

Is Staff Quality the Answer? Solving the Problem of Sexual Assault at American Colleges & Universities

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Abstract

This paper examines the qualifications of 125 staff members who handle sexual assault at 9 American universities. 7 of the universities studied are highly ranked private universities, while 2 are lower ranked public universities. I also provide 2 case studies that illustrate how staff member qualifications influenced the mishandling of sexual assault on college campuses. I find that schools with high ranking and large endowments tend to have separate offices designated for survivor assistance, but they are not necessarily more likely to hire qualified staff. I did not find evidence that female university leaders are more qualified than male university leaders or that they strongly influence the establishment of separate offices to handle sexual assault. These results are important because they shed light on factors that influence how a university addresses sexual assault, as well as whether highly ranked universities differ in their approaches compared to lower ranked universities. Furthermore, they also underscore the importance of having qualified staff members to handle sexual assault.

Motivating Questions

- Do women university leaders behave similarly to the way women behave in legal institutions?
- Are female university staff members more qualified compared to male university staff members?
- Do financial resources make a significant different in the hiring of qualified staff members?

Methods

- Examined the institutional organization and staff compositions of the top 5 ranked universities and two universities ranked 52nd.
- Coded for whether there is a separate office to handle sexual assault, university rank, amount of resources (measured in endowment), and if it is a public or private institution.
- Analyzed 125 different university staff members.
- Coded for gender, level of education, degree relevance, degree subject, university leadership, and years of experience.
- Also provided case study analysis to emphasize importance of qualified staff members

Results

- My data suggests that universities with separate offices do not necessarily have more women leaders.
- My data provide suggestive evidence that universities with larger endowments have separate offices to handle sexual assault
- 20% of staff members were men and 79% of staff members were women.
- 57% of staff members had relevant undergraduate degrees and 83% staff members had relevant graduate degrees

Angie Epifano-Amherst College

- Epifano was raped by a male classmate and began experiencing severe trauma, depression, and anxiety as a result.
- Forced to meet with unqualified staff members who made highly inappropriate comments
- Amherst’s actions violated Title IX

Elizabeth Ryan-SUNY New Paltz

- Elizabeth Ryan was a first semester freshman at SUNY New Paltz when she was raped by a male freshman student at an off-campus fraternity house.
- Obtained medical documentation and reported her assault to university officials
- The Dean of Student Affairs violated Title IX in her meetings with Elizabeth and did not want to take action against the student

School Name	Rank	Endowment	Total Staff	Female Staff Members	Male Staff Members	Female Leadership	Male Leadership	Separate office	Public/private
Princeton	1	\$22.00	8	6	2	3	0	Yes	Private
Harvard	2	\$37.60	11	9	2	3	1	Yes	Private
Yale	3	\$27.20	9	6	3	4	2	Yes	Private
UChicago	3	\$7.80	20	15	5	3	1	No	Private
Columbia	5	\$10.00	20	15	5	10	1	Yes	Private
MIT	5	\$14.80	11	8	3	3	0	Yes	Private
Stanford	5	\$24.80	16	16	0	5	0	Yes	Private
Penn State	52	\$3.60	15	13	2	4	1	No	Public
OSU	52	\$3.60	15	11	4	5	4	No	Public

Gender of Staff Member	Years of Experience				
	0-5	10-May	15-Oct	15-20	20+
Female	13%	25%	19%	5%	20%
Men	8%	23%	12%	23%	4%

School Name	Staff with Relevant Undergrad Degree	Percent of Staff with Relevant Undergrad Degree	Percent of Women with Relevant Undergrad Degree	Percent of Men with Relevant Undergrad Degree
Princeton	4	50%	33%	100%
Harvard	2	18%	22%	0%
Yale	2	22%	17%	33%
UChicago	10	50%	60%	20%
Columbia	8	40%	47%	20%
MIT	8	72%	63%	60%
Stanford	6	38%	38%	N/A
Penn State	4	27%	31%	0%
OSU	4	27%	36%	0%

School Name	Staff with Relevant Grad Degree	Percent of Staff with Relevant Grad Degree	Percent of Women with Relevant Grad Degree	Percent of Men with Relevant Grad Degree
Princeton	6	75%	100%	100%
Harvard	8	73%	56%	100%
Yale	7	78%	83%	67%
UChicago	17	85%	93%	60%
Columbia	13	65%	67%	20%
MIT	1	88%	76%	33%
Stanford	10	63%	63%	N/A
Penn State	7	46%	38%	0%
OSU	10	67%	64%	75%

Conclusion/Discussion

- Data suggests that university financial resources and university ranking play a role in determining whether a university has a separate office to handle sexual assault
- If university ranking and university financial resources make a decisive difference in addressing sexual assault, students at lower ranked universities with less financial resources will be put at a disadvantage.
- .Data suggest that university ranking and university financial resources do not have the same influence on hiring qualified staff members.
- Data suggest that women university leaders do not strongly influence whether a university will have a separate office or if a university will hire more qualified staff members
- Data also suggest that female university leaders are not necessarily more qualified than male university leaders