we can delay people from purchasing tobacco until 21, we can reduce youth smoking," said Mallory Rinckey, a first-year health education Ph.D. student.

Rinckey said that this new initiative, Tobacco21, started in a graduate-level methods and materials course in September 2015. At this time, she said that she was studying to get her masters of public health, and she has continued the project ever since.

"The main goal of this initiative is to protect our youth and young adults in the community," Rinckey said. "I personally

think this is an important issue because we know of all the negative health effects caused by tobacco and nicotine, and kids deserve to live a life without dependence.”

On April 11, Tobacco21 visited Student Government to present their ordinance, according to SG President Jimmy Russell.

“The people who were for it are very public health-minded,” Russell said. “I mean, tobacco is obviously very bad for people to use, so they figure if they raise the age it will reduce the issue and make it harder to get. There were a lot of health concerns.”

Russell said that some senators initially objected to Tobacco21. He said that the main objection to the initiative was under the premise that since the country decides you are an adult at 18, you should be able to make these choices on your own.

“These are the people that are more in favor of reducing the drinking age to 18,” Russell said.

However, Russell said that the motion did pass.

Rinckey said that the main purpose of presenting the initiative and having SG vote on it was to showcase support from the community when they take the ordinance to state and county officials.

“We are going to Toledo City Council very soon, and before we go to City Council, we want to have as much support from people and organizations that will be impacted by a Tobacco21 policy,” Rinckey said.

The fact that UT is a smoke-free campus already is a contributing factor to the positive reception of the initiative, according to Rinckey, who praised the university for their commitment to a culture of “health and wellness.”

“The main tactic to get tobacco out of the hands of young

people is to create barriers to accessing it and smoke free and tobacco free spaces are used often to reduce tobacco use," Rinckey said.

Other states, including Hawaii and California, as well as 224 cities and counties, including Columbus and Chicago, currently adhere to the Tobacco21 policy.

“March for Science”

Replacing test tubes with picketing signs, an estimated 500 people gathered in downtown Toledo last Saturday to reinforce the importance of science and fact-based reasoning at Toledo's March for Science.

The event was in accordance with a National March for Science in Washington, D.C. and satellite marches in cities across the globe.

Coinciding with Earth Day, the demonstration was in light of recent proposed cuts to federal research funding and changes to environmental policy.

“The March for Science champions publicly funded and publicly communicated science as a pillar of human freedom and prosperity,” stated the local event's webpage. “We unite as a diverse, non-partisan group to call for political leaders to enact evidence-based policies in the public interest.”

The March for Science Toledo began with a rally at International Park next to the Maumee River and included several speakers in the local science community. The Northwestern Ohio Chapter of the Association for Women in Science and Imagination Station co-sponsored the event.

"We want you to learn something today," said Susanne Nonekowski, head of the Northwestern Ohio Chapter of the Association for Women in Science. "The goal of the march is to accelerate science and encourage people to learn about the scientific method and have respect for the validity of scientific evidence."

Attendees holding signs with slogans like, "There is no planet B" and "Demand Evidence" marched across the Martin Luther King, Jr Bridge. and down to the Imagination Station.

Community member Marilyn Lazarus, who attended the march, said she saw the demonstration as an opportunity to express her concern over the current proposed funding cuts.

"I'm here because this is my passion," said Lazarus. "I think that with the present administration we're rolling backwards, and we need to keep moving forward."

Others viewed the march as their chance to voice specific grievances to the federal government regarding environmental policy.

"I'm scared of what Trump is going to do to the EPA," said participant Jeanne Dennler. "I'm here to be counted as part of the resistance."

Many, including former distinguished University of Toledo Professor of Astronomy Adolf Witt, kept politics out of their rhetoric but were instead there in support of scientific research in general.

"I'm not going to say anything political," Witt said. "But, obviously if our civilization is to continue, our policies have to be based on fact. On the truth. That's what science is all about."

The organization's main website announced further plans once marches concluded.

“March for Science has mobilized an unprecedented coalition of people committed to championing the role of science in supporting our common good,” stated the website. “Now our work continues as we transition into a non-profit organization.” Toledoans may join the continued movement by logging on to satellites.marchforscience.com and registering as a member in the local area.

