

SEXUAL ASSAULT ON CAMPUS

Earlier this year, President Barack Obama established a White House Task Force to Protect Students from Sexual Assault. We commend him for that, but more needs to be done. Colleges and universities need to get up to speed with the progress made by the Catholic Church in combating sexual assault. Moreover, public officials, beginning with President Obama, should give voice to this idea.

Sexual harassment and assault is addressed under Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972. So far this fiscal year, 30 such complaints have been filed with the Department of Education; this matches the total number filed in all of fiscal 2013. Now the Education Department has released the names of 55 colleges and universities where a complaint has been registered.

Title IX is antiquated, and does not meet the test that Catholic institutions have established. To be sure, it calls for institutions of higher education to take complaints of sexual harassment and assault seriously—immediate action is mandated, including an investigation—but it does not require colleges and universities to notify law enforcement. It's worse than that. As we learned at the end of April, Columbia University administrators recently informed students who filed sexual assault claims that they are not allowed to discuss their cases in public.

In other words, not only are colleges and universities not required to call the cops when they get a credible accusation, they are allowed to silence the accusers. That all of this is happening in institutions where sexism is routinely denounced and free speech is heralded makes it even more disgusting.

It's time the White House called on the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops to instruct college presidents

on how to check this problem.