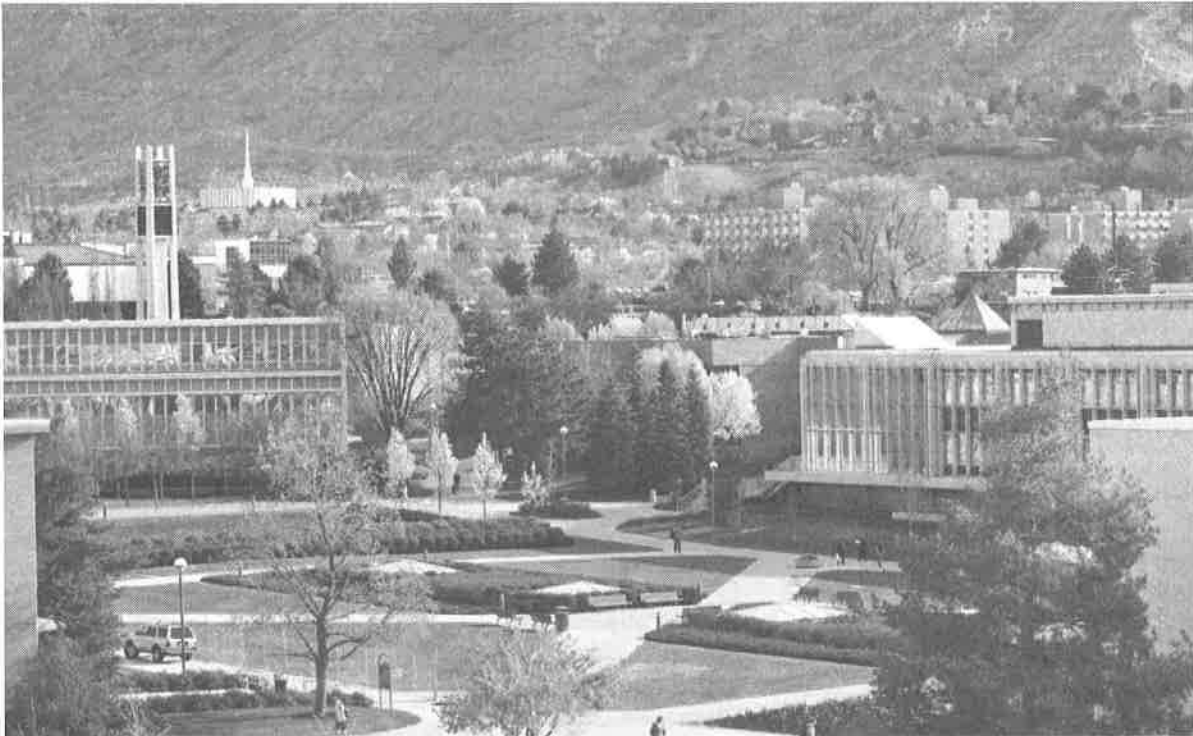


# Cougars Don't Cut Corners – We Stand with BYU Rape Survivors

by Leah Marie Silverman | Jan 19, 2017 | Activism, Featured, Sexual Abuse | 0 comments



Every BYU Alumni knows the phrase, “Cougars don’t cut corners.” It is one of the life lessons you learn as a student at BYU. If you’re going to do a thing, you do it right, and you do it with integrity.

We, at Rational Faiths, stand with BYU Rape Survivors in encouraging BYU not to cut corners while they establish their new Title IX and victims advocacy positions and programs.

From Colleen Payne Dietz:

This last summer, we as BYU Rape Survivor banded together in an effort to urge BYU to revise the way they handle victims of rape and sexual assault on their campus. Following much coverage by the media, BYU commissioned an Advisory Council that provided BYU with a report in October of last year. Last Friday, BYU announced the hiring of a new Title IX coordinator and a brand new position hire of Victim Advocate.

