

Opinion

This is not okay; Vega's punishment inadequate



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I am outraged. I am utterly flabbergasted.

Two weeks. It hasn't even been two weeks since my fellow freshmen and I moved into the dorms here at MSUM. I'm still having to fight off the anxiety over my new classes. I can't imagine how my fellow freshman Dragon is feeling right now after being so terribly and horrifically violated.

In case you were unaware, there was a rape in Grantham. A freshman girl was assaulted earlier this week by 23-year-old Angel Vega, another student here, according to police reports. I can't imagine what this girl must be feeling. My heart sincerely goes out to her. The mindset of a rapist baffles me completely, and it is never something I wish to understand.

What baffles me equally, however, is the sentence this sexual offender could be facing. "Could" is the operative word here. A WDAY article said that Vega could face up to 15 years in prison and a \$30,000 fine.

"Up to?"

"Could?"

Am I missing something here? Did this man not just commit what is arguably the most absurd and terrible crime one can commit? Rape isn't something that someone does once for fun. Rape isn't something that someone does once because they just really need to have sex right then and there. Rape is something that neither the victim nor the predator will ever forget. For the rapist, the act of sexually assaulting someone is a powerful one. It's about dominance. It's about them being powerful and getting what they want. That feeling will never go away. If a person knows that they have the ability to get fifty dollars from someone with just a

little effort, what is stopping them from collecting fifty dollars from every one they can? Criminals—and yes, that is what he is, a criminal, not a "student athlete", not a "wrestler"—such as these need to be put away for, in this writer's humble opinion, at least fifteen years. If it were up to me, this kind of behavior would never be tolerated in the slightest and the punishments doled out for it would be far more severe than they are now.

RAINN, the Rape, Abuse, & Incest National Network, reports on their site that only three out of every 100 rapists will ever spend a single day in a prison cell. The rest will simply walk free.

Most of this is due to a staggering number of rapes going unreported. However, even when a rape is reported, it doesn't always lead to an arrest, and when it does, there's only a 25 percent chance of it leading to a felony conviction and incarceration.

There are also plenty of examples of rapists walking free even if they've been sentenced. Look at the Steubenville rapists. I read not too long ago on MSN that one of the two men found guilty of raping a 16-year-old girl was allowed back on his high school's football team for his senior year. He and his friend raped a girl and recorded the act and yet only faced one and two years in juvenile detention (one of the offenders faced two years because of the video of the rape found on his phone).

This is a prime example which shows just how easily these criminals can get off. Fifteen years is just the tip of the iceberg Vega should be sailing into, but in reality, he's more likely to run into an ice cube. I would be overjoyed to hear that this man received the full sentence he was allotted and had to serve every second of it. Do I think that will actually happen? No.

This is a tragic, awful thing that happened. This young woman's life will never be the same. The circumstances don't matter. Yes, there was alcohol involved. Yes, she was underage. Yes, she was still drinking. But none of that—I repeat, none of that—is an excuse or a valid reason for doing what this offender did. This was a sick act by a sick man, and unfortunately, it is something that is likely to happen again. The statistic is one in four. One in four of us will face some form of sexual assault.

I will be honest; that scares me. Knowing a statistic and having it put into action in front of me are two very different things. After this tragedy, rape isn't just a concept to me anymore. It is a real, tangible problem. More importantly, it is a problem we can combat.

MSUM offers a great course for all women. Rape Aggression Defense, or R.A.D., is a class offered to

women free of charge. It isn't a martial arts class, but it does teach women how to defend themselves.

Personally, I've already signed up for this class. The email I received stated, "RAD draws from a combination of different martial arts and fighting systems to develop physical techniques that are both easy to learn and remember and also effective when used in real life, high stress situations. RAD students are able to put their skills to practical use, through simulation training with a trained aggressor.

Along with learning physical techniques, RAD students will discuss topics such as date rape, domestic violence, stalking, online safety, self-defense and the law, and the use of pepper spray and other personal weapons. MSUM's certified RAD instructors hope to not only empower their students with the confidence needed to defend themselves physically, but also to develop in them an all-around mindset of personal safety in their daily lives.

The classes are completely free to female students, faculty and staff, and are private and confidential. The program is suitable for women of all ages and abilities." If anyone is interested in signing up, it isn't too late! Just contact Marc Baetsch (baetsch@mnstate.edu) and he will send you more info.

The class will be held on Tuesdays, starting Sept. 23 and going through Oct. 28.

Victims of rape can also fight back. One of the most important things to do is report the assault. Get a rape kit done. Secure your case by writing down anything and everything you can remember and by preserving all the evidence you can. Don't let anyone talk you out of it, convince you it was an accident or tell you that you were asking for it any way. You were assaulted. This was no accident. You have every right to seek justice.

