

Dear Hesston Community,

On Wednesday, November 16, Harvey County Now published an article regarding a statement issued by an advocacy group for victims of sexual violence. The advocacy group alleges that students have conveyed to them that their reports of sexual violence to the college were handled inconsistently with college values, policies, and procedures. We are deeply saddened that any student would feel that the college is not fully supporting them after they report crimes of hate, sexual violence, racism or any threat to their well-being.

We would like to share some additional information about the issues raised in the Harvey County Now article.

Institutions of higher education are required by the Clery Act to submit an Annual Security Report (ASR) prior to October 1 each year. The Clery Act is a federal campus safety law that requires educational institutions to share accurate and timely information with students and employees about crimes that are reported on or near campus. ASR's reflect crimes reported to a given institution within the previous calendar year, not academic year. In addition to internal reports, the college also reaches out to the Hesston Police Department, the Newton Police Department and the Harvey County Sheriff annually to confirm and collect all crime reports that took place on Hesston College's campus and adjacent public property. Crime reports are included in an ASR based on the date they were reported rather than the date the crime occurred.

The Harvey County Now article alleges that a rape report was filed with the Hesston Police Department in the fall of 2020, and that this information was left out of Hesston College's 2021 ASR. This is inaccurate. Law enforcement records reflect that the 2020 incident was first reported to the Hesston Police Department in 2022, therefore we are scheduled to include that report in our fall 2023 ASR, which will include crime reports from 2022.

The college's 2021 ASR, which is available on our website, accurately reflects crime reports the college received in 2018-2020 and is in line with federal Clery Act reporting regulations.

The article suggests that we have freedom to share certain information about such reports. Our obligations under Federal privacy and non-discrimination laws prohibit us from sharing protected information about any reports made to us, including those that appear in ASRs.

Several college offices are involved in addressing student reports of threats to their personal safety and in providing support to any student who makes the report. These offices include, but are not limited to, the Title IX coordinator and Student Life staff. In order to ensure there is not a conflict of interest, we have kept Title IX reporting and staffing outside of the Student Life department since 2017.

Hesston College strongly encourages students to report any acts of sexual violence or any other type of threats either to the College or to law enforcement. However, we do recognize the desire by some students to seek assistance from confidential resources, including rape crisis counseling and advocacy centers. This is why, since 2016, we have partnered with Safe Hope in Newton, KS, a trauma-informed advocacy organization that supports victims of sexual and domestic violence. Through this partnership, we can provide our students with 24/7 direct contact to Safe Hope as well as offer weekly on campus support from a Safe Hope advocate.

Because our students, faculty and staff are part of our dearest community, it is imperative that we continue to evaluate and improve our policies and procedures on student safety. In October, the college sought firms to conduct an outside review. Earlier this week, we selected Cozen O'Connor's Institutional Response Group, a unique legal practice that specializes in improving institutional responses to sexual and gender-based harassment, violence, and other forms of discrimination and harassment. Cozen O'Connor is nationally known for their commitment to sensitively and candidly helping educational institutions identify challenges and strengthen their programs. We welcome their insights and perspectives based on their experience with colleges and universities across the country.

This outside audit will include conducting interviews and gathering feedback from employees, students, alumni, and other off campus constituency groups. This review will also include a study of cases of sexual and gender-based harassment and violence handled by the college during the past five years. We want to know what happened, where students were served well and where we fell short. The recommendations from this outside

review, which we expect to receive in spring 2023, will help us ensure we are doing everything we can to support and protect our community.

We will keep you posted as information regarding the next steps of the outside audit become available.

Peace, Joe