

GRAND VALLEY Lantern

Allendale and Grand Rapids, Michigan

GVPD addresses false reports and safety notifications

By [Laureen Horan](#) | 11/12/18 10:05am



GVPD vehicle. Courtesy / Grand Valley State University

Last weekend's alarming notice that an alleged drugging and rape had occurred near campus left the Grand Valley State University community feeling startled and confused, and the confusion continued into the following week when it was determined by Ottawa County police that the incident did not actually happen.

It is still unclear at this point whether the subject intentionally made a false report or whether they had a legitimate reason to believe they had been assaulted. The Grand Valley Police Department says this incident opens up a new discussion about reporting crimes.

"False reports have serious consequences," said GVPD Captain Jeff Stoll.

Under Michigan Legislature statute code 750.411a, intentionally making a false report can have life-changing consequences for the person who makes the report. False report of a misdemeanor crime can cause someone to be charged with a misdemeanor, a hefty fine and up to 93 days in jail.

Intentionally reporting a felony crime, such as drugging and raping, can cause the person who made the report to obtain a felony charge could see between five to 15 years behind bars, depending on how severely their false report may have impacted an innocent person's life.

Any person who has genuine concern for their well-being or doesn't feel safe in their community is encouraged to make reports, as GVSU and GVPD believe all students deserve to feel safe on and near campus.

When this incident was initially reported, there was no known suspect. Because this poses an imminent threat to campus, GVPD sent out a notification to the entire GVSU community through the GVSUAlert! system. So far, two alerts have been sent out during the Fall 2018 semester, although GVPD has responded to more than 15 different sexual violence reports on and near campus, including stalking and rape. Because the incidents were controlled and the suspects were known, GVPD does not view it as a continuous threat to campus and subsequently does not send out an alert. Students felt differently, though.

The results of a survey conducted between Nov. 4 and Nov. 10, show that 83 percent of GVSU students who partook in the survey think GVPD should send out an alert every time they make an initial response to a sexual violence report. GVPD however, says that the victim's interests are the highest priority in these cases and that these alerts may not be good for victims.

"These alerts go to 28,000-plus people... We don't want to victimize them all over again," Stoll said.

Stoll acknowledged that campuses and law enforcement officials everywhere are taking sexual violence reports a lot more seriously than they did even 10-15 years ago. Part of the problem, Stoll said, is that victim's needs were being disregarded.

In these cases, it's always up to the victim/survivor to decide how to move forward, according to both GVPD and GVSU Victim's Advocate Krystal Diel.

"Sexual assault is one of the most under-reported crimes and that is consistent with the students I talk with at GVSU," Diel said.

Stoll said that because the victim's wishes will always be respected when it comes to further investigation or pressing charges, this sometimes leaves campus authorities with little closure.

GVSU community members who wish to talk with the Victim's Advocate or make a report can contact Krystal Diel at 616-331-2748 or stop by the Center for Women & Gender Equity, Kirkhof 1201.

<http://www.lanthorn.com/article/2018/11/gvpd-addresses-report>