

**Did government policy spark a feminist movement and increase sexual assault reporting rates?**

How the release of the 2011 Dear Colleague letter by President Obama's administration fueled the #MeToo movement and affected sexual assault reporting rates

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## Introduction

In light of the #MeToo movement, sexual assault advocacy has been taking strides in allowing victims to feel more comfortable coming forward to share their stories and find justice. During President Obama's administration, he wrote a letter titled "Dear Colleague" where he outlined the government action to further protect victims of sexual assault and lowered the burden of proof for convicting sexual assault perpetrators from beyond a doubt to preponderance of evidence (Office of Civil Rights, 2011). This research project argues that when the federal government changed their Title IX policy, it ignited a new wave of feminist activism which allowed for increased acceptance of sexual assault as a major issue as well as cause universities to comply with these new regulations. The growing level of acceptance for sexual assault reporting is proposed to have ultimately led to an increased number of sexual assault victims to come forward and seek adjudication. In 2017 Betsy DeVos, United States Secretary of Education for President Trump, rescinded the Dear Colleague guidance, arguing it had limited the due process rights of accused perpetrators (Office of Civil Rights, 2017). This research also seeks to discover how university campus policies are changing once again in response to the new standards of evidence to convict sexual assault perpetrators. An analysis of reported sexual assaults in the University of Wisconsin system was conducted at both the university and the Department of Education level to uncover how the University of Wisconsin system policy change, in accordance with President Obama's Title IX Dear Colleague letter in 2011, has affected sexual assault reporting. This research also aims to discover whether the rescindment of the protections in 2017, and the attitudes of the Trump presidential administration as a whole, will have any effects on future university policy change or campus climate towards sexual assault reporting.

## Literature Review

### **Title IX**

Title IX is the descendent of Title VI and Title VII, the *Civil Rights Act* of 1964, which “prohibits employment discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex and national origin.” (Title VII, 1964; Valentine, 1997) While Title VI and Title VII made tremendous strides for the Civil Rights Movement, it still left significant gaps for women fighting discrimination, primarily centered on women not receiving equal opportunities and funds as men in schools and colleges (Waxman, 2018). Women seeking higher education would be required to have higher grades and test scores than men in order to be considered for the same school, and women’s sports received little to no funding compared to men’s sports (Waxman 2018; Sandler, 1974). These discrepancies between men and women in education spurred the 1974 report “What Constitutes Equality for Women in Sport? Federal law Puts Women in the Running” which in turn was part of the rationale for the executive branch to enact the Title IX Education Amendment on June 23, 1972, to fight against gender discrimination (Sandler, 1974; Title IX, 1974).

The preamble to Title IX states: "No person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subject to discrimination under any educational programs or activity receiving federal financial assistance." (Title IX of the Education Amendments, 1972) Originally Title IX was enacted only to regulate aspects of institutions receiving federal funds, however, it has changed over the years to become a much more comprehensive act now ensuring equal protections for men and women in education, from kindergarten through graduate school (*Grove City College v. Bell*, 1984). This act has spurred a series of advances for women in education from equal financial aid to women sports teams to sexual violence. *Cannon v. University of Chicago* solidified Title IX as having the following

functions: (1) to avoid the use of federal funds to support discriminatory practices and (2) to provide effective protection against those practices to individual citizens (*Cannon v. University of Chicago*, 1979). *Grove City College v. Bell* of 1984 continued this narrow scope that gender equity standards should be enforced only for those who are being federally funded. It was not until the *Civil Rights Restoration Act* of 1987 that Congress reversed this decision and Title IX expanded to include all educational programs, not only those federally funded. Today, Title IX covers a wide range of topics all for gender equity in the learning environment. Since Title IX was enacted, the number of women in college seeking STEM and advanced degrees has skyrocketed (Feminist.org, 2007). The number of women studying in the physical sciences went from 15% in 1970 to over 40% in 2005; Medical and Law school women attendees jumped from under 10% to almost 50%, and thousands more women can participate in sports and receive more scholarship money to attend universities and colleges (Bennett and Jones, 2018). The enactment of Title IX in 1972 illustrated that there were problems on college campuses that needed to be changed (Morrison, 2017). For the purposes of this paper Title IX will be used to discuss the guidelines for handling sexual assault allegations at all colleges at universities.

It must, however, be noted that there are still many areas for improvement in Title IX enforcement, one of the most prominent areas being campus sexual assault. Still one in five women are victims of sexual assault during their undergraduate university careers, and these numbers climb higher when referring to women of color (racially, ethnically, socioeconomically) (Kamenetz, 2014).

Sexual assault was not initially seen to be considered in the scope of Title IX or in the jurisdiction of the OCR, and instead the *Violence Against Women Act* (VAWA) of 1994 was seen to protect women on school campuses from sexual assault. The VAWA was enacted to support

women as victims of sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence, and stalking during the beginning of the movement to “reconceptualize rape” in the 1980s (Jones, 2015). Proponents of this movement argued there was an epidemic of sexual assault occurring on college campuses which was why legislation needed to be passed to protect these victims (Jones, 2015). While originally VAWA protected sexual assault victims at colleges, the Supreme Court took away a large part of VAWA’s authority in *United States v. Morrison* in 1995 which held that parts of VAWA were unconstitutional and that VAWA does not, by itself, protect women on college campuses from sexual assault (*United States v. Morrison*, 1995).

Needing to find an alternative way to protect victims of sexual assault on college campuses, the first time Title IX was used for a campus sexual assault complaint was in *Cannon v. University of Chicago* in 1979. However, the use of Title IX for sexual assault cases on college campuses did not become popular until after the Supreme Court ruling in *United States v. Morrison*. As Title IX became increasingly used for campuses sexual assault cases, there was not yet a governmental body to take complaints about the process. In the 1990’s, the Office of Civil Rights (OCR) took up this role as the enforcing agency of Title IX campus sexual assault.

### **The Office of Civil Rights and IX**

The Office of Civil Rights (OCR) was established on May 4, 1980 in the Department of Education for the investigation of alleged Title VI and Title VII violations, but it quickly expanded to include Title IX alleged violations which is now where all Title IX complaints are sent (Liberwitz et al., 2016). The OCR justified their increased involvement in campus sexual assault and harassment claims because “these acts, even if they occur only once, are severe enough to create a hostile environment that limits a student's ability to participate in or benefit

from a school program and thus brings the acts fall within Title IX's prohibition against sexual harassment in educational programs.” (Meloy, 2014; Hendrix, 2012, p 603). A Title IX complaint arises when a student or employee believes there is sexual discrimination that causes an overly hostile environment which goes beyond harassment or bullying (Liberwitz et al., 2016). That individual becomes known as “the complainant” once they have filed a report within the educational facility they attend, and that educational facility is required by Title IX to follow up on the complaint (Jachimski and Kitchens, n.d.). All reports of sexual misconduct are required to be entered into the *Clery* database. The act came about as the result of the rape and murder of Jeanna Clery in 1986, whose parents led the legislative effort to enact the *Clery Act* (1990) (United Educators, 2015).

The *Clery Act* (1990) is a federal statute requiring universities participating in federal financial aid programs to keep a record of campus crime statistics and report them (*Clery Act*, 1990). Any university of college receiving federal government money is required to release an annual security reporting detailing crimes that were committed on campus including criminal homicide, sexual assault, robbery, aggravated assault, burglary, hate crimes, motor vehicle theft, and arson (*Clery Act*, 1990). Besides reporting typical crimes, universities and colleges are required to disclose any VAWA offenses and any referrals for disciplinary action because of weapon, drug or liquor violations (*Clery Act*, 1990). Additionally, any crime that is deemed an immediate and significant danger to the health and safety of the campus is required to have an emergency notification issued to the campus (*Clery Act*, 1990). The *Clery Act* also outlines mandatory prevention education training to be given to students and employees of all schools and also requires the school to provide access to counseling and legal action against the perpetrator if desired (1990). Finally, the *Clery Act* stipulates all disciplinary proceedings must

be conducted by trained parties and carried out promptly, impartially, and fairly (1990). The *Clery Act* provides a way for the OCR to be able to tell how many sexual assaults are happening on college campuses as well as how these college campuses are adjudicating sexual assaults. However, if the educational facility does not promptly investigate the Title IX complaint, the complainant is able to seek the OCR for help resolving the dispute. At the same time as filing a complaint against how their Title IX complaint was handled, the complainant is able to bring the educational facility to court for not addressing their Title IX complaint according to the decision made in *Davis v. Monroe County Board of Education* (1999) (Jachimski and Kitchens, n.d.). As more cases were adjudicated, the OCR realized a potential flaw that in some cases the due process rights of the victim and defendant may contradict, and thus in 2001 published the Revised Sexual Harassment Guideline which implies the protection of the complainant takes priority in matters where the due process rights contradict (Office of Civil Rights, 2001; Lieberwitz et al., 2016). As of 2017, the OCR has 304 sexual assault investigations open in 223 colleges and universities across the United States (Anderson, 2017).

One of the most important cases in the time after the OCR began taking complaints about mishandled university Title IX complaints is *Kelly v. Yale* (2003). Kelly was sexually assaulted by a male student who was in her dormitory and in one of her classes and immediately filed a complaint with Yale University requesting to have the perpetrator removed from her dormitory and her classes until graduation (2003). It was claimed by Kelly that Yale University waited too long before responding to her request, where in the meantime she had to drop out of her classes and dormitory in order not to see her attacker. Yale University did respond to the complaint and begin an investigation, but because the school did not respond promptly Kelly's life was further impacted (2003). As a result of Yale not correctly handling Kelly's case, Kelly sent her

complaint to the OCR (2003). While Yale University argued they needed time to gather evidence, the OCR ruled in favor of Kelly (2003). Their verdict came from using a lower burden of proof than was typically used before this case, the preponderance of evidence burden of proof rather than the standard beyond a reasonable doubt (2003). The OCR used the preponderance of evidence burden of proof because it is sufficient to use in cases to minimize harm, thus they found the university not in compliance with Title IX by not protecting the victim (*Kelly v Yale*, 2003). This case set a precedent for President Obama's 2011 Dear Colleague letter, which attended to some of the problems that arose in the *Kelly v. Yale* case (Johnson and Taylor, 2017).

