



**Higher Education & Employment Advancement Committee
and the Public Safety & Security Committee
Informational Hearing Regarding
Sexual Assault Prevention & Response Procedures at Connecticut Colleges and Universities
November 13, 2013**

**Testimony
by
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My name is Elizabeth Conklin and I am the Associate Vice President of the Office of Diversity and Equity and the University's Title IX Coordinator. With me today are Michael Gilbert, the University's Vice President for Student Affairs, and Barbara O'Connor, Chief of the UConn Police Department. Each of us are going to offer brief comments to you today about what we are doing as an institution and in collaboration with one another as we work to ensure the safety of all members of our University community.

We want to begin by thanking you for the opportunity to again address you regarding sexual violence. The University of Connecticut appreciates the Legislature's interest in ensuring that Connecticut's institutions of higher education are doing their part to raise awareness of the prevalence of sexual assault on college campuses and to afford appropriate assistance to the victims of sexual assault.

I was last here in March 2012, when the Chief O'Connor and I testified in support of Public Act 12-78. We are glad to be talking with you today about the steps we have taken since then to comply with the Act and beyond.

As you know, Title IX is a federal law that prohibits discrimination based on sex (gender) in all of the University's programs and activities. My role as the University's Title IX Coordinator is to ensure UConn's commitment to prohibiting sex-based discrimination of all kinds, including sexual harassment and the most severe form of sexual harassment, which is sexual violence.

Our coordinated approach to fulfilling our commitment to Title IX includes, broadly, two major categories: first, a robust response to support victim-survivors after incidents that do occur and to hold

perpetrators accountable; and second, education and prevention initiatives that aim to both support victim-survivors and, importantly, prevent future incidents. I am going to provide a brief overview of our approach to each, including the steps we have taken to comply with Public Act 12-78.

In order to support this conversation as fully as possible and in recognition of our time constraints this afternoon, we have prepared a binder for each of you containing many of our key policies and procedures regarding sexual violence. It also includes materials that detail, in both narrative and chart form, our compliance with Public Act 12-78. Finally, it includes a range of materials that outline some of our many education and prevention efforts.

This particular assortment of materials was prepared specifically for the purpose of assisting you and us in our discussion today. I want to be clear that this binder is not something that would be provided, in this format, to a victim-survivor. While virtually all of these materials are available on our sexual violence website (www.sexualviolence.uconn.edu), and that website is a resource that victims are directed to, in that context they are navigable by major subheadings and narrative descriptions.

Most importantly, when incidents do occur, our biggest asset lies in our trained and coordinated response team. We rely on a longstanding coalition of on and off-campus offices and organizations to work closely with victim-survivors when incidents do occur. At UConn, this team includes Student Health Services, Counseling and Mental Health Services, the UConn Women's Center, UConn Police, Resident Assistants, off-campus confidential sexual assault crisis counselors (through Connecticut Sexual Assault Crisis Services (ConnSACS), the Office of Student Services and Advocacy, the Title IX Coordinator and the Office of Community Standards.

Our approach to responding to sexual violence relies on multiple coordinated routes of entry and support for a victim-survivor. We recognize that a student will first tell someone that he or she trusts. In some cases this may be the police, student health services or another member of our coordinated team, but in other cases this will be a trusted professor, advisor or coach.

In recognition of these multiple possible routes of entry, including to offices and individual employees who are not experienced in this field, in January 2012, at President Herbst's urging, the UConn Board of Trustees was one of the first universities in Connecticut and the nation to approve a Sexual Assault Response Policy requiring *all* employees who witness or receive a report of sexual assault to immediately notify the Title IX Coordinator or our Community Standards office.

Since its passage, this policy has allowed us to support victim-survivors no matter where they first report their assault. It allows us to provide victim-survivors with appropriate resources in a timely fashion. And because the offices receiving these reports also report the information received to the UConn police pursuant to the Clery Act, it also has allowed us to better ensure campus safety in a collaborative and timely fashion.

Chief O'Connor and Michael Gilbert will each speak in more detail about the University's response, particularly when it comes to the important roles of the police and the Division of Student Affairs. Though I would be happy to take questions about any aspect of our efforts after we provide our remarks, I want to use the remainder of my time to briefly share some highlights of our education and prevention efforts.

We know that policies and procedures are not enough and only take us so far. Our response to a crime like sexual assault is not merely a matter of policy or procedures or resources. UConn is fully and absolutely committed to doing all we can to educate our community to prevent sexual violence, in every form, to aid victims, to provide them with every resource possible – and to treat every member of our community with fairness, dignity and respect. And as long as there is a single sexual assault on our campus, our work is not finished.

Within your materials, you have been provided with an overview of our efforts in this area, including: mandatory training for all incoming students at orientation; six sexual violence educational opportunities through First Year Experience small workshops for freshmen; mandatory training for all permanent employees both at new employee orientation and during university-mandated sexual harassment prevention training; specific and tailored training for those most likely to be first responders, including Resident Assistants and other members of our community response team; and events throughout the year sponsored by our Women’s Center and its Violence Against Women Prevention Project, including Sexual Assault Awareness Month each year in April. Both Chief O’Connor and Michael Gilbert will speak more specifically to some of the additional prevention and education activities in their areas.

In closing, I want to mention the work that we are doing on the President’s Task Force for Civility and Campus Culture and its connection to these critical issues. Established by President Herbst this summer, the Task Force is comprised of a diverse group of faculty, staff and students who are exploring questions of civil behavior and speech, with a focus on discrimination, harassment, sexual violence, alcohol and drug use and overall campus culture questions.

The Task Force is actively engaged and listening to our campus community. We have actively solicited student feedback and perspectives, which are driving our work. During this fall semester, the Task Force has examined and will be recommending new or expanded programming and avenues of educating and communicating with students about harassment, intimidation, bullying, incivility and the stigmatization of individuals or groups of students for any reason. This work includes focusing on ways to deter and address sexual violence of any kind. President Herbst has charged our Task Force to promote problem-solving, positive decision-making and to deliver our recommendations to her in December.

Working together, we have a tremendous opportunity not only to enhance our response to sexual violence committed against our students, but also to bolster our proactive efforts to educate and prevent all forms of sexual harassment and violence on our campus. We will not stop doing this critical work until all forms of sexual violence are eradicated on our campus. Nothing is more important to us than the safety and well-being of our students.

Thank you. I would now like to turn your attention to our new Vice President of Student Affairs, Michael Gilbert.