

Title IX aims to protect against sexual discrimination

TRISTAN BENNETT

NEWS EDITOR

According to the Rape, Abuse & Incest Network, women in college are three times more likely to experience sexual violence than those not in college. While there is no way to prevent these crimes, Title IX aims to protect everyone on campuses across the nation.

Stephanie Lott, A-State Title IX and institutional equity coordinator, said the law ensures sexual equality in all aspects.

"Title IX gives everyone equal rights under the law," Lott said. "So if I'm a participant, no matter what my demographics are, no matter what role I hold in the process, everybody has the right to participate fully."

While originally written to prevent discrimination in college sports, the law applies broadly to all institutional activities. Every school that receives federal funds must comply with the law.

According to the Campus Security Act Report, in 2019, A-State reported four rapes on campus, eight instances of dating violence and one domestic violence case. Victims of sexual harassment or discrimination can file a report with the Title IX Office for formal investigation.

"It's a really prescriptive process," Lott said. "We begin an investigation by sending notices to both parties simultaneously letting them know that we're conducting an investigation."

Once everyone involved is notified and advised of their rights, Title IX investigators begin a full and impartial investigation, which should last no longer than 45 business days.

To ensure the investigation is impartial, investigators receive training more than once a year.

"Our investigators have specific training to mitigate bias in our processes and to understand how to ask questions

that are related to the allegations only," Lott said. "They have significant training and experience that we are required to get annually by the federal government, and Arkansas State is actually really great at making sure that we do training more than once a year."

In May 2020, new guidelines for Title IX compliance were released, and A-State had to be in compliance with those by August 2020. One of the biggest changes was to the definition of sexual harassment.

"It used to say that the behavior had to be severe, persistent or pervasive, and now it says it must be severe, persistent and pervasive, which is a much higher threshold from what it was previously," Lott said.

Other changes included a limiting of the office's jurisdiction. Before, a complainant could have an off-campus incident investigated, but now the alleged crime must take place on university-controlled property or at a university-sponsored event.

"It's not as broad as it used to be, but that just means we can't do formal investigations. We're still able to provide resources to anybody," Lott said.

Even if a formal investigation cannot occur due to jurisdiction, the Title IX office can provide access to counseling and crisis centers and housing and academic accommodations.

The changes to the guidelines limited jurisdiction, but all participants retained the rights to advance notice of meetings, review all materials and an adviser, which could be a friend, parent or lawyer.

"You have the same rights equally under the law no matter what your role is in our process," Lott said.

Title IX protects everyone on campus, but women are specifically vulnerable to the types of crimes it aims are preventing. However, according to RAINN, only 20% of female student



Photo by: Tristan Bennett | News Editor

A-State has emergency phones placed around campus which can be identified by their blue light on top. They can be used in any type of emergency or to request the assistance of the University Police Department.

victims ever report the crimes against them, with most of them stating they believe it was a personal matter.

Lott said the law is beneficial for all members of the campus community. "When you come to work here, or

you go to school here, when you're a visitor to our campus and you want to go to the library, you want to be able to enjoy our campus environment and the university itself in a discriminatory-free environment," Lott said. "You

want to be able to come here and not be catcalled, you want to be able to walk campus any time of day and feel safe, so that's the goal in what we're doing."

SAB hosts former Hell's Kitchen winner for virtual cooking event

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NEWS WRITER

Student Activities Board hosted a virtual cooking show last Thursday night, Feb. 25 via Zoom. The show featured Rock Harper, Hell's Kitchen's third winner.

Harper shared some of his favorite recipes during the show like macaroni and cheese, braised kale and fried chicken salad sandwiches.

Born and raised in Alexandria, Virginia, Harper spent some summers in Tappahannock, Chris Brown's hometown. He has been out in the industry for 25 years.

In the beginning, Harper talked about dishes that are important to African-American culture and taught some lessons during Black History Month.

Keyon Atkins, SAB president, due to the lack of activities and events the previous week, it is a good idea to let students try something new while also being on a virtual platform.

In order to invite Harper to be the host, SAB constantly stays in touch with agencies that have multiple opportunities to reach out to people for collaborations during special occasions.