### **Dear Colleague Letter**

In order to address some of the grievances still not fixed by Title IX, such as a high burden of proof for victims of sexual assault to prove they were victimized, the "Dear Colleague" letter was published by President Obama on April 11, 2011. The Dear Colleague letter was issued as an addendum to Title IX to spread awareness that sexual assault is included in Title IX policy and remind universities and colleges "of their responsibilities to take immediate and effective steps to respond to sexual violence in accordance with the requirements of Title IX" (Obama, 2011, p. 1). The letter provides guidance for sexual assault cases, with specific reference to the role of criminal investigations and the "school's independent responsibility to investigate and address sexual violence" (Obama, 2011, p. 1). In the document, it outlines key steps schools can take to proactively prevent sexual assault and also how the OCR can become involved in a school's sexual assault case along with examples of how schools and the OCR can act in a variety of circumstances (Obama, 2011). One of the steps the letter mandated schools take is defining the role of a Title IX coordinator to be required at all schools

(Obama, 2011). Other obligations for schools seeking federal money include taking immediate action upon knowledge of sexual assault and take steps to eliminate sexual assault, prevent reoccurrence, and follow through on any disciplinary proceedings, whether through the school or a criminal investigation (Obama, 2011). The Dear Colleague letter also required that schools provide an accessible way for complainants to raise their complaint, protect the complainant (victim) while the case is being addressed to prevent further harm, and notify both parties at the end of deliberation about the outcome of the case and future steps the school may take to prevent similar incidents (2011). The most controversial change was lowering the burden of proof in a Title IX sexual assault investigation from beyond a reasonable doubt to a preponderance of evidence standard (Obama, 2011; Hendrix, 2012; Jachimski and Kitchens, n.d.). The OCR used this letter as the basis for lowering the burden of proof to a preponderance of evidence from “the Supreme Court’s use of that standard in civil litigation involving discrimination under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Title VII)” (Jachimski and Kitchens, n.d.). According to the OCR, any higher burden of proof would be “inequitable because it would require a higher standard of proof to establish Title IX violations than that required for violations of other civil rights laws” (Office of Civil Rights, 2012, n.p.).

Many critics, including minority leader of the United States house John Andrew Boehner, have lashed out in response to the Dear Colleague letter by President Obama, calling its lowering of the burden of proof to preponderance of evidence unconstitutional and stripping the defendant's right to due process (Hendrix, 2012). Upon having their authority to lower the burden of proof to preponderance of evidence challenged, then OCR head Catherin E. Lhamon cited a 2003 Georgetown University sexual assault case, *Dieringer v. Georgetown*, the OCR had to become involved in when the university did not handle the case properly (Johnson and Taylor,

2017; Office of Civil Rights, 2004). On the third page of the 17-page letter, the OCR indicates that they have the right at any time to lower the burden of proof to preponderance of evidence (Office of Civil Rights, 2004). Under new administration, the Dear Colleague letter written by President Obama was rescinded in 2017 through the head of the Department of Education, Betsy DeVos (Jackson, 2017). In her speech about the redaction of the Dear Colleague letter DeVos articulated her belief the burden of proof is too low which allows many innocent defendants to be more easily convicted (Jackson, 2017). False accusations of sexual assault are actually exceedingly rare and happen just as frequently as false accusations for any other crime, with a suggested 6% of individuals falsely alleging sexual assault (Saul and Taylor, 2017; Lisak et al., 2010). Additionally, what is considered a “false” accusation does not mean that someone outrightly lied, with some law enforcement agencies considering any sexual assault allegations that do not have sufficient evidence as “false”, when the better term might be “baseless” (Yan and Chavez, 2018). Some scholars, such as Catherine E. Lhamon, former assistant education secretary for civil rights under Obama and now chairs the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, sees the revocation of Obama’s Dear Colleague letter as a major step back for Title IX, women’s equality and elimination of sexual assault of campus (Anderson, 2017). Others, including President Donald Trump, think it is a step in the right direction to finding a solution that can both accurately understand the events in questions and maintain the due process rights.

The revocation of President Obama’s Dear Colleague letter has also been seen by some to be a backlash against the growing #MeToo movement because, as stated by Janet Napolitano, the president of the University of California system and a Homeland Security secretary in the Obama administration, it “weakened sexual violence protections, prompted confusion among campuses

about how best to respond to reports of sexual violence and sexual harassment, and unraveled the progress that so many schools have made” (Saul and Taylor, 2017; Felton, 2018, n.p.).

### **Dear Colleague in light of #MeToo**

The #MeToo movement gained wide attention on social media when actor Alyssa Milano tweeted her sexual assault story along with the hashtag in 2017, but the movement began in 2006 (Zacharek et al., 2017). Tarana Burke, who is an activist against sexual assault, started a nonprofit while creating the #MeToo movement “to address both the dearth in resources for survivors of sexual assault and to build a community of advocates, driven by survivors, who will be at the forefront for creating solutions to interrupt sexual violence in the communities” (Burke, 2006, n.p.). Once ignited by Milano, the hashtag caught on with over 17 million people using it and causing many prominent men to be in the forefront of sexual assault scandals, including Kevin Spacey and Harvey Weinstein (Zacharek et al., 2017; Burke, 2006). Now many institutions and college campuses directly attribute the #MeToo movement, and the subsequent large name figures the movement has outed for sexual assault to an increase in sexual assault reporting rates. This includes Harvard University, who reported they had a 20 percent increase in sexual harassment and assault reports two months after the Harvey Weinstein allegations surfaced (Felton, 2018). This powerful movement has shown that women can no longer be silenced and turning the blame on the individuals it should be placed on: the perpetrators (Williams and Lebson, (2018); Zacharek et al., 2017).

The #MeToo movement is the most recent of a long line of feminist movements that have been dedicated to giving equal rights to women. The history of feminist movements is typically broken into four eras (Rampton, 2015). The first era came about in the late 1800’s and early

1900's in the wake of urban industrialization, most notably in the Seneca Falls Convention. Here the focus was on women's suffrage, which successfully passed the 19<sup>th</sup> Constitutional Amendment allowing all women to vote in 1919 (Head, 2017; Rampton, 2015). The second era began in the early 1960's in parallel with to the movement against the Vietnam War and focused on everything from workplace access to reproductive rights to divorce rights to access to abortion; anything seen as an "official" barrier to women's rights (Head, 2017; Rampton, 2015). This wave laid the groundwork for Title IX to be enacted (Head, 2017; Rampton, 2015). The third wave, which is currently in progress, started in the 1990's is seen to be a combination of not only the past waves of feminism but also an amalgamation and consciousness of oppression along many other lines including race, ethnicity, and classism (Rampton, 2015). A critique of the second wave of feminism was that it did not include a universal womanhood mentality, otherwise known as intersectional feminism, which the third wave seeks to address (Rand, 2017). This wave's intersectionality initially faced backlash from the traditional white women who spoke for the movement, arguing other groups of women who voiced their own sexism complaints added lenses based on their race or sexual orientation which was divisive to the feminist movement (Rand, 2017). However, the third feminist wave has grown from this to include all backgrounds and identities, now called the intersectionality of feminism, which allows all voices to be heard for the platform of improving women's rights beyond the traditional white, middleclass, and heterosexual female. Part of this third era has been spurred on by politics, and some suggest the changing political atmosphere to feminism, such as Obama's Dear Colleague letter, are motivating factors behind the rise in this third movement (Rampton, 2015).

Despite all the progress the #MeToo movement is making, much more is needed before sexual assault is no longer a prevalent threat. Although Bill Cosby was convicted for drugging

and raping a woman he only received three to ten years of jail time; Brock Turner was similarly convicted of sexual assault yet only received three months of jail time before being released; Alec Cook who received three years of jail time despite facing 40 years with charges of more than 20 crimes from over a dozen women; and the most recent Supreme Court Justice was voted into the highest moral office in America despite the world hearing how he had allegedly sexually assaulted Dr. Christine Blasey Ford (Levenson and Cooper, 2018; Grinberg and Soichet, 2016; Treleven, 2018; Kay, 2018). Governmental guidance, such as Title IX and the 2011 Dear Colleague letter, seems to be the place to make progress as those monumental acts have increased sexual assault awareness and willingness to report by accepting new norms at the governmental level. As the Harvard Business Review accurately surmised of the #MeToo movement, “translating outrage into action, however, requires moving beyond hashtags [and] toward new norms” and that the government should follow the same guidelines in place for any other civil suit. (Williams and Lebsack, 2018., n.p.)

Governmental change has aided the third era of feminist movements by increasing the acceptance of sexual assault as a problem needing to be addressed, and from the increased awareness feminist movements provide it has sparked university change (Lesk et al., 2017). Universities have actively changed their policies to follow Obama’s Dear Colleague guidelines, on threat of losing government money, and although the 2011 Dear Colleague letter has been rescinded, many schools have spoken that they will not change their policies again (Saul and Taylor, 2017). While universities may not be changing their policies in response to changing governmental stance, what effects does the recantation of the 2011 Dear Colleague letter have on sexual assault reporting rates in the future? The hypothesis of this paper is that governmental acceptance of the issue of sexual assault, in the form of the Dear Colleague letter, began a new

wave of intersectional feminism, including the #MeToo movement, which pressured universities into complying with the title IX more fully and increased reporting rates of sexual assault.

## Methods

In 1990, the Wisconsin state legislature passed the Wisconsin Statute 36.11(22)(b) which requires Wisconsin system universities and colleges to report the number of sexual assaults which happened at their institution annually. The numbers used for the analysis or reported sexual assaults was gleaned from university reports that they are required by law to disclose. In this study, only the University of Wisconsin System four-year universities' data was used, thus this paper will only address the reporting information specific to the University of Wisconsin.

When students are sexually assaulted, they have multiple options on how to continue (Figure 12). The first choice is whether to report the sexual assault; if students choose to report they can report to the Dean of Students, the Title IX Coordinator and/or the police department (University Health Services, 2018; University of Wisconsin-Madison Police Department, 2018). If they choose not to report, there are many services still available. Counseling for emotional trauma as well as medical services for physical trauma are typically encourage, while there are additional advocacy groups who allow victims to privately disclose their sexual assault and suggest further steps (Figure 12).

