



## MEMORANDUM

To: Parents  
From: S/HE staff  
Re: Do Clery Act statistics reflect reality? Not even close!  
Date: January 7, 2016

Colleges and universities grossly underreport sexual assault statistics. A study published in February 2015 is consistent with this observation.

“When it comes to sexual assault and rape, the norm for universities and colleges is to downplay the situation and the numbers,” said researcher Corey Rayburn Yung, JD, a law professor at the University of Kansas. “The result is students at many universities continue to be attacked and victimized, and punishment isn’t meted out to the rapists and sexual assaulters.”

The study analyzed on-campus sexual assaults reported by 31 large universities and colleges during U.S. Department of Education audits for compliance with Clery Act reporting requirements. According to a summary of the findings published by the American Psychological Association:

During the audits, the reported numbers of sexual assaults increased by approximately 44 percent on average from previously reported levels. After the audits ended, the reported number of sexual assaults in following years dropped to pre-audit levels, evidence that some schools provided a more accurate picture of sexual assaults on campus only when they were under federal scrutiny, the study concluded.

“Colleges and universities still aren’t taking the safety of their students from sexual assault seriously,” Yung said. “The study shows that many universities continue to view rape and sexual assault as a public relations issue rather than a safety issue. They don’t want to be seen as a school with really high sexual assault numbers, and they don’t want to go out of their way to report that information to students or the media.”

An excellent series of articles by Collin Binkley, et al., in conjunction with the Student Press Law Center and published in the *Columbus Dispatch* shows a similar failure to comply. As Binkley writes, “Even the U.S. Department of Education official who oversees [Clery Act] compliance . . . admits that they are inaccurate. Jim Moore said that a vast majority of schools comply with the law but some purposely underreport crimes to protect their images; others have made honest mistakes in attempting to comply.”

After analyzing 12 years of Clery Act crime statistics involving nearly 1,800



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schools with on-campus housing *the Dispatch* authors wrote that:

- Nearly 3 percent have reported that there never has been a crime of violence on their campuses. Not a single homicide, robbery, serious physical assault or sexual assault.
- Nearly 16 percent reported that there has never been a physical altercation that could have resulted in serious harm.
- Nearly a fifth reported that there has never been a sexual assault, including Urbana University, northwest of Columbus, where a student told police in 2012 that she was gang-raped in a dorm room.
- In any year, at least half of the colleges report zero sexual assaults. About two-thirds report zero serious physical assaults.

Clery Act statistics are so inaccurate and manipulated that Diane Moyer, legal director of the Pennsylvania Coalition Against Rape, says: “This will sound counterintuitive, but I actually tell parents to send their kids to the college or university with the highest number of sexual assaults reported through the Clery Act . . . .”