University of Toledo researchers break record

Researchers at the University of Toledo searching for more efficient and cleaner forms of energy set a new record for the conversion of sunlight to electricity using the low-bandgap perovskite solar cell.

“Dr. Yan and his team set this record,” wrote Karen Bjorkman, dean of the College of Natural Sciences and Mathematics. “This achievement means they were able to produce a higher amount of electricity than had previously been the case.”

Not only is this solar cell more efficient, but it is also much cheaper with more readily available materials than the silicon-based solar cells, Bjorkman wrote.

The highest record of efficiency was made in Korea at 22.1 percent for the entire perovskite family; the one used by the researchers was one in this family of solar cells, said Yanfa Yan, Ohio research scholar chair and UT professor of physics.

“We focused on the mixed tin-lead perovskite which has less lead than the other perovskites people are working with,” Yan said. “There is a huge effort to replace lead because it is

toxic to the environment.”

This tin-lead perovskite can absorb more spectrums of sunlight because it uses two absorbers stacked on each other, according to Yan. He continued that the top cell absorbs a specific array of light and the bottom absorbs a different part of the spectrum.

“This is important because if a solar cell is more efficient, then it can generate even more energy to help power our electricity need...while providing more inexpensive solar energy,” Bjorkman said.

Third-year electrical engineering and computer science and engineering major Tyler Barton said he thinks this research is very important and could lead to a more widespread use of solar panels.

“One of the major setbacks to photovoltaics currently is the large upfront cost of the solar panels themselves, and if this new material could drastically lower the cost, that could push more companies to adopt solar energy,” Barton said.

[Sexual assault survivor to speak to students](#)

The University of Toledo is celebrating Sexual Assault Awareness Month in April by hosting Liz Seccuro, a rape survivor, author and victims’ advocate. She will speak at UT at 6 p.m. Wednesday, April 19 in Doermann Theater.

Seccuro was gang-raped in 1984 during her freshman year at the University of Virginia in Charlottesville. She reported her

situation to the dean of students and others at the university, but no one helped her to take further action.

“Being told by the dean of students that I was crazy and a liar discouraged me, but I kept going. I reported to whoever I could,” Seccuro said. “Also, I know it’s hard. So many survivors stay silent; they don’t tell their roommates and friends because a lot people, even unwittingly, don’t say what it is considered the right thing. There’s no script for it. It’s really hard, being a secondary survivor.”

Twenty years later, Seccuro’s rapist sent her a letter, apologizing. She replied to him, asking him why he was reaching out to her now. They exchanged several emails back and forth, with him referring to the rape as something much more romantic. Seccuro became even more concerned and called the Charlottesville police department.

Seccuro didn’t expect anything to come of it, but, soon after, she went back to Charlottesville to give her statement to the police and tell them her story. At the police station, Seccuro described the rape itself. After she finished, the detectives asked her if she would like to press charges against her rapist.

Seccuro said the moment was very emotional.

“I think it was very liberating to spend the afternoon telling my story, which I told countless times years before, to the regular police,” Seccuro said. “It took me by surprise, but it was also extraordinarily affirming and I was very emotional. I remember just crying a lot because it was like being heard for the first time, which is not the way it’s supposed to work. I felt very validated and at peace. Regardless of where it was going to go or if it was going to go forward, I felt that, and it’s so important for many survivors, to feel heard... it was a big moment.”

Kasey Tucker-Gail, director of the Center for Student Advocacy

and Wellness, said Seccuro's story and experience speaks to empowerment.

"It is important to students, faculty, staff and the community – her message is one of education, survival and advocacy," Tucker-Gail said in an email interview. "How to take an event and turn it into a message of hope and empowerment."

One in five women will be assaulted during their college career. Deborah Stoll, director of the YWCA Hope Center, said these are horrible odds and part of the reason they wanted to bring Seccuro to Toledo.

"I think, hopefully, they can relate to her because she was assaulted on a university campus," Stoll said. "She was a student when this happened, a 17-year-old freshman, and we know from our work, it's incredibly common for a college student to be the victim of sexual assault."

