

- **Sexual Violence Climate Survey Starts in November**

Title IX Enhancements include New Website, New Advocacy and Support for Victims of Sexual Assault, and Administration of Sexual Violence Campus Climate Survey

During the first few weeks of November, nearly 6,000 randomly selected undergraduate and graduate students at the Storrs and regional campuses will be asked to participate in a confidential sexual violence climate survey. The survey will be administered using a collaboration between the Higher Education Data Sharing Consortium (HEDS) and UConn's Office of Institutional Research and Effectiveness (OIRE).

"This survey is so important to UConn's efforts to address and eliminate sexual violence on all our campuses," UConn President Susan Herbst said. "UConn's leaders are eager to learn more about students' perceptions of UConn's climate around sexual violence and how UConn responds to reports. We also will benefit greatly from data regarding whether and how often students have experienced unwanted sexual contact at UConn."

President Herbst also stressed the importance of mutual respect and bystander intervention. "We all share the obligation to contribute to a culture of respect and care. We will not tolerate sexual violence on our campuses, and the results of this survey will allow us to face the issues together to enhance both prevention and response," she said.

Over 50 universities and colleges should be administering the HEDS survey to their students, and UConn will benefit from the ability to compare its results to those of its peers. The survey will be completely anonymous; the results will be shown to UConn by HEDS in aggregate, but no individually identifying student information will be shared.

Elizabeth Conklin, UConn's Title IX Coordinator and Associate Vice President of the Office of Diversity and Equity (ODE), underscored how important the survey would be to UConn administration and students moving forward. "I hope that all students asked to participate will fill out this important survey," she said. "The results will be used to improve support, policies and practices at UConn."

Michael Gilbert, UConn's Vice President for Student Affairs, further underlined the importance of student feedback in these critical areas.

"We rely on information about our UConn students' experiences and perceptions to ensure that we are meeting the needs of our campus community in responding to these very serious incidents," Gilbert explained. "The University will be able to use the climate survey responses to tailor education and prevention programs. It also will allow offices like the Dean of Students and Counseling and Mental Health

Services to receive more information about how best to provide critical support to students when incidents do occur.”

Dean of Students Elly Daugherty agreed, adding, “We want to provide the best support to UConn students that we can following these traumatizing events while also adding programs that increase awareness and support the development of bystander education.”

In addition to the sexual violence climate survey the University unveiled an updated comprehensive website this semester aimed at providing information and resources around the issues of sexual violence, relationship violence and stalking. The updated site, www.titleix.uconn.edu is also more accessible when viewed on mobile phones and tablets. It includes enhanced links and information about on- and off-campus resources, regional campus contacts and resources, reporting and investigations, and how to provide support to someone impacted by sexual violence.

“The enhanced website is intended to make the university’s resources and reporting options easier to navigate,” said Alexis Phipps Boyd, a Title IX Investigator with ODE at UConn.

The Title IX staff, led by Boyd and a graduate student interning with ODE, conducted numerous focus groups with students to determine what their needs and interests were in connection with online resources for sexual violence, relationship violence, and stalking. “Student feedback was critical to our thinking and work around how to provide a more straightforward online experience around these critical issues,” Boyd said.

Another major development this year is the arrival of sexual assault forensic examinations on the Storrs campus. Through the advocacy and support of UConn, our students and the Connecticut General Assembly, UConn Student Health Services is now a site for victims of sexual assault to receive a sexual assault evidence collection kit. A Sexual Assault Forensic Examiner (SAFE) is a nurse or doctor who has specialized training and education in evidence collection. They have specialized knowledge of legal issues such as chain of custody and courtroom testimony and are trained in Sexually Transmitted Infection (STI) testing and medications.

“SAFEs work closely with sexual assault victim advocates, hospital staff, law enforcement, and criminal prosecutors to provide victims of sexual assault with comprehensive and compassionate services,” said According to Betsy Cracco, Interim Director of Student Health Services,

Cracco further explained that SAFEs “serve on an on-call basis and provide coverage at participating hospitals across the state. Provided that UConn Storrs students are not at risk of critical injury, they can call Student Health Services at any time during the fall and spring semester to speak with a nurse on call and discuss having a SAFE paged to UConn. Exams are administered through the CT Office of Victim Services (OVS).”

For more information, contact: Office of Diversity & Equity at 860-486-2943