During the show, students submitted their questions, and Harper answered all of them. He was candid and shared some interesting facts about himself as well as personal preferences. Since the show took place at Harper's residence, he experienced some technical issues and was disconnected for five minutes.

Amie Thomas, SAB director of arts and culture, said she panicked at first and had to find a way to entertain since she was one of the directors hosting, but Harper got his camera back on, "everything after was smooth sailing."

Students were excited to follow along. Some faced difficulties getting things done, but Harper was enthusiastic and reassured them.

K'yonna Harris, SAB marketing director, said that the show was enjoyable.

"Harper was super engaging with his audience talking about his life and answering questions about his time on Hell's Kitchen," Harris said.

After the show, she learned that the process of cooking scallops is uncomplicated, unlike how it is portrayed in the show and said she will definitely be trying it out in the future.

Thomas said she discovered a lot about the cultural roots of food as well.

"Which was really nice because we don't really think about how things come to be," Thomas said.

She has not had the chance to try out his recipes since she does not have her own kitchen in the quads. However, other directors were able to participate in the cooking and they said the recipes were fantastic.

For those who decided not to cook, they submitted questions and listened to his storytelling. Harper welcomed all kinds of questions with a lot of laughter and left no stone unturned.

At the end of the show, Harper said that he wanted to come to Arkansas to make fried chicken salad and dessert.

Thomas revealed that she would really love to come to visit Harper's restaurant in Virginia, called Queen Mother's.

"When I'm able to gather up all my coins, I'll take all my friends on a road trip and finally try that fried chicken he kept mentioning," Thomas said.

"It was overall a fun night to get in the kitchen with close friends and make a dinner with an amazing chef," Harris said.

CAMPUS CRIME

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Feb. 23 | 7:28 p.m.

University Police responded to a QuikTip from the Education & Leadership Studies building which stated that a man jumped off the building and chased Alexandria Lawrence and Aaliyah Porter. The officer asked the University Hall resident assistant if she knew what was going on, and she told officers Lawrence was her friend and asked her to come speak with the officers. She told them she was walking with Porter when a black male wearing a black hoodie and pants jumped off the Education & Leadership Studies building and began chasing them, saying, "Where are y'all going?" Porter gave officers the same statement.

The officers went back to the University Police Department to review the cameras and saw three black males by the stair ledge on the southside of University Hall. One wearing all black jumped towards the victims, causing them to run from him. They were then spotted on the Kays Hall primary entrance camera shortly after, looking

like they were possibly stealing a bike or electric scooter. Extra patrol was requested for the University Hall area.

Feb. 24 | 9:56 a.m.

A University Police officer stopped a 2001 Toyota Camry for driving on the left of the center lane as it traveled north on Marion Berry Parkway. The officer noticed a female laying down in the back seat of the car, and she stated she was the registered owner of the car. The driver's information came back as valid, and the front passenger, Demond Franklin was unable to provide identification.

While the officer was waiting for information about Franklin, he fled from the vehicle behind the house where they were stopped. The driver told him Franklin had given him a fake name and tried to tell the officer she did not know who he was. She finally gave him the name Travon Higgins.

He was caught a short time later running through backyards. He had felony warrants from the Jackson County Sheriff's Office as well. He was charged with obstruction of governmental operations and fleeing and given a court

date of March 3. The Jackson County Sheriff's Office said they would extradite Higgins.

Feb. 27 | 7:00 a.m.

Christine Miyawa filed a report stating that her iPad and laptop had been accessed in her home without her permission. In her statement, she said she turned off her iPad at night to save battery. When she woke up, it was already on and logged in to her A-State account. Miyawa said the same thing occurred with her laptop as well. She claimed it was affecting her phone too as she was unable to communicate with whoever she calls. She said she can hear them, but they cannot hear her.

Feb. 27 | 8:45 p.m.

An officer was dispatched to First National Bank Arena in reference to stolen property. Kayla Womack reported that her Apple AirPods had been stolen during a basketball game at the green entrance inside a break area. The officer asked dispatch to check the security footage, but they were unable to see the incident. Womack said she did not wish to press charges and only wanted a report filed.