Only reported sexual assaults are able to be used when analyzing statistics of sexual assault which is why there are large information gaps between how many people statistics report have been sexually assaulted compared to the larger picture including individuals who do not report (Cantor et al., 2015). It is estimated around 63% of sexual assault victims never report their sexual assault (National Sexual Violence Resource Center, 2012). Calculating the rough percentage of people who are sexually assaulted from only those who report comes from anonymous surveys, such as the "Report on the AAU Campus Climate Survey on Sexual Assault and Sexual Misconduct" which analyzed data anonymous submitted from University of

Wisconsin – Madison student participants after the survey was sent to all students (Cantor et al., 2015). From anonymous surveys asking students if they have been sexually assaulted and whether they report, staggering new statistics emerge such as one in five women and one in 71 men having been sexually assaulted in their lifetime or 90% of sexual assault victims know their attacker (University of Wisconsin System Annual Report on Sexual Assault and Harassment, 2016; National Institute of Justice, 2008). Additionally, sexual assault disproportionately happens to minority populations including 32.3% of multiracial women and 27.5% of Native American women being sexually assaulted in their lifetime (University of Wisconsin System Annual Report on Sexual Assault and Harassment, 2016). It is well known that the reported sexual assaults at a university do not accurately compare to the actual number of sexual assaults at a university, but reported sexual assaults still provide valuable insight into how campus climate views, or make acceptable, reporting sexual assault. When reported sexual assaults are also compared to the university size, it is an interesting tool to gauge how university size or growth impacts reported sexual assaults.

Besides the general inaccuracy of sexual assault reporting compared to the actual number of sexual assaults, problems with the data and obtaining the data are prevalent. Originally, more schools were going to be used for this study, however due to time restrictions and the length it would require obtaining significant portions of data from some universities, the study was reframed to only target University of Wisconsin system four-year universities who have more readily accessible data. This data is considered to be generalizable to other four-year state universities in America because this is a representative sample of many sized universities, specializing in many different areas. Even using the University of Wisconsin system data, data was only available until 2006, and before 2006 there was a separate application procedure to

procure the data. Additionally, the data itself of sexual assault reports can be difficult to work with because many of the University of Wisconsin system four-year universities are quite small so the difference between the years of sexual assault reporting is only by a few reports leading to a larger deviation between years.

Universities are required by the *Clery Act* (1990) to include all cases of reported sexual assault that are reported to the Dean of Students, and the Dean of Students is required to compile all this information (University of Wisconsin System Annual Report on Sexual Assault and Harassment, 2016). For the annual report, the compilation of data is sent to the Senior Student Affairs Officer or designee. Additional data is also held by the OCR in the Department of Education which is only for specific cases where a victim of sexual assault who reported to their university felt they were not supported to the full extent of Title IX policies and thus complain to have their case investigated by the OCR.

Requests to the University of Wisconsin – Madison Title IX department as well as to the OCR in the Department of Education were placed to obtain sexual assault report and adjudication history from the year 2010 for University of Wisconsin system schools. From this data, trends were established between the number of reports per year as well as adjudication trends per year, and cross referenced with the dates of governmental policy affecting the burden of proof in sexual assault cases. The University of Wisconsin Police Department, University of Wisconsin System’s Annual Reports on Sexual Assaults and Sexual Harassment, and the University of Wisconsin System’s Education Report Statistics provided the most complete information for the analysis of the University of Wisconsin System’s four-year universities.

Results

Year	School	Report	Count on Campus Acquaintances	Count on Campus Not Acquaintances	Count on Campu s Not Known	Count off Campus Acquaintances	Count off Campus Not Acquaintances	Count off Campu s Not Known	Total Sexual Assault s	Populat ion Size of Campu s
2016	Eau Claire	Sexual Assault	9	3	0	16	1	6	35	10705
2015	Eau Claire	Sexual Assault	9	1	0	24	1	0	35	10531
2014	Eau Claire	Sexual Assault	11	0	0	26	3	4	44	10692
2013	Eau Claire	Sexual Assault	6	1	0	35	5	5	52	10907
2012	Eau Claire	Sexual Assault	1	1	0	13	3	3	21	11047
2011	Eau Claire	Sexual Assault	6	0	0	9	1	1	17	11234
2010	Eau Claire	Sexual Assault	6	0	1	6	6	1	20	11413
2009	Eau Claire	Sexual Assault	3	0	1	1	6	2	13	11216
2008	Eau Claire	Sexual Assault	3	0	1	8	2	0	14	11140
2007	Eau Claire	Sexual Assault	0	0	0	5	0	1	6	10854
2006	Eau Claire	Sexual Assault	1	0	0	8	0	4	13	10766
2016	Green Bay	Sexual Assault	20	0	1	19	2	2	44	7030
2015	Green Bay	Sexual Assault	6	0	0	10	0	1	17	6779
2014	Green Bay	Sexual Assault	1	1	1	10	0	1	14	6921
2013	Green Bay	Sexual Assault	2	0	0	8	2	1	13	6667
2012	Green Bay	Sexual Assault	6	0	0	5	0	0	11	6790
2011	Green Bay	Sexual Assault	6	0	0	5	0	1	12	6665

Year	School	Report	Count on Campus Acquaintances	Count on Campus Not Acquaintances	Count on Campu s Not Known	Count off Campus Acquaintances	Count off Campus Not Acquaintances	Count off Campu s Not Known	Total Sexual Assault s	Populat ion Size of Campu s
2010	Green Bay	Sexual Assault	5	0	0	5	0	0	10	6636
2009	Green Bay	Sexual Assault	2	0	1	7	0	1	11	6638
2008	Green Bay	Sexual Assault	8	0	0	7	1	2	18	6268
2007	Green Bay	Sexual Assault	9	0	1	6	0	2	18	6110
2006	Green Bay	Sexual Assault	8	0	1	5	0	0	14	5690
2016	La Crosse	Sexual Assault	10	1	1	29	8	9	58	10624
2015	La Crosse	Sexual Assault	7	0	0	19	5	1	32	10486
2014	La Crosse	Sexual Assault	7	0	0	15	3	1	26	10664
2013	La Crosse	Sexual Assault	6	1	0	13	1	1	22	10502
2012	La Crosse	Sexual Assault	12	1	0	3	0	0	16	10380
2011	La Crosse	Sexual Assault	2	0	0	11	1	1	15	10285
2010	La Crosse	Sexual Assault	5	1	0	11	0	3	20	10135
2009	La Crosse	Sexual Assault	2	0	1	13	0	1	17	10009
2008	La Crosse	Sexual Assault	5	0	0	4	4	6	19	9880
2007	La Crosse	Sexual Assault	5	0	0	13	0	0	18	9994
2006	La Crosse	Sexual Assault	2	0	0	7	0	0	9	9849
2016	Madison	Sexual Assault	13	5	18	111	26	152	325	42994
2015	Madison	Sexual Assault	13	5	4	74	15	103	214	43064
2014	Madison	Sexual Assault	22	6	11	61	8	64	172	42865

Year	School	Report	Count on Campus Acquaintances	Count on Campus Not Acquaintances	Count on Campu s Not Known	Count off Campus Acquaintances	Count off Campus Not Acquaintances	Count off Campu s Not Known	Total Sexual Assault s	Populat ion Size of Campu s
2013	Madison	Sexual Assault	25	5	5	26	22	39	122	42902
2012	Madison	Sexual Assault	11	3	10	23	7	68	122	42463
2011	Madison	Sexual Assault	21	8	9	55	13	17	123	42065
2010	Madison	Sexual Assault	14	8	1	40	23	26	112	42180
2009	Madison	Sexual Assault	10	2	1	18	7	7	45	41654
2008	Madison	Sexual Assault	11	3	0	16	11	3	44	41620
2007	Madison	Sexual Assault	8	0	5	22	0	11	46	41563
2006	Madison	Sexual Assault	12	0	2	18	0	14	46	41028
2016	Milwaukee	Sexual Assault	9	1	1	55	12	14	92	26011
2015	Milwaukee	Sexual Assault	6	0	0	36	15	15	72	27119
2014	Milwaukee	Sexual Assault	8	2	0	19	4	1	34	28013
2013	Milwaukee	Sexual Assault	5	0	2	15	5	4	31	27784
2012	Milwaukee	Sexual Assault	1	1	0	5	4	5	16	29114
2011	Milwaukee	Sexual Assault	2	1	1	3	1	1	9	29726
2010	Milwaukee	Sexual Assault	2	1	2	18	5	0	28	30470
2009	Milwaukee	Sexual Assault	8	0	1	8	5	2	24	30418
2008	Milwaukee	Sexual Assault	0	2	0	7	3	1	13	29215
2007	Milwaukee	Sexual Assault	5	0	1	4	0	6	16	29338
2006	Milwaukee	Sexual Assault	2	0	2	5	0	10	19	28309

Year	School	Report	Count on Campus Acquaintances	Count on Campus Not Acquaintances	Count on Campu s Not Known	Count off Campus Acquaintances	Count off Campus Not Acquaintances	Count off Campu s Not Known	Total Sexual Assault s	Populat ion Size of Campu s
2016	Oshkosh	Sexual Assault	2	0	0	48	1	6	57	13955
2015	Oshkosh	Sexual Assault	15	0	0	25	3	1	44	14059
2014	Oshkosh	Sexual Assault	10	0	1	29	2	2	44	14542
2013	Oshkosh	Sexual Assault	8	0	0	22	2	1	33	13902
2012	Oshkosh	Sexual Assault	8	1	0	24	2	1	36	13519
2011	Oshkosh	Sexual Assault	3	0	0	26	1	1	31	13513
2010	Oshkosh	Sexual Assault	3	0	0	6	4	1	14	13629
2009	Oshkosh	Sexual Assault	5	0	0	9	2	2	18	13192
2008	Oshkosh	Sexual Assault	11	0	4	6	1	0	22	12753
2007	Oshkosh	Sexual Assault	10	0	1	13	0	6	30	12772
2006	Oshkosh	Sexual Assault	3	0	1	16	0	4	24	12530
2016	Parkside	Sexual Assault	7	0	0	1	0	0	8	4399
2015	Parkside	Sexual Assault	3	1	0	2	0	0	6	4443
2014	Parkside	Sexual Assault	6	0	0	1	0	0	7	4584
2013	Parkside	Sexual Assault	1	0	0	2	0	0	3	4617
2012	Parkside	Sexual Assault	2	0	1	0	0	0	3	4769
2011	Parkside	Sexual Assault	5	0	0	0	0	0	5	4887
2010	Parkside	Sexual Assault	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	5160
2009	Parkside	Sexual Assault	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	5303

