



AN OVERVIEW OF

Sexual Violence on Campus

in the United States

OCTOBER 28, 2026

Across the decades, across the nation

A non-exhaustive overview of sexual assault cases involving higher education institutions in the U.S., 1972 to 2026

The following pages contain a sampling of some of the most well-known and/or legally impactful cases of sexual violence since Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 prohibited discrimination against women in federally-funded higher education. It barely scrapes the surface of reported sexual misconduct in university settings over the past 54 years, much less actual instances of sexual violence experienced in and around college communities in that time.

Yet the 32 cases featured in this resource create a striking impression of the scale of the problem; it spans the entire country, and reports of campus-related sexual violence have risen to public consciousness several times in each of the past five decades. While it would be inaccurate to say progress hasn't been made—the introduction of prevention and response resources at most higher education institutions in that time has surely been a net positive—it would also be woefully inaccurate to suggest this national dilemma is anywhere near “solved.”

Sexual violence remains an alarming reality for too many modern university students (and other members of campus communities). **Institutions of higher education must reconsider and reform their responses**, with the aid of survivor advocates and clinical trauma experts, if we hope to see any change in this pattern over the decades to come.

The “Year” column in the table below denotes the year or years of the underlying incident(s), if known. The facts of the accounts included have been widely reported, and no statement is based on the personal knowledge of the authors.

Across the decades, across the nation

A non-exhaustive overview of sexual assault cases involving higher education institutions in the U.S., 1972 to 2026

Year	Institution	Known as	Description
1973	University of Pennsylvania	UPenn anti-rape sit in	In March 1973, multiple Penn students were raped by a group of young men. Frustrated by the administration's perceived inaction and a victim-blaming culture—including a suggestion from Penn's safety director that women should simply avoid wearing "provocative clothing"—students, faculty, and staff decided to stage a sit-in. On April 3, 1973, around 200 women occupied College Hall; Roughly 50 women stayed overnight during the four-day demonstration
1977	Yale University	Alexander v. Yale	Alexander v. Yale (1977) was the first-ever lawsuit to charge an educational institution with sex discrimination under Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 due to sexual harassment. Five female Yale students (Ronni Alexander, Ann Olivarius, Pamela Price, Margery Reifler, and Lisa Stone)—advised by then-Yale Law student and legal theorist Catharine MacKinnon—argued that Yale's failure to stop the sexual harassment of female students and its refusal to create investigation and grievance procedures violated Title IX
1977	Pine Manor College	Mullins v. Pine Manor College	Mullins sued the college for negligent security. The Massachusetts high court upheld liability and rejected Pine Manor's argument that colleges generally had no duty to protect students from third-party criminals. Colleges have a duty to take reasonable measures to protect resident students
1980	Harvard University	Harvard / Radcliffe Quad rape	A woman walking home to the Radcliffe Quad was dragged behind bushes near Hilles Library and raped; The rape triggered major criticism of Harvard's allocation of security resources. A house master publicly accused Harvard of inadequately protecting Quad residents: only one guard patrolled all three Quad houses while substantially more guards protected other areas
1983	University of Pennsylvania	UPenn / Alpha Tau Omega gang-rape	A Penn undergraduate reported that five to eight men carried her upstairs at an ATO party and raped her for about an hour; About 600 students demonstrated, demanding institutional action. Penn investigated and ultimately suspended ATO for 18 months, permanently barred the then-current brothers from fraternity membership, and required the accused members to undergo sexual-assault education. It became a major campus controversy about university responsibility for fraternity sexual violence and disciplinary sanctions

Across the decades, across the nation

A non-exhaustive overview of sexual assault cases involving higher education institutions in the U.S., 1972 to 2026

Year	Institution	Known as	Description
1986	Lehigh University	Clery rape & murder case	Freshman Jeanne Clery was raped and murdered in her dorm room by another student. Her parents learned afterward about substantial prior campus crime and accused Lehigh of inadequate security and failing to disclose the danger to students. They sued; the settlement required security improvements. Their advocacy produced Pennsylvania legislation in 1988 and ultimately the federal Clery Act, fundamentally changing universities' obligations to disclose campus crime
1986	University of California Berkeley	UC Berkeley / Tanja Harm football-player case	Freshman Tanja Harm alleged that several Cal football players raped her following a dormitory gathering; Berkeley's internal disposition—counseling and 40 hours of community service without affecting the players' academic or athletic status—provoked protests by women students and faculty. Harm then sued the university, alleging that despite prior reports of date rape, it had failed to provide adequate protection
1987	Syracuse University	Syracuse University music-school rape	A student was sexually assaulted at knifepoint in 1987 in a bathroom in Syracuse's music building after the assailant allegedly entered through an unlocked door. The survivor sued Syracuse decades later. Her complaint alleges inadequate security amid escalating sexual violence around campus and essentially no institutional support afterward
1990	College of William & Mary	Katie Koestner / William & Mary case	Koestner reported that another freshman raped her in her dorm room. A university hearing found that a sexual assault occurred, but the student was permitted to remain enrolled subject to restrictions. Koestner went public specifically because she considered William & Mary's response inadequate; the controversy forced the college to reexamine its sexual-assault policies and helped put "date rape" into the national conversation
1990	Antioch College	Antioch assaults / Womyn of Antioch	Following reported rapes, students demanded better institutional prevention, survivor support, notification and procedures. This produced Antioch's famous 1992 affirmative-consent policy—consent required at each new level of sexual activity—which, though ridiculed in the early 90's, has been lauded in the modern era as ahead of its time