Stoll said the most common time for sexual assault to occur is at the very beginning of their freshman year.

"At a time when youth should be having the adventure of a lifetime, coming to a university, perhaps living on their own for the first time, making new friends, charting their adult life, they should not have to face a sexual assault."

By continuing to tell her story, Seccuro is keeping the issue of sexual assault alive and in people's minds.

"That this is not just a women's issue – but an issue for everyone – until it ends – it's in everyone's wheelhouse," Tucker-Gail said. "Education and awareness until it is eradicated. People need to continue to talk about this issue – we need to make it OK for everyone to talk about it. OK for victims to report, OK for victims to seek help, OK for people to advocate."

The free event is co-sponsored by the YWCA Hope Center and the

Center for Student Advocacy and Wellness and is open to all UT community members.

Student Government president and vice president for 2017-18 announced

Jimmy Russell and Drew Williams will serve as student body president and vice president for the University of Toledo during the 2017-2018 school year.

According to Andrew Taylor, recording secretary of Student Government, Russell and Williams won with 43 percent of the vote. Cameron Forsythe and Andrew Montry earned 33 percent, and Jared Enoch and Brayton Conley earned 24 percent.

“I believe our total voter turnout was 984, or at least somewhere around 980 votes, which is somewhat of an abysmal turnout in my opinion,” Taylor wrote in an email.

Despite the low voter turnout, Russell is aiming to reach out to the UT community and create a more transparent Student Government.

“I intend to have a newsletter sent out at regular intervals to the entirety of the student body that discusses everything we are working on,” Russell wrote in an email. “This will allow us to reach out to students that are not in orgs and simultaneously increase transparency.”

Russell added that the newsletters will also be posted on the Student Government website.

Currently, the SG website is outdated, stating that president and vice president are Cody Spoon and Ian Michalak, who served in 2015-2016. Williams hopes that by fall it will be up to date.

"We actually have someone in Student Government...who is working on the website," Williams said. "He is updating all the legislations that we pass and updating the quality of the website."

Williams also said that Blackboard can serve as another mean of communication between students and SG. He said Blackboard could list different events coming up, thus keeping students informed and in touch with Student Government.

Among other goals on Russell and Williams' platform, the two will be working toward gaining TARTA student access and creating a service award.

"We will be working with several administrators to work on making it so that students will have access free of charge," Russell wrote. "At the very least, we want to make the UT transportation add stops and run later so students can have safe transportation to and from nightlife options."

Though Russell and Williams have not yet begun working on the service award, Russell has discussed it with Donovan Nichols, assistant dean for student involvement and leadership.

"[Nichols] is very much so on board with working with Drew and I to make it happen," Russell wrote. "It will be broken down by types of service and specific hour requirements for each area. The award will be able to be worked on throughout the entirety of a student's time at the University of Toledo."

As for obstacles Russell and Williams will face, Williams said that the Phoenicia backlash is prevalent right now.

"There has just been a lot of people on different pages," Williams said. "We do believe that we have a lot of the facts."

If anything, just working with administration to strengthen our relationship again.”

Russell and Williams began their term as president and vice president Tuesday at the Student Government meeting.

“I’m really looking forward to getting more involved with different organizations on campus and learning more about the different things we have and connecting them with administration for things they need,” Williams said.

[Ad hoc committee tackles sexual assault at University of Toledo](#)

Nationwide, 23 percent of undergraduate students report being sexually assaulted, four percent report being stalked and one in 16 men are affected by sexual assault, said Amy Thompson, co-chair of the sexual assault awareness and prevention ad hoc committee and health education professor.

At the State of the University Address just last week, University of Toledo President Sharon Gaber announced she would create an ad hoc taskforce with the goal of evaluating and providing information about how UT can improve sexual assault prevention and awareness.

“Dr. Gaber...put together a taskforce to basically assess our campus,” Thompson said, “in terms of, ‘What are our current policies?’ ‘What is the best practice?’ ‘Are there any gaps that need to be filled?’ And the most important thing is, ‘How do we keep our students, faculty and staff safer?’”