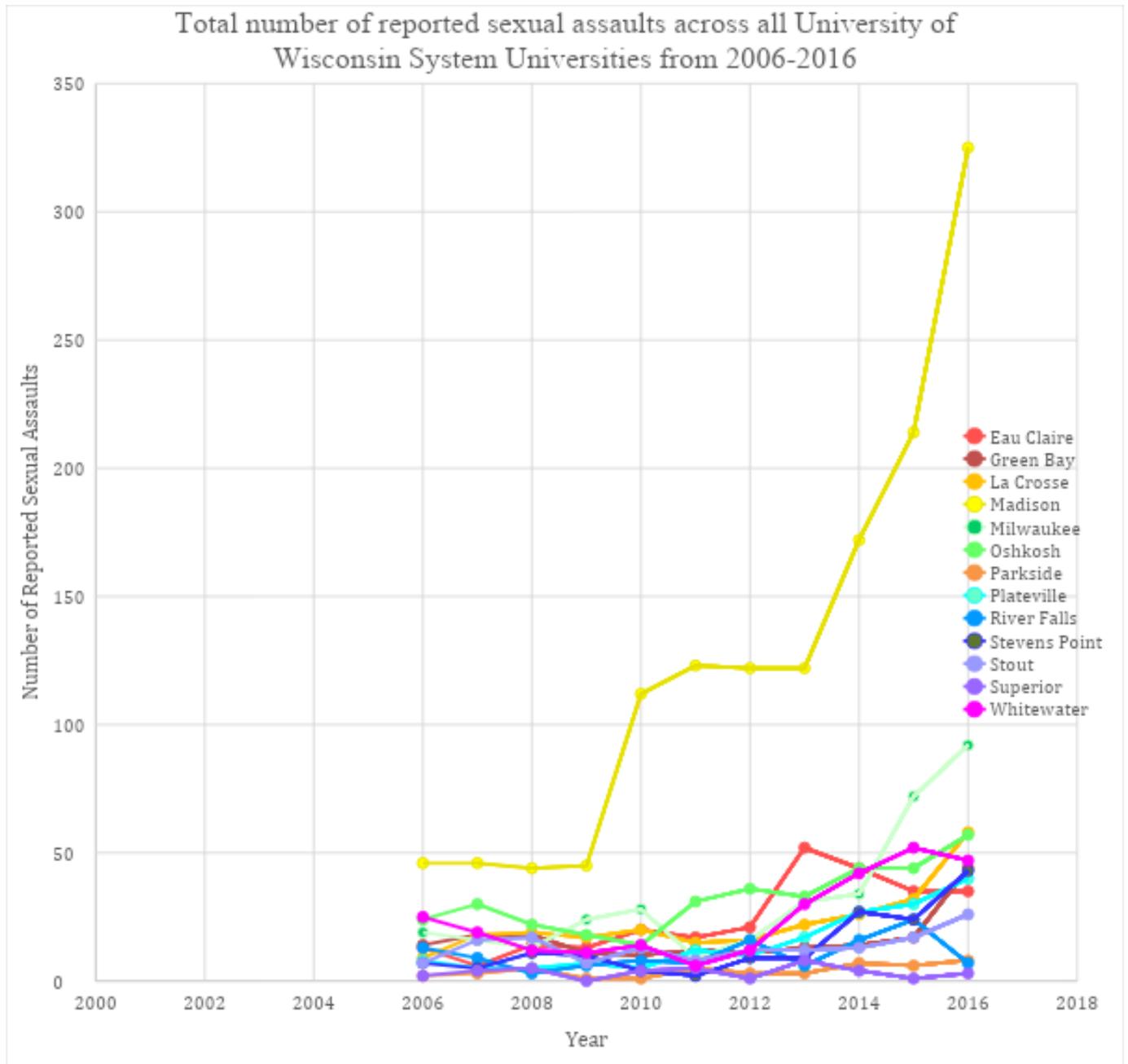
Year	School	Report	Count on Campus Acquaintances	Count on Campus Not Acquaintances	Count on Campu s Not Known	Count off Campus Acquaintances	Count off Campus Not Acquaintances	Count off Campu s Not Known	Total Sexual Assaults	Population Size of Campu s
2008	Parkside	Sexual Assault	3	1	0	0	1	0	5	5167
2007	Parkside	Sexual Assault	2	0	0	1	0	0	3	5010
2006	Parkside	Sexual Assault	1	0	1	0	0	0	2	5007
2016	Platteville	Sexual Assault	2	0	4	14	0	20	40	8782
2015	Platteville	Sexual Assault	6	0	0	14	0	10	30	8950
2014	Platteville	Sexual Assault	7	0	0	13	2	5	27	8901
2013	Platteville	Sexual Assault	6	2	2	4	1	2	17	8717
2012	Platteville	Sexual Assault	7	0	2	1	0	0	10	8678
2011	Platteville	Sexual Assault	4	2	0	4	2	0	12	8262
2010	Platteville	Sexual Assault	2	1	0	2	0	0	5	7928
2009	Platteville	Sexual Assault	1	0	1	5	0	0	7	7803
2008	Platteville	Sexual Assault	2	0	1	1	0	1	5	7512
2007	Platteville	Sexual Assault	1	0	0	2	0	2	5	7189
2006	Platteville	Sexual Assault	4	0	0	4	0	0	8	6813
2016	River Falls	Sexual Assault	4	0	0	3	0	0	7	5931
2015	River Falls	Sexual Assault	7	0	1	12	1	3	24	5928
2014	River Falls	Sexual Assault	5	0	2	5	2	2	16	6184
2013	River Falls	Sexual Assault	0	0	0	6	0	0	6	6171
2012	River Falls	Sexual Assault	2	0	0	11	2	1	16	6447

Year	School	Report	Count on Campus Acquaintances	Count on Campus Not Acquaintances	Count on Campu s Not Known	Count off Campus Acquaintances	Count off Campus Not Acquaintances	Count off Campu s Not Known	Total Sexual Assault s	Populat ion Size of Campu s
2011	River Falls	Sexual Assault	2	0	0	3	1	1	7	6788
2010	River Falls	Sexual Assault	5	1	0	1	1	0	8	6902
2009	River Falls	Sexual Assault	0	0	0	3	1	2	6	6728
2008	River Falls	Sexual Assault	1	0	0	1	1	0	3	6555
2007	River Falls	Sexual Assault	1	0	2	6	0	0	9	6452
2006	River Falls	Sexual Assault	0	0	1	12	0	0	13	6229
2016	Stevens Point	Sexual Assault	11	0	2	16	1	13	43	8627
2015	Stevens Point	Sexual Assault	5	0	1	13	0	5	24	9255
2014	Stevens Point	Sexual Assault	7	0	0	13	2	5	27	9322
2013	Stevens Point	Sexual Assault	2	0	0	3	4	0	9	9643
2012	Stevens Point	Sexual Assault	0	0	0	5	2	2	9	9677
2011	Stevens Point	Sexual Assault	0	0	0	2	0	0	2	9477
2010	Stevens Point	Sexual Assault	0	1	0	2	0	1	4	9500
2009	Stevens Point	Sexual Assault	3	1	2	3	0	1	10	9209
2008	Stevens Point	Sexual Assault	3	1	1	3	0	3	11	9163
2007	Stevens Point	Sexual Assault	3	0	0	2	0	0	5	9115
2006	Stevens Point	Sexual Assault	5	0	1	0	0	1	7	9048
2016	Stout	Sexual Assault	8	4	1	6	5	2	26	9619
2015	Stout	Sexual Assault	9	1	1	1	2	3	17	9535

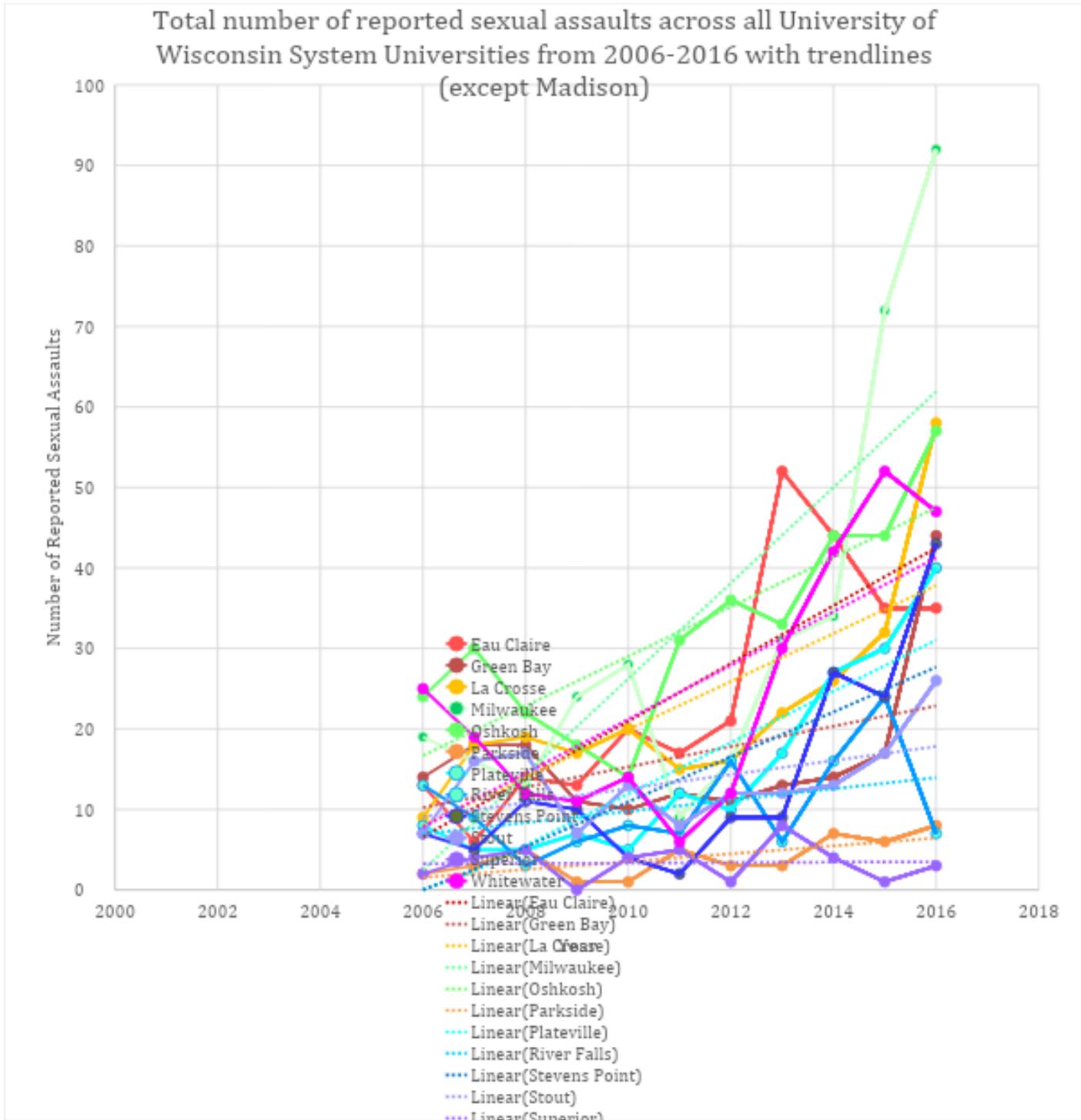
Year	School	Report	Count on Campus Acquaintances	Count on Campus Not Acquaintances	Count on Campu s Not Known	Count off Campus Acquaintances	Count off Campus Not Acquaintances	Count off Campu s Not Known	Total Sexual Assaults	Populat ion Size of Campu s
2014	Stout	Sexual Assault	2	1	0	3	6	1	13	9371
2013	Stout	Sexual Assault	4	0	0	2	2	4	12	9286
2012	Stout	Sexual Assault	3	0	1	4	1	3	12	9247
2011	Stout	Sexual Assault	0	0	0	7	1	0	8	9356
2010	Stout	Sexual Assault	2	0	0	10	1	0	13	9339
2009	Stout	Sexual Assault	2	0	0	5	0	0	7	9017
2008	Stout	Sexual Assault	3	1	0	7	6	0	17	8839
2007	Stout	Sexual Assault	2	0	1	11	0	2	16	8477
2006	Stout	Sexual Assault	3	0	0	3	0	1	7	8372
2016	Superior	Sexual Assault	2	0	0	1	0	0	3	2487
2015	Superior	Sexual Assault	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	2489
2014	Superior	Sexual Assault	4	0	0	0	0	0	4	2589
2013	Superior	Sexual Assault	3	4	0	1	0	0	8	2656
2012	Superior	Sexual Assault	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	2700
2011	Superior	Sexual Assault	5	0	0	0	0	0	5	2825
2010	Superior	Sexual Assault	2	0	0	2	0	0	4	2856
2009	Superior	Sexual Assault	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2794
2008	Superior	Sexual Assault	4	0	0	1	0	0	5	2689
2007	Superior	Sexual Assault	2	0	0	2	0	0	4	2753