Most importantly, however, you must remember that you are not alone. There are many women who have been through this same thing. There are support networks out there to connect to, along with your own friends and family. Never feel like it is you against the world. I promise you, someone out there cares.

Rape is a serious issue, and it's an issue we don't take seriously enough. This heinous crime that takes away a person's right to their own body should be taken more seriously.

It shouldn't be justified. It shouldn't be swept under the carpet. It shouldn't be forgotten about. It is something that should be talked about, discussed, and acknowledged as a true problem with our society.



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The Advocate encourages letters to the editor and any submissions.

They should be typed and must include the writer's name, signature, address, phone number, year in school or occupation and any affiliations. Letters are due by 5 p.m. Friday and can be sent to MSUM Box 130, dropped off in The Advocate office or emailed to advocate@mnstate.edu.

MSUM absent from local bike share



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As fall in the Minnesota tundra is finally beginning, students without cars are bundling up outside Matbus stops and experiencing the feelings of numbness in their toes, boisterous purple fingers, and the awakening sensation of frostbite on their ears.

Meanwhile, NDSU and Concordia students are encouraged to stay warm by keeping their blood circulating and using bike share programs available on or near their campuses.

Students at MSUM are tough enough to go without a bike share program to keep their little piggies warm.

After all, who needs the stress-relieving benefits of a cardiovascular workout on a bike when you can just opt out of feeling your body at all and limp to class on numb feet?

NDSU students will have to take the time to swipe their student ID's

before grabbing a bike and heading into Fargo.

MSUM students know what a waste of time that is. They enjoy frantically tracking down friends who have cars, and hoping to catch a ride to replenish their stash of ramen. Even better, MSUM students like to test their wits by memorizing diverse bus schedules.

It's always a lovely surprise when you're sitting in a blizzard at a bus stop for 15 minutes and having a stranger come up and inform you that the bus doesn't stop there on Sunday.

In fact, MSUM students get to experience real treasures by waiting in bus stops. True friendships are formed while sitting stagnantly next to strangers in 20 degree weather. These are where the best kinds of friendships are formed: cuddle-friends. You get the chance to understand that this is where true friends are made, by sitting next to the people who will nonchalantly scoot next to you for warmth despite the fact that unruly icicles are forming from your nostrils.

That's right, MSUM students don't need to get in on this local phenomena of bike share programs. Although Moorhead is a flat town that is geographically perfect for a stroll on two wheels, some MSUM students still love to own cars. Why not, when after all, buying gas and insurance is a cheap addition to any plentiful student bank account?

After all, students love to show off their grandpa's old station wagon. They treasure the moments when they get to gather up groups of friends (they probably met at the bus stop) and blast "Ridin'" by Chamillionaire through their manual roll-up windows while cruising down Broadway. They love to slide on sunglasses, sink into their leather seats, and whisper sweet nothings to their air conditioner with high hopes of it actually blowing cold air.

However, students really don't need to get anywhere faster than they can walk. In fact, Dragons enjoy proving their ferocity by walking across campus and getting into class as fast as possible, all while dodging large strips of ice like a fun, vintage arcade game. In fact, students will often brag to their friends and keep score for not having slipped on ice that day. Five points for Janice.

Student athletes will happily test their physical endurance in the chilly months by scampering from Nemzek to Hagen in the quickest time possible. The swimmers are put to the ultimate test, as they get to experience the refreshing chill of frozen hair on their scalps, eyebrows, and eyelashes.

Don't worry Moorhead. Take your time installing bike shares in our community. The Dragons will invest in ice skates.

Opinion

Time management, aiming for success



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Common to the beginning of the year, students begrudgingly return to their studies. Though the interest is there, the habit to adopt the inevitable routine of studying and doing homework is not.

I am one of those people; I enjoy the break from education despite my love for what I study.

In the first few weeks, students have to adjust to doing class work

yet again. Contrary to their fun-filled summer, the school year brings many things, but students lose the excessive amount of free time they get during summer break.

Like always, I begin the school year wasting my time doing things that can wait. With the number of highly distracting websites and services that have risen over the years, such as Netflix and Facebook, getting homework finished is always a struggle. Despite telling myself I am just going to go online to look up a term for an assignment, I always find myself an hour later scrolling through my newsfeeds.

This is where time management and self-control need to show their faces. We all know that getting homework done and studying to do well should be our number one priority, but knowing it is a priority is different than making it a priority. If students want to have a balance of work and fun during the school year, they have to figure out how to make

room for projects, assignments, studying, relaxing, socializing, eating, going to go to sleep and waking up, etc. A lot of things have to be sorted out to be able to actually accomplish managing your time.