This taskforce is co-chaired by Thompson and Associate Vice President and Co-Director of Residence Life Valerie Walston. It also includes representatives from the Sexual Assault Awareness Programs, the Counseling Center, the Student Advocacy and Wellness Center, Student Affairs, Athletics and Title IX, Thompson said. Once the assessment is finished, the committee will look at programs, practices and policies at other universities and compare those to UT's existing counterparts with an emphasis on education, information, prevention and adjudication, said Donald Kamm, Director of Title IX.

"Part of that is staffing questions as well," said Kasey Tucker-Gail, associate professor and director of the Center of Student Advocacy and Wellness. "Do we have the right number of people in the right positions to address these issues?"

The final report, that is expected to be finished and issued to Gaber in August 2017, will include existing programs and policies that need to be changed, as well as new policies and programs that need to be created, Thompson said. The committee had their first meeting on Thursday, April 13 to begin work on this report and the individual assignments for each member.

"The assignment I have is to look at trainings made available to faculty and staff as responsible employees under Title IX," Kamm said. "When a student goes to a faculty member to talk about a case, they need to know there is a legal obligation by that employee to act on that information."

Kamm said faculty and staff need to be trained in "informed interruption." This means interrupting the student to say that any information about sexual misconduct will be reported to Title IX, with or without the student's consent.

Approximately 88 to 89 percent of sexual assault victims never report it, and they often deal with the emotional, mental and physical issues resulting from the assault, Thompson said.

“I think for those especially who have been sexually assaulted, we need to encourage them to report, and create a system where they feel safe and that they know the perpetrator will receive due process,” Thompson said.

One of Kamm’s goals for this committee is to expand sexual assault awareness and prevention outside of the Haven program.

“The Haven program is the sole experience that a student has or relates to sexual assault or prevention on campus,” Kamm said. “I would love to see certain outcomes for the entire four-year experience and have touchstones along the way where we’re constantly reinforcing these messages.”

Kamm said he also wants to see more outreach toward the students who are not involved in campus groups like Greek Life.

“When I came here last year, I said I wanted this campus to be a role model campus on how we handle sexual assault cases, how we administer Title IX and the adjudication of sexual assault,” Kamm said. “That’s still my goal, and even though I’m limited in my scope, it’s nice to see someone is looking at the big picture.”

University of Toledo granted \$2 million for water renovations

The state of Ohio granted the University of Toledo over \$2 million to implement campus water renovations.

According to a press release from the state, the university plans to contract with Toledo-based Trane U.S. Inc. and Peak Electric Inc., among others, to add cooling towers and a new chiller in two water plants on the main campus.

As stated by SPX Cooling Technologies, a cooling tower is a specialized heat exchanger in which air and water are brought into direct contact with each other to reduce the water's temperature.

"Facilities managers at UT requested chiller water plant upgrades," Michael Sheehy, a state representative, wrote in an email. "Two chillers on campus, one at north end and one at south end, will provide air conditioning/climate control, not just for personal comfort but for sensitive IT, rare books, etc.

Sheehy described the process of this specific financing.

"Before these funds are released at the state level, funds must get the authorization from the State Controlling Board. My representative on the board voted to release the funds which had previously been voted on in the General Assembly," Sheehy wrote.

Associate Vice President for Facilities and Construction Jason Toth said he predicts substantial improvements.

"The project will add capacity to the system, allowing us to better meet the needs of our users while also providing more efficient and less costly equipment," said Toth.

In accordance with a Filtration Systems Technology website, using cooling tower filtration decreases maintenance costs by ensuring that the system is operating at maximum capacity and increases efficiency by recirculating water and removing particles such as suspended solids.

Students at UT recognize that the improved water renovations

and boosted efficiency will aid in providing a comfortable working environment.

“It’s not every day you think about water renovations on campus,” said Kennedy Shaw, a first-year biology major. “But what they are doing here really does matter. When it comes to improving indoor climate conditions, I know for me, I need a comfortable temperature in order to focus on my work.”

Representative Sheehy, a UT graduate, said he holds value in advancements made with his alma mater.