Year	School	Report	Count on Campus Acquaintances	Count on Campus Not Acquaintances	Count on Campu s Not Known	Count off Campus Acquaintances	Count off Campus Not Acquaintances	Count off Campu s Not Known	Total Sexual Assaults	Population Size of Campu s
2006	Superior	Sexual Assault	2	0	0	0	0	0	2	2924
2016	Whitewater	Sexual Assault	10	2	0	11	3	21	47	12628
2015	Whitewater	Sexual Assault	12	1	0	24	4	11	52	12351
2014	Whitewater	Sexual Assault	12	0	2	21	2	5	42	12159
2013	Whitewater	Sexual Assault	13	1	0	11	3	2	30	12015
2012	Whitewater	Sexual Assault	5	1	1	0	3	2	12	12031
2011	Whitewater	Sexual Assault	4	0	0	1	0	1	6	11643
2010	Whitewater	Sexual Assault	4	0	0	3	2	5	14	11557
2009	Whitewater	Sexual Assault	3	0	0	7	1	0	11	11139
2008	Whitewater	Sexual Assault	5	1	0	5	1	0	12	10962
2007	Whitewater	Sexual Assault	8	0	1	7	0	3	19	10737
2006	Whitewater	Sexual Assault	7	0	3	10	0	5	25	10502

**Figure 1:** Reported sexual assaults at each University of Wisconsin system four-year university broken down by year, perpetrator’s relationship to victim, and campus size. This dataset is used for subsequent graphical analysis and illustrates drastic increases in sexual assault reports over the past ten years despite no large increase in campus size. This data was retrieved from the University of Wisconsin Police Department, University of Wisconsin System’s Annual Reports on Sexual Assaults and Sexual Harassment, and the University of Wisconsin System’s Education Report Statistics.



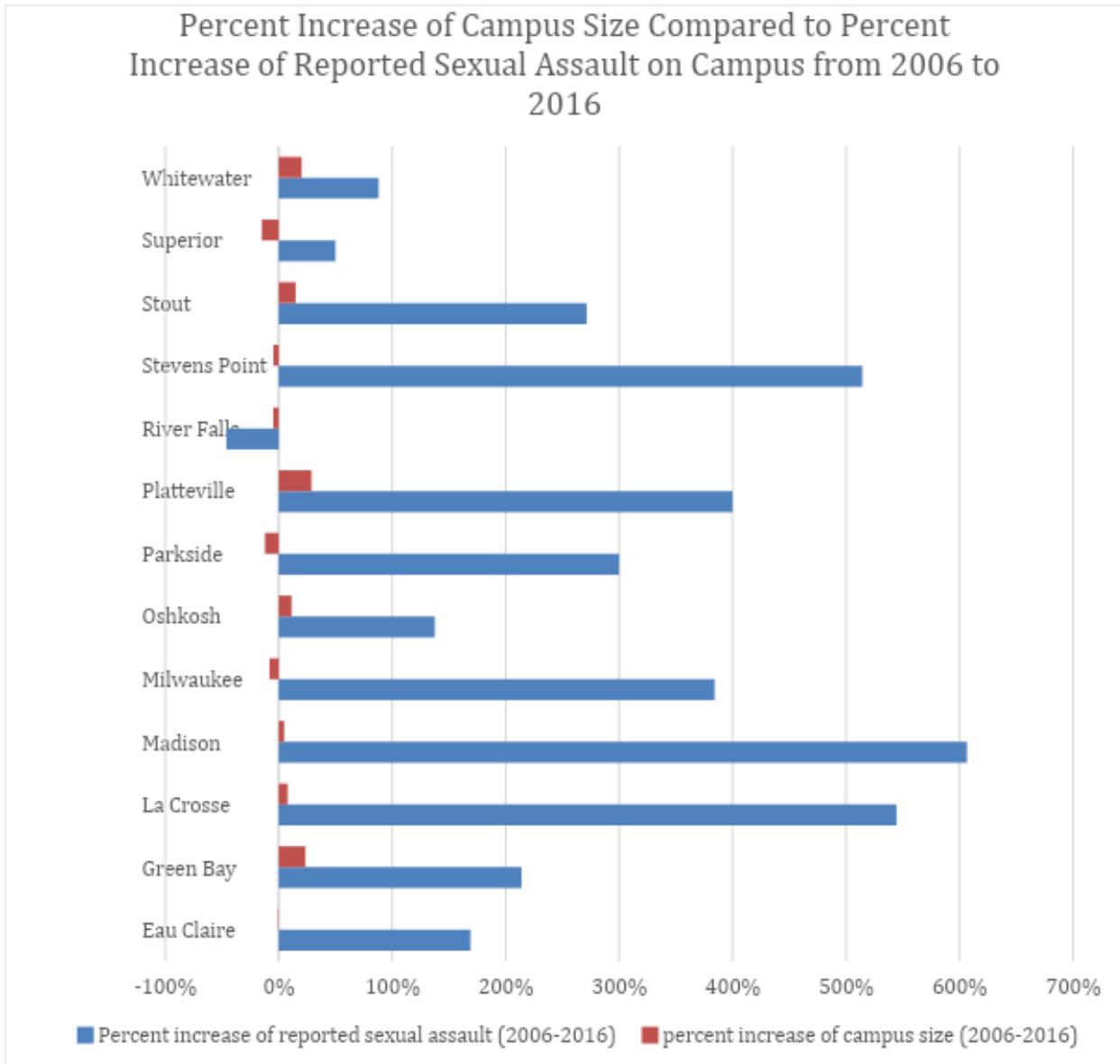
**Figure 2:** Total number of reported sexual assaults across all University of Wisconsin System four-year universities from 2006-2016. This graph indicates an increase in sexual assault reports over the past ten years, with the most notable increase of sexual assault reports at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.



**Figure 3:** Total number of reported sexual assaults across all University of Wisconsin System four-year universities, except the University of Wisconsin-Madison, from 2006-2016 with trendlines. The University of Wisconsin-Madison was omitted from this graph to be able to get a closer analysis of all the other universities without the sheer size of the University of Wisconsin-Madison hindering any further observations. This graph shows significant increases in sexual assault reporting rates in all University of Wisconsin System four-year universities, as seen in positive  $R^2$  values for all schools.