I am one of those people who have a difficult time practicing what they preach. The time I schedule to study is a very loose timeframe with wiggle room, and because of that, I usually end up changing my plans to accommodate everything but my studies. I tell myself that I can go hang out with friends for an hour or so and then go study, but when I actually get to completing my work, it is 2 a.m., and getting enough sleep is no longer a possibility.

Do not do this. If you are like me, and find yourself up late because you decided to watch a season of your favorite show on Netflix before you started your homework, consider this and learn from my own mistakes. If you are procrastinating now, at the beginning of the year, it

is only the beginning of trouble. If you are staying up late and nodding off in class because of this, think of the consequences when you really start to burn out. We all know as students that sometimes finding a balance is hard, but it is necessary to make the best out of our college experience.

Schedule specific times to do homework and stick to that schedule. Learn to manage your time wisely and reap from the rewards of your own success. Treat your schedule like an obligation. If you plan on studying at 4 p.m. and a friend asks if you want to hang out then, remember your prior commitment to yourself.

Do not let yourself down – as students, college is a commitment that requires active participation, time management, and determination that is just as important as socializing, networking, and simply enjoying your time on campus.

MSUM - A dry campus, or a dry attitude toward alcohol?



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As an international student, I found the very concept of MSUM's 'dry' campus intriguing, having experienced a predominantly 'wet' campus back in England. So wet in fact that it is arguably soaking.

I am used to walking through campus passing bars, pubs and clubs on the way to a 9 a.m. class, accompanied by friends struggling with hangovers from the night before. At MSUM however, there is not a single alcohol-related establishment to be seen.

I can't say that I wasn't expecting this, knowing full well that the U.K. has a slightly lower drinking age than the U.S., providing alcohol access to students at age 18.

Personally, the eradication of alcohol as part of the university experience has taken a while for me to adjust to. In England, there is a whole drinking culture surrounding university life. Many British universities actively promote alcohol consumption by hosting numerous events at bars and clubs around the campus and nearby cities.

For example, 'Freshers Week' is a weeklong event at the beginning of the semester during which a variety of alcohol fuelled parties are hosted

by the university, resulting in excess alcohol consumption, hordes of blind-drunk students and thousands of excruciating hangovers. As appalling as it seems, it is all part of the university experience.

Looking back, I think that being exposed to the drinking culture at university forced me to become responsible and respectful of alcohol, something that I don't think would've happened had I not had access to alcohol on campus. I also became aware of the dangers of alcohol consumption, especially regarding students. Vandalism, fighting and sexual assault were prevalent and common problems as a result of intoxicated students. Therefore, I can understand and appreciate why MSUM chose a 'dry campus' policy to protect students and the environment.

But how much protection is too much protection, to the point where it prevents students from learning responsibility? I interviewed Emily, a sophomore student, for her opinion: "The problem is not stopping students drinking alcohol, but teaching them responsibility instead."

I can understand Emily's point. In my opinion, allowing students to have access to alcohol in a controlled, safe environment could teach students responsible drinking in preparation for the outside world. Abstinence can be dangerous, as it creates naivety and shelters individuals.

However, if alcohol was permitted on campus, it would be harder to control underage drinking, but you have to be realistic. Students are going to drink alcohol regardless of whether it is permitted or not, and whether they are underage or not. Educating students to actually understand and respect alcohol would be far more beneficial to

their relationship with it, rather than expecting them to already have a sense of alcohol awareness.

Of course, I cannot speak for everyone and some students may have already had alcohol awareness classes prior to university. But there is always a minority and it is this minority which will usually cause the issues.

But what do MSUM's students think about the dry campus status? I surveyed twenty MSUM students to find out what they really think of the policy. Interestingly, 75 percent of the students felt safer having a dry campus compared to a wet one. This statistic is unsurprising, considering the alcohol-related rape incident which happened on campus last week. However, I doubt that the statistics would've been drastically different if the unfortunate incident didn't happen; if MSUM was a wet campus, intoxicated students would probably hang around on the campus. Anti-social behaviour would be created, making many students feel uncomfortable and insecure. Therefore, I can understand why students prefer having a dry campus for the sake of security.

Also, 65 percent of the students believe that the 'dry campus' policy is successful and I agree to some extent too. Since being here I have not encountered any anti-social behaviour whatsoever in comparison to my British university and I am actually enjoying MSUM events without the dependency on alcohol to have a good time, or feeling pressured to drink.

Whatever the policy is, alcohol should be respected and regulated. Students should be able to feel safe and secure on campus and I hope that MSUM continues to maintain this, even if it means having dry campus policy.



Story idea?
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