“Any time an improvement is made at the University of Toledo, whether an academic milestone, physical plant improvement or a Rocket sports victory, I take personal pride in that achievement,” Sheehy wrote, “This funding and improvement will serve students today and in the years beyond.”

[Humanities Insititute renamed for founder](#)

During a celebration in Libbey Hall April 14, The Humanities Institute in the College of Arts and Letters was renamed The Roger Ray Institute for the Humanities after its founder, Dr. Roger Ray, professor emeritus of history.

Ray founded the Institute in 1986 and led the institute for more than 20 years before he retired in 2006. It was later re-established in 2014.

“The kinds of questions addressed by RRIH events and speakers include big questions like ‘What does it mean to be human?’”

said Mysoon Rizk, associate professor of history, who was named the director of the institute in February. “So students, UT staff and community that have any interest in reflecting on such questions would certainly benefit from participating in RRIH activities.”

While Ray led The Humanities Institute, it offered a monthly research seminar for senior and junior faculty, countless scholarship awards for humanities undergraduates and extensive public programming, according to a UT press release. This included a partnership with the Toledo Museum of Art, a collaboration with area high schools and a regular series of scholarly lectures, symposia and public talks on and off campus.

“Under Ray’s leadership, The Humanities Institute was granted more than \$1 million, including major funding from the National Endowment for the Humanities and the Ohio Humanities Council,” Rizk said in an interview with UT News. “The institute became a model for similar programs across the state, including at Ohio State University.”

Rizk said the RRIH will continue to support UT faculty in the future, as well as scholars from other institutions, engaging in the humanities from a variety of disciplines.

“For example, a future talk I am organizing will feature a speaker who is a member of the OSIRIS-REx team of scientists that recently launched a probe toward an asteroid (Bennu) considered to be a strong candidate for containing some of the earliest matter in the universe, that is, engaging in the inquiry of ‘What did we all come from?’” Rizk said.

To learn more about The Humanities Institute and see its upcoming events, visit its Facebook page.

Gaber gives first address

University of Toledo President Sharon Gaber gave her first State of the University Address Wednesday April 5, outlining the school's academic and athletic accomplishments, financial challenges and its plans for the future.

During the address, Gaber said she was initially faced with a multimillion-dollar shortfall and a university that had lost its footing; to address these problems, she established five goals that included raising UT's national reputation, increasing fundraising, externally funded research and enrollment.

"The changes we're making together are meant to help ensure the long-term sustainability of this university and that means putting the needs of our students first," Gaber said in her address. "Strengthening our foundation meant establishing goals and developing plans that focused on our students."

Gaber said the university has increased enrollment by 2.2 percent and retention by 3 percent within Gaber's first year. Alumni donations have doubled from less than 3 percent two years ago and total fundraising has increased by 69 percent, totaling more than \$17.2 million.

To address the financial shortfall, Gaber said a combination of spending reductions, new revenue and cost avoidance has allowed the university to reach \$50 million in savings.

"This stemmed from realigning our executive team, merging 16 colleges into 13, implementing a hiring freeze, instituting temporary holds on open positions and identifying numerous other ways to reduce our expenditures or generate revenue," Gaber said.

Even though UT is in a better financial position now than it was one year ago, the university still faces serious economic challenges between tuition freezes and a state bill that would require public universities to help cover textbook costs over \$300, which would cost UT nearly \$14 million, Gaber said.

“The reality is that when we receive less financial support from the state, we need to find innovative ways to move forward to continue providing the same high-quality education that our students deserve – with less money,” said Gaber. “Based on feedback from faculty, staff and our students, we’re already making changes to help with expense management.”

Gaber did not go into detail about these expense changes, but she did say that further action will need to be taken to reduce costs, even with these changes.

“We have successfully increased externally funded research,” Gaber said, “This year, new competitive research awards are already 45 percent higher than the prior year. UT has more than 471 faculty and physicians who have brought in more than \$225 million of sponsored research in the past five years.” Looking to the future, Gaber said the university will roll out a 15-week semester and require second-year students to live on campus in Fall 2018. She also announced the university will have mandatory Title IX and ethics training for faculty and staff starting in July, and a new AD-HOC committee will be co-chaired by Amy Thompson and Valerie Walston.