School	Increase of reported sexual assault (2016-2006)	Percent increase of reported sexual assault (2006-2016)	increase of campus size (2016-2006)	percent increase of campus size (2006-2016)
Eau Claire	1.692307692	169%	-0.005665986	-0.56%
Green Bay	2.142857143	214%	0.235500879	23.55%
La Crosse	5.444444444	544.44%	0.078688192	7.86%
Madison	6.065217391	606.50%	0.047918495	4.79%
Milwaukee	3.842105263	384.20%	-0.081175598	-8.11%
Oshkosh	1.375	137.50%	0.113727055	11.30%
Parkside	3	300%	-0.121429998	-12.14%
Platteville	4	400%	0.289006311	28.90%
River Falls	-0.461538462	-46.15%	-0.047840745	-4.78%
Stevens Point	5.142857143	514.30%	-0.04652962	-4.65%
Stout	2.714285714	271.40%	0.148948877	14.89%
Superior	0.5	50%	-0.149452804	-14.94%
Whitewater	0.88	88%	0.202437631	20.24%

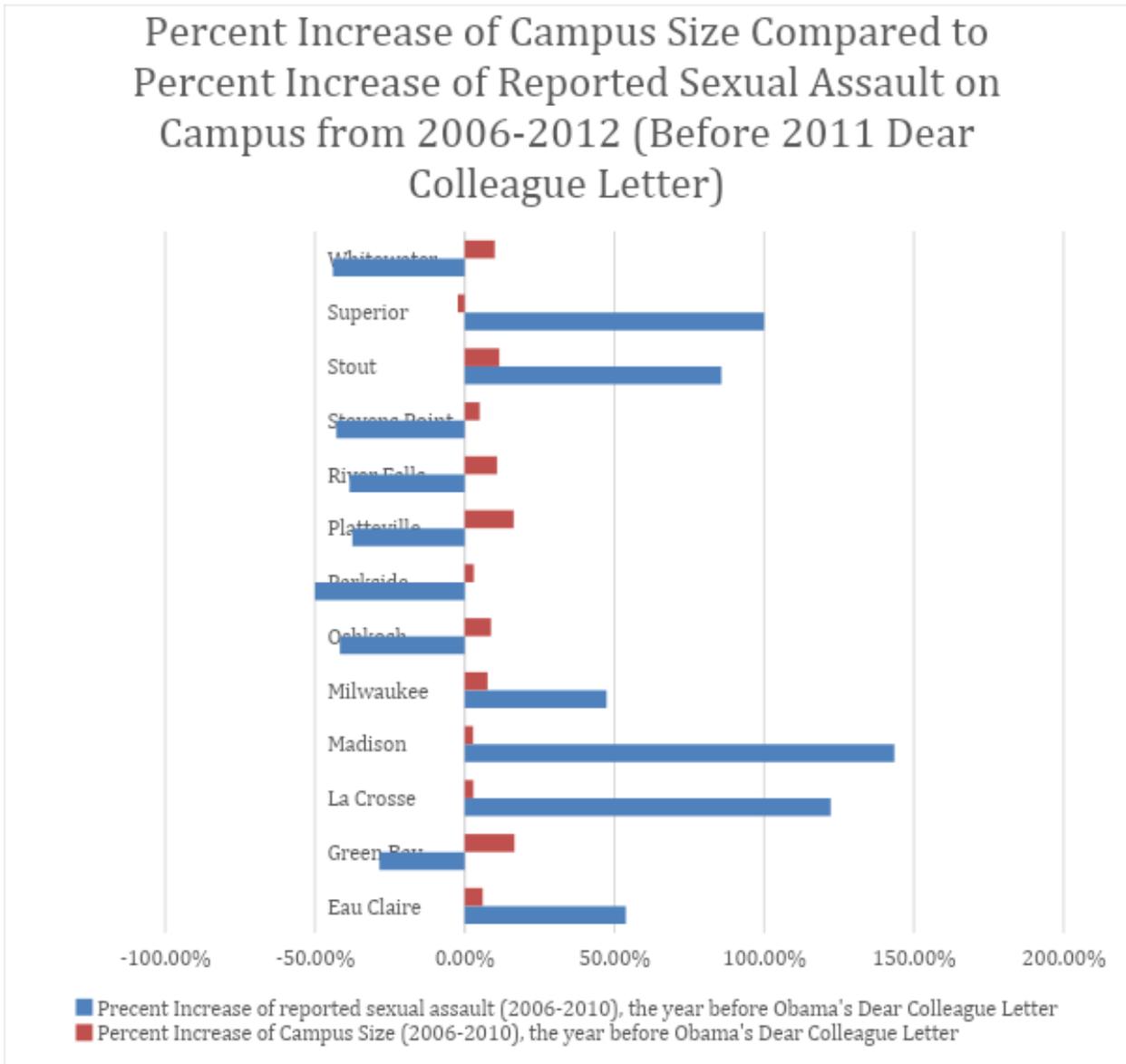
Figure 4: Percent increase of sexual assault reports and campus size at all the University of Wisconsin System's four-year universities from 2006-2016. This data is used for subsequent graphs to analyze whether sexual assault reports increased due to an increase in campus size.



**Figure 5:** Percent increase of campus size compared to percent increase of reported sexual assault on campus from 2006-2016. This data shows that campus size over the past ten years did not increase compared to the increase in sexual assault reports, and indicates that other factors must be involved in why sexual assault reporting increased instead of increased campus size.

School	Increase of reported sexual assault (2006-2010), the year before Obama's Dear Colleague Letter	Percent Increase of reported sexual assault (2006-2010), the year before Obama's Dear Colleague Letter	Increase of Campus Size (2006-2010), the year before Obama's Dear Colleague Letter	Percent Increase of Campus Size (2006-2010), the year before Obama's Dear Colleague Letter
Eau Claire	0.538461538	53.80%	0.0600966	6.01%
Green Bay	-0.285714286	-28.50%	0.166256591	16.62%
La Crosse	1.222222222	122.22%	0.029038481	2.90%
Madison	1.434782609	143.48%	0.028078385	2.81%
Milwaukee	0.473684211	47.37%	0.076336148	7.63%
Oshkosh	-0.416666667	-41.67%	0.087709497	8.77%
Parkside	-0.5	-50%	0.03055722	3.05%
Platteville	-0.375	-37.50%	0.163657713	16.36%
River Falls	-0.384615385	-38.46%	0.108043025	10.80%
Stevens Point	-0.428571429	-42.86%	0.049955791	4.99%
Stout	0.857142857	85.71%	0.115504061	11.55%
Superior	1	100%	-0.023255814	-2.32%
Whitewater	-0.44	-44%	0.100457056	10.04%

**Figure 6:** Percent increase of sexual assault reports and campus size at all the University of Wisconsin System's four-year universities from 2006-2010, before President Obama's 2011 Dear Colleague Letter. The year of 2011 is not used in this data set because it is the year during the suggested change that took place as a result of the Dear Colleague Letter and the data is not reliable because parts of the data in this year will have been collected from before and after its publication. This data is used for subsequent graphs to analyze whether sexual assault reports increased due to the 2011 Dear Colleague Letter or an increase in campus size.

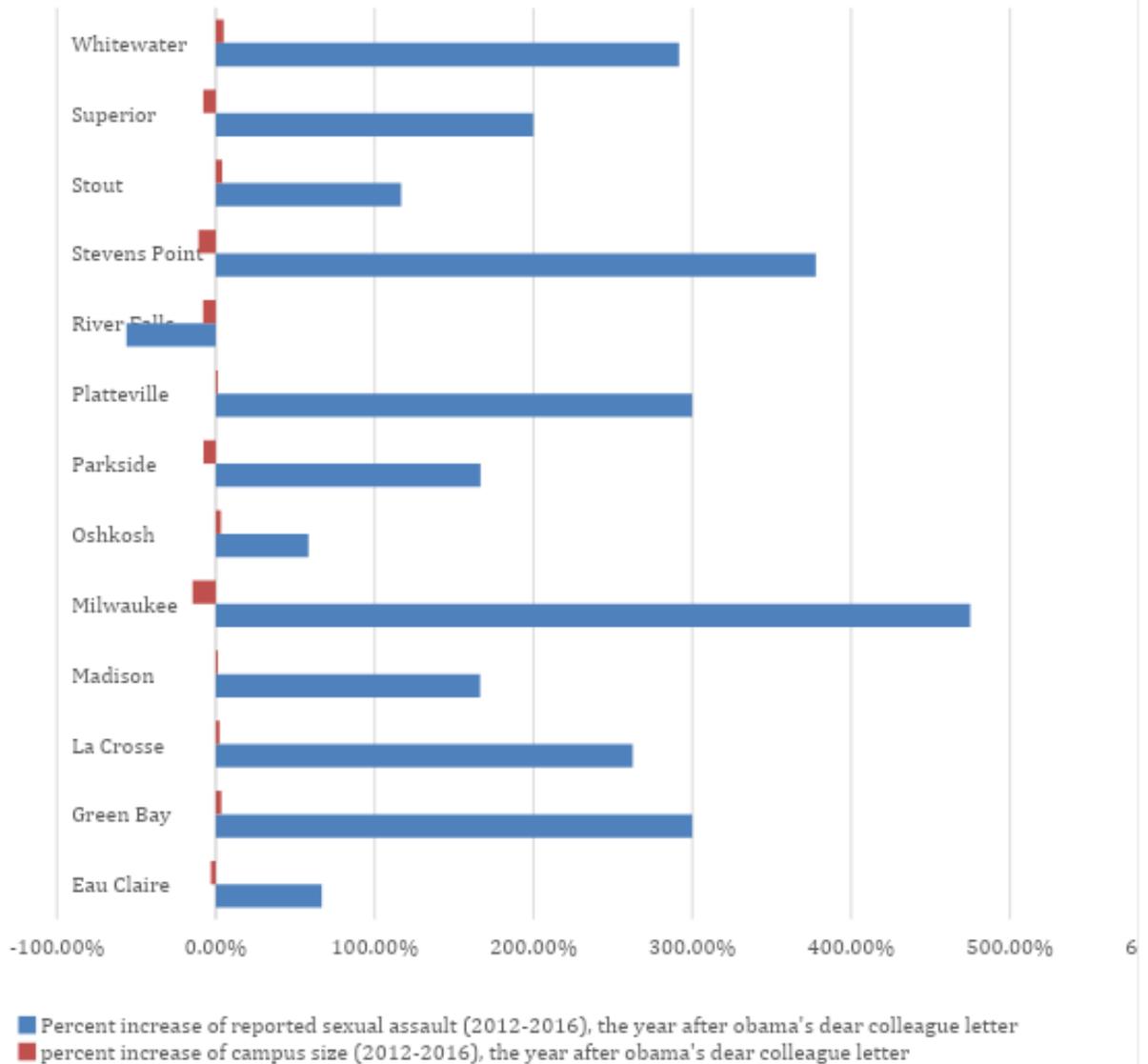


**Figure 7:** Percent increase of campus size compared to percent increase of reported sexual assault on campus from 2006-2010, before Obama’s 2011 Dear Colleague Letter. This data shows that there was no consistent increase in sexual assault reporting rates at all University of Wisconsin system schools, and that campus growth is not correlated with sexual assault reporting rates.