Across the decades, across the nation

A non-exhaustive overview of sexual assault cases involving higher education institutions in the U.S., 1972 to 2026

Year	Institution	Known as	Description
1991	Brown University	Brown University "Rape List"	Students, frustrated that complaints were not being taken seriously by Brown's disciplinary system, began writing names of alleged perpetrators on women's bathroom walls. Brown subsequently made sexual misconduct expressly punishable in its conduct code, revised disciplinary procedures, added first-year sexual-assault education, and designated an administrator for women's concerns
1992	NYU (College of Dentistry)	Murray v. NYU College of Dentistry	Dental student alleged that a male clinic patient sexually harassed and stalked her. A clinic chief initially warned him, but the conduct allegedly continued; another faculty member allegedly told Murray to "grow up" and handle the problem herself
1992-2016	Michigan State University	Larry Nassar / USA Olympics abuse scandal	Former MSU physician Larry Nassar was accused by hundreds of women of sexual abuse, reaching back to 1992 and including several female gymnasts who had competed for Team USA. The scandal produced criminal convictions, enormous scrutiny of MSU's institutional response, and major changes in athletic/medical oversight. The DOJ ultimately settled with 139 of Nassar's victims
1994	Virginia Tech	Christy Brzonkala / Virginia Tech case	Brzonkala alleged that two Virginia Tech football players raped her. A university panel found one player responsible and suspended him; after appeals/rehearings, the offense was recharacterized and the sanction reduced. Brzonkala alleged preferential treatment for a valuable football player, inadequate university procedures, violations of the Campus Sexual Assault Victims' Bill of Rights, and underreporting of sexual assault in Tech's Clery statistics. Her suit eventually became part of United States v. Morrison, the Supreme Court case invalidating VAWA's federal civil remedy
1990s to 2000s	Georgetown University	Georgetown clerical abuse	The GU student newspaper published an investigation revealing multiple sexual misconduct allegations against Jesuit priest Fr. Alvaro Ribeiro, S.J. Following the report, Georgetown quietly updated its Title IX clerical abuse webpage to acknowledge Ribeiro's resignation after a 2010 university inquiry, though critics and survivors noted it omitted additional publicized survivor accounts

Across the decades, across the nation

A non-exhaustive overview of sexual assault cases involving higher education institutions in the U.S., 1972 to 2026

Year	Institution	Known as	Description
2000-2001	University of Colorado Boulder	Colorado football scandal	Former football player Katie Hnida publicly alleged in 2004 that a teammate raped her in 2000. Lisa Simpson and Anne Gilmore alleged sexual assaults by football players and recruits at a 2001 party. Regarding Simpson and Gilmore's case, the Tenth Circuit held in 2007 that the university could face Title IX liability for allegedly disregarding foreseeable risks associated with its football recruiting program
2002	University of Georgia	Williams v. Board of Regents	Tiffany Williams alleged sexual assault involving three university athletes. Her lawsuit claimed that Georgia knowingly recruited a basketball player with a history of sexual misconduct and failed to protect students; a 2007 appellate decision permitted her Title IX claim to proceed
2004	Arizona State University	J.K. v. Arizona Board of Regents	A student said she was raped by a football player whom ASU had previously expelled for sexual harassment but subsequently readmitted. The case challenged the university's failure to implement adequate safeguards and resulted in an \$850,000 settlement and institutional reforms in 2009
2004	University of Wisconsin–Madison	Laura Dunn sexual assault case	Laura Dunn reported that two fellow students sexually assaulted her in 2004. The university took approximately nine months to decide against disciplinary charges; the case later received national attention as an example of inadequate campus sexual-assault investigations
2006	Eastern Michigan University	Laura Dickinson rape and murder	Laura Dickinson was raped and murdered in her dormitory in December 2006, but university officials publicly maintained that no foul play was suspected despite evidence of homicide. The concealment became public in 2007, resulting in administrative dismissals, federal Clery Act penalties, and a \$2.5 million settlement with her family
2011	Baylor University	Baylor football assault scandal	A series of sexual-assault allegations involving Baylor football players led to an external investigation. The investigation found major institutional failures in Title IX response and athletics oversight; football coach Art Briles was fired and President Ken Starr left his leadership role

