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Sexual assault programs deserve greater awareness

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Texas State should raise greater awareness for the prevention of sexual assault and bring further attention to programs aiding student victims.

In recent months, a few reported cases of sexual assault have occurred near campus or in student apartment complexes. A man was arrested Nov. 6 for a sexual assault incident at the University Club Apartments, and an alert was sent out Dec. 14 about a reported sexual assault on East Hopkins Street. Texas State administrators should look into implementing new programs to raise awareness of sexual assault and overall basic safety among students.

Sexual assault is an issue that can happen more frequently in college environments. According to statistics from the New York University Student Health Center, one of four college-aged women reported experiencing attempted or completed rape in their lifetimes. The statistics additionally indicate one in five women are raped during their college years alone.

Even more concerning is the fact most rapes go unreported. According to the same statistics, fewer than 5 percent of all attempted or completed rapes are reported to police. According to statistics from the Rape Abuse and Incest National Network, 97 percent of people who commit rape will not receive any jail time.

Texas State has already taken some steps to educate faculty and students about rape, however. Part of PAWS Preview, for instance, is dedicated to educating about date rape, sex and alcohol and other sexual assault issues college students may encounter. The counseling website has a dedicated self-help section for rape and abuse victims.

Additionally, according to a March 7 University Star article, some faculty involved with summer programs for minors are now required to undergo sexual abuse education. This is the type of program that could be extended further to educate a wider variety of interested faculty members who opt in. Often, victims of sexual assault do not know who to turn to

after abuse, and for many, a trusted professor with education on the issue may be easier to talk to than an impersonal counselor.

According to a Feb. 21 University Star article, several campus entities work together yearly to host “denim day” in honor of a rape victim in Italy who was singled out in a hearing by a judge for wearing “tight-fitting” jeans. The event features various educational activities with proceeds that benefit the Hays-Caldwell Women’s Center. An event like this sets a good example for how to raise both awareness and money for victims of rape and sexual abuse.

The problem is many students do not know about these sexual assault programs. Or if they know, students do not appear to make a large effort to get involved with them. While relaxing on their bus rides home, students should pay attention to the advertisements promoting the Men Can Stop Rape campaign posted on some Texas State trams.

The next thing Texas State could do to educate and raise awareness of rape and sexual assault is to implement a campus-wide campaign that students cannot help but see. More fliers placed in other visible areas around campus and occasional organized rallies in The Quad would be hard for students to avoid on their daily walks to class. Frequent informational sessions with intriguing speakers can be held in teaching theaters for students to attend. These additions would attract the attention of many who otherwise may never receive any education on the issue.

While Texas State has taken steps to raise awareness of sexual assault and rape, many students and faculty are missing the message entirely. To rectify this, university officials should work together with campus organizations, faculty, staff and students to implement a more visible sexual assault education campaign.

-Savannah Wingo is a mass communication sophomore.

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