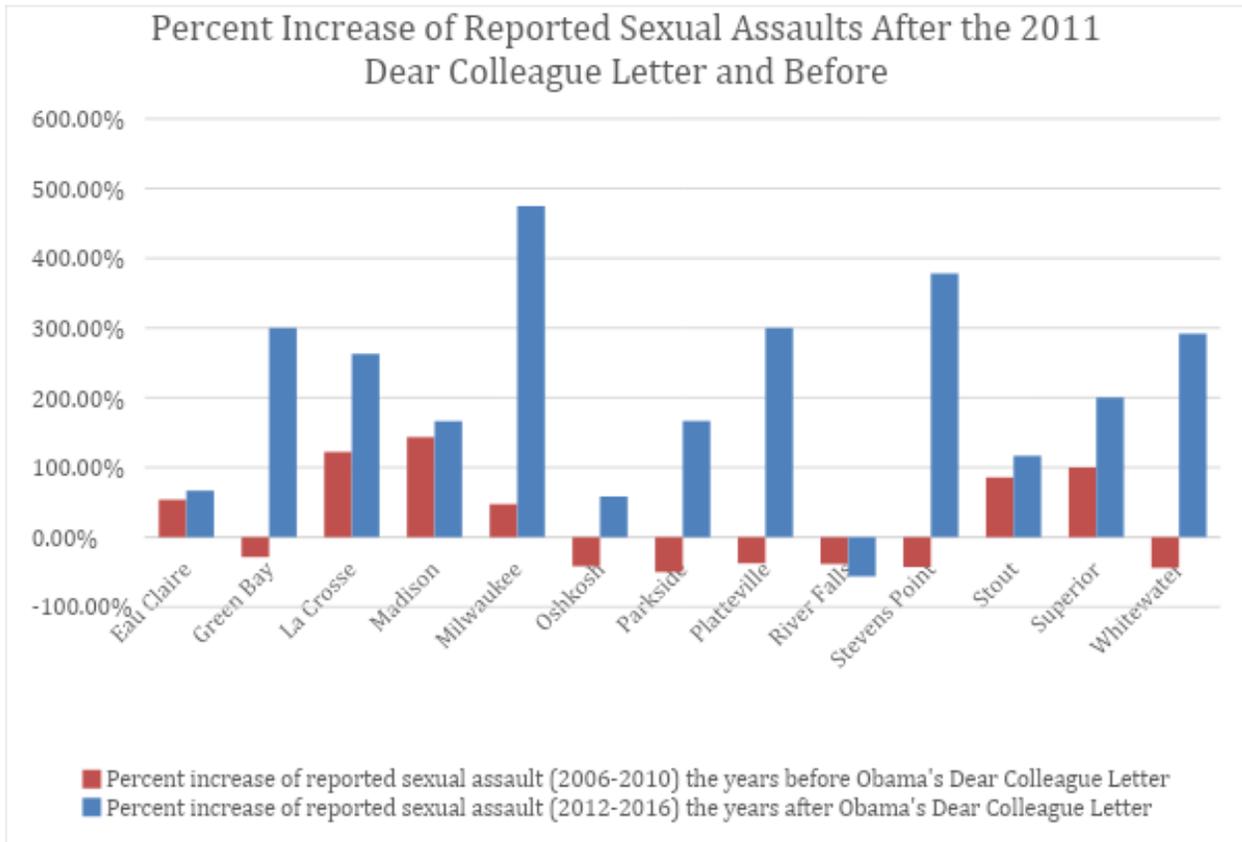
School	Increase of reported sexual assault (2012-2016), the year after Obama's dear colleague letter	Percent increase of reported sexual assault (2012-2016), the year after Obama's dear colleague letter	increase of campus size (2012-2016), the year after Obama's dear colleague letter	percent increase of campus size (2012-2016), the year after Obama's dear colleague letter
Eau Claire	0.666666667	66.70%	-0.030958631	-3.10%
Green Bay	3	300%	0.035346097	3.53%
La Crosse	2.625	262.50%	0.023506744	2.35%
Madison	1.663934426	166.39%	0.012505004	1.25%
Milwaukee	4.75	475%	-0.146340663	-14.60%
Oshkosh	0.583333333	58.33%	0.032250906	3.22%
Parkside	1.666666667	166.67%	-0.077584399	-7.76%
Platteville	3	300%	0.011984328	1.20%
River Falls	-0.5625	-56.25%	-0.080037227	-8%
Stevens Point	3.777777778	377.78%	-0.108504702	-10.85%
Stout	1.166666667	116.67%	0.040229264	4.02%
Superior	2	200%	-0.078888889	-7.89%
Whitewater	2.916666667	291.67%	0.04962181	4.96%

**Figure 8:** Percent increase of sexual assault reports and campus size at all the University of Wisconsin System's four-year universities from 2012-2016, after President Obama's 2011 Dear Colleague Letter. The year of 2011 is not used in this data set because it is the year during the suggested change that took place as a result of the Dear Colleague Letter and the data is not reliable because parts of the data in this year will have been collected from before and after its publication. This data is used for subsequent graphs to analyze whether sexual assault reports increased due to the 2011 Dear Colleague Letter or an increase in campus size.

## Percent Increase of Campus Size Compared to Percent Increase of Reported Sexual Assault on Campus from 2012 to 2016 (After 2011 Dear Colleague Letter)



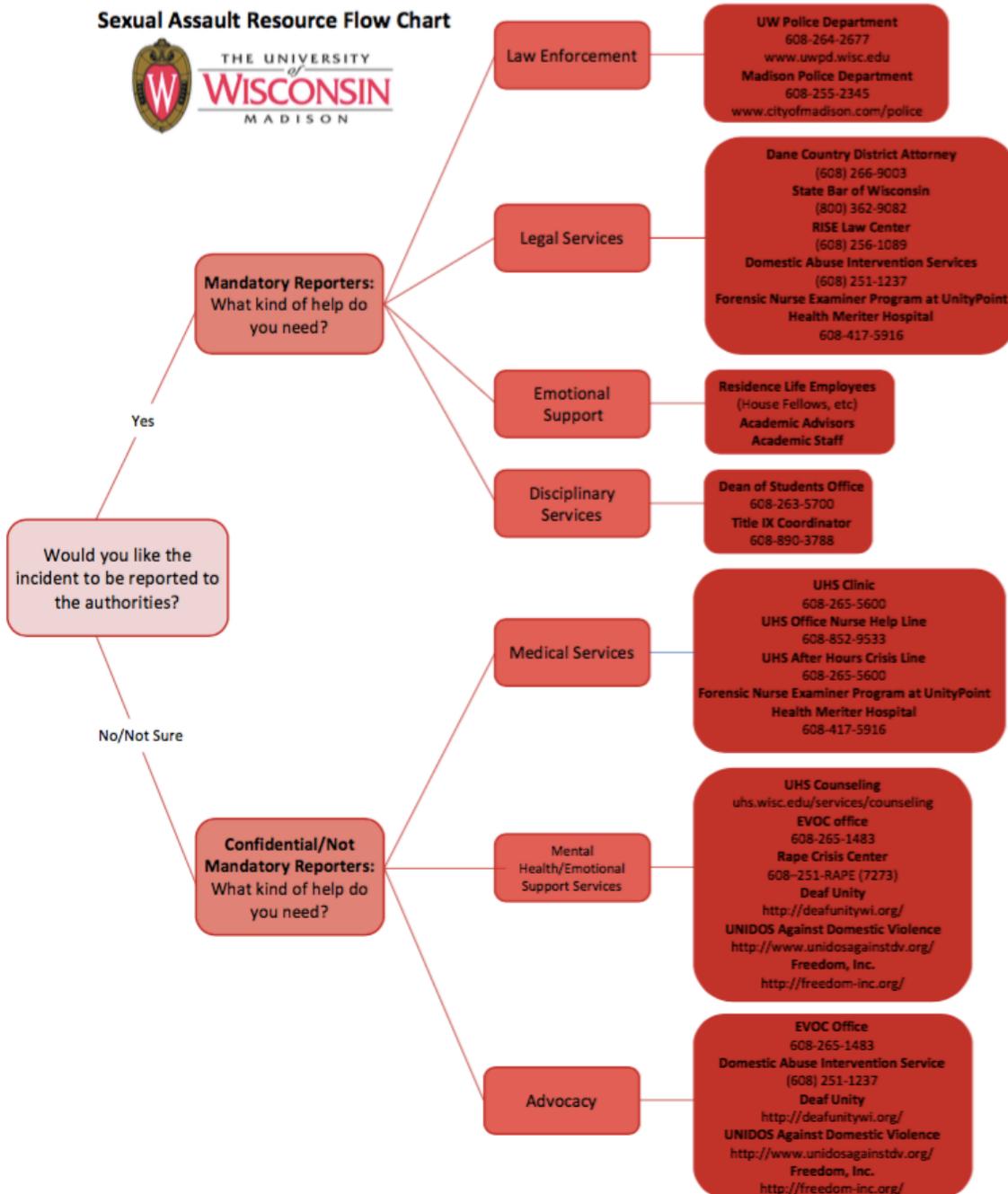
**Figure 9:** Percent increase of campus size compared to percent increase of reported sexual assault on campus from 2012-2016, after Obama’s 2011 Dear Colleague Letter. This data shows that there was a consistent increase in sexual assault reporting rates at all University of Wisconsin system schools except the University of Wisconsin- River Falls, and that campus growth is not correlated with sexual assault reporting rates.



**Figure 10:** Percent increase of reported sexual assaults before and after the publication of the 2011 Dear Colleague Letter. This graph is a comparison between each school’s sexual assault report rates in the years before the 2011 Dear Colleague letter (2006-2010) and the years after the letter (2012-2016). These results indicate a notable increase in sexual assault reporting rates at all University of Wisconsin system schools, except the University of Wisconsin-River Falls.

Percent Increase of reported sexual assault (2006-2010), the year before Obama's Dear Colleague Letter	Percent increase of reported sexual assault (2012-2016), the year after Obama's dear colleague letter
53.80%	66.70%
-28.50%	300%
122.22%	262.50%
143.48%	166.39%
47.37%	475%
-41.67%	58.33%
-50%	166.67%
-37.50%	300%
-38.46%	-56.25%
-42.86%	377.78%
85.71%	116.67%
100%	200%
-44%	291.67%

Figure 11: Percent increase of reported sexual assaults before and after the publication of the 2011 Dear Colleague Letter. This graph is a comparison between each school's sexual assault report rates in the years before the 2011 Dear Colleague letter (2006-2010) and the years after the letter (2012-2016). These results indicate a notable increase in sexual assault reporting rates at all University of Wisconsin system schools, except the University of Wisconsin-River Falls.



**Figure 12:** University of Wisconsin – Madison’s sexual assault resource flow chart. This chart identifies multiple pathways sexual assault victims can pursue for closure. These pathways include report and non-report options, legal and disciplinary services, and counseling options.