Across the decades, across the nation

A non-exhaustive overview of sexual assault cases involving higher education institutions in the U.S., 1972 to 2026

Year	Institution	Known as	Description
2011	Amherst College	Angie Epifano / Amherst rape case	Epifano published an account of her alleged rape and subsequent treatment by Amherst. The essay went viral and helped trigger broader national discussion of college sexual assault, Title IX and how institutions respond to survivors. Former students subsequently filed federal complaints against Amherst
2012	Columbia University	Columbia "Mattress Girl" case	Emma Sulkowicz said another Columbia student raped her; Columbia's disciplinary process cleared him. Her subsequent "Carry That Weight" mattress performance became an internationally recognized protest about campus sexual assault and university adjudication. The accused student sued Columbia; Columbia stood by its disciplinary process results and settled with him
2013	Vanderbilt University	Vanderbilt football rape case	Four football players were accused of sexually assaulting an unconscious student in a dorm building on Peabody campus. Campus staff discovered surveillance footage of the assault on June 25, 2013, and immediately reported it; Two of the men were convicted in 2015 and another was convicted in 2017
2014	Yale University	Yale basketball / Jack Montague case	Yale basketball captain Jack Montague was expelled after a university sexual-misconduct proceeding found that he had sex with a student without her consent. His expulsion, Yale's disciplinary process, and the basketball team's public support for him generated substantial national coverage. Montague subsequently sued Yale
2015	Stanford University	Chanel Miller / Brock Turner / Stanford swimmer case	Turner was convicted of sexually assaulting an unconscious young woman behind a dumpster (now known to be Chanel Miller, whose memoir "Know My Name" was a bestseller). Her victim impact statement went viral in 2016; controversy over Turner's six-month sentence became a national discussion of campus sexual assault and sentencing. The judge who imposed the sentence was subsequently recalled in 2018
2017	Harvard University	Harvard professor misconduct case	Three students filed a lawsuit in 2022 against Harvard alleging that the school violated Title IX and MA Civil Rights and Common laws by willfully ignoring a near-decade-long pattern of sexual harassment and retaliation by tenured Anthropology Professor John Comaroff against three female graduate students in Harvard's Anthropology Department

Across the decades, across the nation

A non-exhaustive overview of sexual assault cases involving higher education institutions in the U.S., 1972 to 2026

Year	Institution	Known as	Description
2010s -2021	Louisiana State University	LSU Title IX failures	An independent review found that LSU's handling of misconduct complaints was a "serious institutional failure," and the reporting mechanism was described as "built to fail." The report found that not enough budget, training, staff, or consideration was given to supporting students after the trauma of a sexual assault
2022	University of Washington	UW fraternity rape case	A former University of Washington (UW) student, referred to as A.P., filed a civil suit against the school and a former fraternity member, alleging negligence and failure to protect students from sexual assault. A.P. says she was served as a minor at a frat party, became intoxicated, and was raped
2024	Cornell University	Cornell 7 case	Former student alleges she was drugged and sexually assaulted by seven fraternity members in 2024; a 2026 civil suit brought renewed national attention and prompted prosecutors to reopen the criminal investigation. Cornell says its internal investigation resulted in expulsions/suspensions and closure of Chi Phi
2025	Louisiana State University	Kendall Francis / LSU football player rape case	Criminal investigation is currently underway involving LSU football defensive end who was found responsible for forcible rape in a university Title IX proceeding. However, the school reduced his punishment from a year of suspension w/campus ban to four semesters of unrestricted probation, in a move critics suspect was connected to his status as a football player. Kendall Francis, the survivor, went public with her story on TikTok in 2026
2026	University of Chicago	UChicago greek life rapes	Two separate women went public in 2026 with accounts of greek-life-linked sexual assaults. A 21-year-old reported that she blacked out and was sexually assaulted in a UChicago fraternity house basement bathroom by an individual who followed her in. According to witnesses, a group of males stood outside the bathroom door cheering during the assault. A 19-year-old woman filed a civil lawsuit against another fraternity house alleging that during a party she was given a spiked drink and coerced upstairs, where she was raped by a UChicago student



@tbtnfoundation



@advocatesagainstsexualviolence

Created by Claire Barnett, President of Advocates Against Sexual Violence at Georgetown Law