“We are creating an AD-HOC taskforce on sexual assault awareness and prevention to compare our practices to...other universities,” Gaber said, “Student safety is a top priority, and we will continue enforcing zero tolerance of any type of abuse.”

Andrew Weisbarth, a third-year finance and sales major, said he was disappointed parking has not been addressed.

“She needs to improve on parking,” Weisbarth said. “I’m a

junior living on campus, and it goes for the Greek Village too; I can't park near my classes."

Gaber closed by saying the state of university is strong, and it can be an even stronger.

"I think she's done a very good job, but there is always more that can be done," said first-year business major Tabish Phelps.

SG candidates debate to win

Last week, the student body presidential candidates debated wide-ranging topics, including communication, mandating midterm grades and Title IX policies.

Each candidate stressed the importance put on reaching out to the student body to hear its ideas and concerns.

"Our platform is 'Your UT' because your experience at this university matters," said Cameron Forsythe, a second-year mechanical engineer major. "We want your voice to be heard, and we would like to be your representatives in the year going forward."



Jared Enoch, a fifth-year double major in mechanical engineering and political science, stated that communication goes further than just talking to students; it's also informing them of SG's actions.

"We plan to include more student voices, not only in the decisions we are making but also in what student government is doing," Enoch said.



Jimmy Russell, a second-year political science major, said he offers any student to “take a walk” with him in order to hear students’ concerns. He also said that in order for communication to improve, transparency must as well, with Russell promising to post weekly updates.



Each candidate agreed that there should be a mandate requiring professors to post midterm grades.

However, the question arose about how these candidates would realistically mandate professors to post grades, when many professors do not even use Blackboard as their primary mode of communication.

“This is something I am passionate about,” Enoch said. “One of the concerns was that professors didn’t know how to use the system, so I think that is something we need to look at, making sure professors know how to use these things.”

Enoch added that working with the provost would help implement this change.

Russell argued that the best way to tackle this issue is on a department-by-department basis instead of starting from the top of administration.

Forsythe said that this is an issue he is currently working on. He said he has submitted a proposal to senate faculty stating that midterm grades need to be posted somehow, whether on Blackboard or on another platform for the time being.

Since October, there have been four reported sexual assaults within the UT community. Sexual assault and harassment is another issue the candidates took a stance on.

Forsythe believes that students need to know the resources available to them. He said that he is currently working on make Title IX access and resources available through Blackboard.

“That way when you log in, the resources will be there,” Forsythe said. “Admittedly, you’ll probably ignore them most of the time, but when you need them, you’ll know where to look, and you won’t have to go searching through a million different websites.”

Russell stated that sexual assault awareness needs to be increased on campus. He suggested confidential and anonymous meetings for those who have been victims.

“We need to work with the administration and make sure they know that there is a zero-tolerance policy on this campus for anything like that,” Russell said. “This university is a place for anyone and everyone.”

Enoch also stated that it must be made clear that sexual assault and harassment are not tolerated on campus, and they are punishable.

“Any cases that are being reported need to be taken seriously so that students feel comfortable coming to these resources and utilizing them,” Enoch said.

Russell also plans to implement a service award on campus, which he said would provide students with a cutting edge to

land jobs more easily.

“Basically what that would look like is, throughout your time here at UT, you would fulfill so many requirements and then basically you would get a physical award of some type, and then on your degree it would say ‘graduated with a distinction in service.’”

Along with the service award, Russell added that another large goal of his is to gain TARTA access for students, which would allow students to use TARTA buses to get into the city easily.

Enoch, too, wants UT students to obtain access to TARTA buses, claiming that most metropolitan school already use this system.

“Our platform is centered around three main ideas: inclusions, communication and improvements,” Enoch said.

Enoch promised that communication, school spirit and pride will improve if he is president.

“We want Student Government to be there for the students, and we want Student Government to be more reachable,” Forsythe said.

Voting began on Monday and will be open via OrgSync until April 13. A post-election festival will be held Thursday in Student Union room 2591 at 4:30 p.m.