Together, a group of strong survivors and I drafted a response to BYU's decision to hire internally for the positions of Title IX Coordinator and Victim Advocate. This decision reflects a gross failure on the part of BYU to commit to and act in a way to bring about change in the way BYU handles rape and sexual assault. We feel it does nothing but reinforce a systemic error in collective thinking at BYU. We are outraged.

As recently as May of last year, Tiffany Turley (newly appointed Title IX Coordinator) was against an Amnesty Clause, or an immunity for victims of rape and sexual assault to be pursued for circumstances surrounding the attack. This demonstrates to us that she will not be loyal to victims. This is an egregious failure. The "chilling effect" that BYU needs to overcome will only be perpetuated by appointing an individual who believes in this way. Victims will continue to fear punishment at the hands of the Title IX office. Many of us in the BYU Survivor community, when we turned to BYU for help, were shamed, threatened and absolutely wounded by the treatment we received. By simply moving around existing personnel within an already offensive organization, BYU has shown they have not understood the true spirit outlined in the Advisory Council Report that they committed to follow.

Please, hear our outrage! Feel our pain! We need your support as we continue to fight for a safer place for our sisters and brothers at BYU.

You can read their letter to BYU below, or at the Salt Lake Tribune's website.

[Letter to BYU by The Salt Lake Tribune on Scribd](#)

President Worthen of Brigham Young University,

This letter is in regards to the recent announcement identifying the individuals you have hired for the Title IX and Victim Advocate positions. We are thankful that you have moved forward with filling the positions, accepting amnesty and separating the Honor Code Office from the Title IX office. However, we have some grave concerns regarding the choices that were made and have been unable to reach you to discuss them. We recognize and respect the education, experience and passion that these individuals possess, but our concerns are as follows:

First, you filled the positions with current employees who were both working at BYU during the times that university policies and practices failed to support victims of sexual crimes. It is vital to make sure that external voices contribute to organizational change. Hiring from within is not only a missed opportunity to bring in new ideas and attitudes that could affect real change at BYU, also runs the risk that said persons will be seen by survivors as being as loyal to the university's interests rather than to the victims they serve. A Title IX Coordinator should also be impartial from university allegiance when investigating and enforcing the law. A Victim Advocate is a liaison with the police department, someone who knows the court process and who knows the resources to get the help they need.

Our second concern is that the hired individuals have no prior experience in these positions. The sexual assault victims at BYU need strong and experienced personnel to build new policies and procedures separate from those conducted in the past, which are now the subjects of both civil and criminal investigations. A Title IX Coordinator needs to understand and enforce sexual assaults as the crimes they are, not simply as misconduct. For the Victim Advocate you have hired a psychologist, which is a resource, not a victim advocate.

We, as informed and concerned members of this community, recommend the following to help ensure these individuals will make informed decisions and carry out policies that are in the best interest of the victims.

Our Suggestions:

- Provide the BYU Victim Advocate with a minimum of 100 hours of advocate training by September 1, 2017 and volunteer with a local advocate agency for the first six months of her position.
- Require the new Title IX Director to attend the Four Corners of Title IX Compliance and the Trauma-Informed Sexual Assault Investigation and Adjudication Institution.
- Require the new Title IX Director to shadow a currently effective Title IX Director, such as that at UVU.
- Have the Advisory Council on Campus Response to Sexual Assault evaluate progress of The New Title IX Director and BYU Victim Advocate and their training. If they are unable to fulfill their responsibilities, replace the individuals or take immediate steps to make sure qualifications are met.

The university has a responsibility to make an unequivocal statement that sexual assault is not

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Leah Marie has lived all over the country, and currently resides in Virginia, nestled in the Blue Ridge Mountains. She earned a BA in Political Science at BYU, and a Masters in Public Administration at Boise State. She is currently working towards her PhD in Public Policy through Walden University. She is wife to an English professor, and mother to 3 beautiful boys.

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