## Discussion

The #MeToo movement, has increased social awareness for sexual assault and heightened awareness for the need of sexual assault reporting that minimizes victim blaming and trauma from reliving the experience (Felton, 2018). These movements influenced President Obama's decision to release the Dear Colleague letter outlining an adjudication system for sexual assault lowering the burden of proof, which in turn increased awareness for sexual assault that even the government became aware of the issue and resulted in universities complying. The question then, is whether there is a correlation of the release of the Dear Colleague letter and an increase in victims to feeling more comfortable to report their sexual assaults. If sexual assault reporting is shown to increase, the question to address is whether this increase is due to the new policy enacted after the Dear Colleague letter in combination with increased acceptance of the issue by both the feminist movements and government and university policy changes promoting sexual assault reporting. Another competing theory is that sexual assault reporting rates could have increased because campus population size has increased.

An analysis was conducted of data retrieved and compiled from the University of Wisconsin Police Department, University of Wisconsin System's Annual Reports on Sexual Assaults and Sexual Harassment, and the University of Wisconsin System's Education Report Statistics (Figure 1). The data collected spanned from 2006 to 2016 and included reports of sexual assaults on campus, off campus, perpetrated by someone known to the victim, and perpetrated by someone unknown to the victim. The population size of the campus was also obtained for each year from 2006-2016. This data shows an increase in sexual assault reports in every four-year University of Wisconsin system school from 2006 to 2016 (Figure 2, Figure 3). The University of Wisconsin-Madison has experienced the largest increase in sexual assault

reports, with a significant spike from 2013 to 2016 (Figure 2). After the University of Wisconsin-Madison, the next largest increase in sexual assault reporting rates is at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, which may be because they are also the two largest schools in the University of Wisconsin system (Figure 2, Figure 3). Most of the University of Wisconsin system universities have a campus population between 9000 to 12000 students, and they all share an increase in sexual assault reporting rates over the ten years, with  $R^2$  values ranging from 0.14 to 0.65 (Figure 3). The two smaller campus size outliers are the University of Wisconsin-Parkside and the University of Wisconsin-Superior with around 5000 and 2000 students, respectively, and received lower numbers of sexual assaults (Figure 3). This lower number of sexual assault reports makes it harder to study these smaller schools because a difference in one person reporting their sexual assault may bring the number of sexual assaults up or down by a larger factor than bigger schools. The University of Wisconsin-Parkside over this period had an increase of sexual assault reports at  $R^2$  value of 0.47, while the University of Wisconsin-Superior only had a correlation of 0.0016 (Figure 3). This statistic does not accurately represent the population because the population size is so small, as is the number of reported sexual assaults. A better indicator would be from schools with larger student populations, such as the University of Wisconsin-Madison and the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee who both have strong increases in sexual assault reports over the ten years before and after the 2011 Dear Colleague letter was published.

It is important to look not only at whether the number of sexual assault reports increased, but the percentage by which they increased to tell us how big a change the numbers are. Figure 4 illustrates percent increases of sexual assault from 2006 to 2016 at each University of Wisconsin school, while Figure 5 is a graphical representation of the percent increase of sexual assault over

the decade. The biggest percent increase in sexual assault reports comes from the University of Wisconsin-Madison at 606% increase from 2006 to 2016, which also holds the place as the largest University of Wisconsin system school and having the highest numbers of sexual assault reports (Figure 1, Figure 4). The next schools with the largest percent increase of reported sexual assaults actually come from the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse and the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point with increases of 544% and 514%, respectively (Figure 4). Surprisingly, the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, which ranked second for the highest number of sexual assault reports and for campus size, ranked fifth for having a 384% increase of sexual assault reporting rates over the ten years (Figure 4). The only school of the data set that did not have an increase in percent of reported sexual assaults is the University of Wisconsin-River Falls with a -46% (Figure 4). The outlier of the University of Wisconsin – River Falls may be because the population is quite small, and thus even a couple people reporting makes the difference between sexual assault reports increasing or decreasing from 2006 to 2016.

To establish whether the 2011 Dear Colleague letter was a contributing factor to the increase in sexual assault reporting rates, the sexual assault reports before and after 2011 were isolated and compared. Figure 6 breaks down the previously mentioned data into sexual assault reports that occurred at each University of Wisconsin system school from 2006 to 2010, the years prior to the 2011 Dear Colleague letter. Figure 7 depicts Figure 6 graphically and indicates that before the Dear Colleague letter was published in 2011 there was no consistent increase in sexual assault reporting rates in the University of Wisconsin system schools. Figure 8 and Figure 9 both show sexual assault reports by university in the years after the 2011 Dear Colleague letter, 2012 through 2016. Here it is shown there is a significant trend in increased sexual assault

reports where all University of Wisconsin system schools show at least a 50% increase in sexual assault reports over the four years, except for the outlier University of Wisconsin-River Falls (Figure 8, Figure 9). The university with the largest percent increase in sexual assault reporting rates was the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee at 475%, while the University of Wisconsin-Madison surprisingly trailed in 9<sup>th</sup> out of 13 schools for largest increase of sexual assault reporting rates from 2012 to 2016 at 166.39%, despite its campus size being the largest (Figure 8, Figure 9).

In order to control for whether this increase in sexual assault reporting rates was due to an increase in campus population size, an analysis comparing the percentage sexual assault reporting increased and the percentage the campus population increased was conducted (Figure 5, Figure 7, Figure 9). The result was that campus population had barely increased, with five schools' populations decreasing, while all universities' sexual assault reporting rates, except the University of Wisconsin – River Falls, had increased from 2006 to 2016 (Figure 5). The University of Wisconsin-Madison, which experienced the largest percent increase of sexual assault reports, only grew in campus population by 4.79% (Figure 4). The second place for largest percent increase of sexual assault reports, the University of Wisconsin-LaCrosse, only had campus growth of 7.86%, and the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point, third for largest percent increase of sexual assault reports, actually had a 4.65% decrease in campus size from 2006-2016 (Figure 4). In fact, out of all the schools that had a percent increase in sexual assault reports over the ten years, five of them had a smaller campus size in 2016 than in 2006: Superior, Stevens Point, Parkside, Milwaukee, and Eau Claire (Figure 4, Figure 5). Before the Dear Colleague letter, there seems to be a trend towards campus growth, while reported sexual assaults have no trend (Figure 7). After the Dear Colleague letter, there is a slight trend for

campus size to be decreasing, but reported sexual assaults increase to factors up to 378% (Figure 8, Figure 9).

The most telling figures of all Figure 10 and Figure 11, which compare the percent increase of sexual assault reporting rates between the years before the Dear Colleague letter and after. This graph shows that every University of Wisconsin system school, besides the University of Wisconsin-River Falls, had a larger percent increase in sexual assault reporting rates after the Dear Colleague letter was published than before (Figure 10, Figure 11). Overall, the data suggests that victims were more comfortable to report their sexual assaults after the release of the 2011 Dear Colleague letter (Figure 1, Figure 11). The 2011 Dear Colleague letter seems to have increased acceptance of sexual assault as an issue which caused the increase of sexual assault reporting rates, instead of an increasing campus population causing an increase of sexual assault reporting rates.

## Conclusion

This paper sought to address how the United States government, through its enactment of the Dear Colleague letter in 2011, played a role in revitalizing the third wave of the feminist movement in the form of the #MeToo movement. The government's acknowledgment of sexual assault as a key issue reaffirmed old feminist stances that were now being accredited by the same body that shunned them at the end of the second feminist movement. The government had given a platform for sexual assault victims to feel more comfortable reporting. After the Dear Colleagues letter suggested Title IX policy reform for universities, the universities followed suit by lowering their burden of proof to a preponderance of evidence, among a series of other requirements. The combination of government acknowledgement of sexual assault, the rebirth of the feminist movement in the form of sexual assault awareness, and universities making decisive policy changes to allow sexual assault reporting to be conducted more easily provided sexual assault victims with the safety that their voices could be heard. This is evident in the sharp increase of sexual assault reporting in the University of Wisconsin system schools. This pool of universities allowed for a wide range of analyses, comparing large universities to small ones, while also being able to keep standard the sexual assault reporting procedure the University of Wisconsin system uses. Despite differences in population size, and a relatively unchanging campus population density, sexual assault reports drastically increased after the release of the Dear Colleague letter.

While there has been massive support for victims who choose to report their sexual assault, there remain some problems when using sexual assault reporting data. 25% of female students at the University of Wisconsin-Madison identified in an anonymous survey that they had been sexually assaulted while at college, yet the statistics even noting the large uptick in

sexual assault reports indicates that only 0.7% of the students on the campus reported a sexual assault (Herzog, 2015; AAU, 2015). These discrepancies can only be accounted for by further anonymous survey reporting, and yet not everyone will choose to report even under anonymous settings. However, it is only through increased sexual assault awareness on all platforms that more individuals who wish to report will come forward. Now that the Dear Colleague letter has been rescinded, and more sexual assault allegations are being laid aside, such as now Supreme Court Justice Brett Kavanaugh, one must wonder where the political attitude towards sexual assault is heading. Most universities, such as the University of Wisconsin system schools, are not planning to change their Title IX policies since the redaction of the Dear Colleague letter, but it may still change the attitude of the campus towards sexual assault and the mentality of victims who may want to speak up.

In conclusion, The Dear Colleague letter President Obama's administration published in 2011 to address changes to Title IX policy is suggested to have influenced the rise of the #MeToo movement, beginning the third era of feminism in America. The Dear Colleague letter allowed women, specifically sexual assault victims, to feel as though their concerns were being heard at the governmental level, which rebirthed the feminist movement as well as allowed individuals to feel more comfortable to report their sexual assaults. Universities changed their policies to match those the Dear Colleague letter suggest, which further created acceptance for sexual assault as an issue. Sexual assault victims do seem to be more willing to report their encounters due to the sharp increase of reported sexual assaults since the Dear Colleague letter being published and the #MeToo movement spreading. The analysis of sexual assault reporting rates at the University of Wisconsin system allowed a thorough investigation of how reporting rates have changed over time to be able to align with what caused the increase. Further studies should be conducted on a

wider sample of universities to understand this shift at a broader level. Additionally, future analysis could include degree of severity of sexual assaults reported to provide more information about what types of sexual assaults victims are more likely to report and whether what type of sexual assault incident people are reporting is changing.

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