



**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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Co-Chairs, Ranking Members and Committee Members, thank you for inviting me to testify. The University of Connecticut appreciates the Legislature's on-going interest and commitment to the safety of all Connecticut colleges and universities. As you may know, I am Barbara O'Connor, the Chief of Police and Director of Public Safety at the University of Connecticut. I have over 30 years of law enforcement experience in both municipalities and universities, including as the chief of police at three state flagship institutions.

In April of 2012, I had the honor and privilege to be appointed as the Chief of Police at UConn. Upon my appointment, President Susan Herbst expressly directed me to assess and review public safety programs and services for the institution to ensure that UConn is a national leader in this important area. Her words to me were, "the safety of our community is of the utmost importance to me—our students, faculty and staff deserve to learn, teach, and work in a safe environment."

We spent the past year conducting an extensive evaluation of UConn's public safety functions and services. This assessment is, as you can imagine, on-going. We enhanced our services in several areas, including: behavioral threat assessment, emergency planning and preparedness, crime reporting and communication, active threat preparation, crime prevention, education and awareness programming, and initiating a comprehensive security assessment.

One of the most important areas of our work, however, has been and continues to be in the area of prevention and response to incidents of sexual violence. Sexual assault, next to homicide, is the most egregious act one human being can do to another. The national research tells us that a woman is at her greatest risk between the ages of 18 and 24 years of age. Because of this, we are dedicated to raising

awareness, increasing preventative measures, and conducting the most effective and thorough investigations of and responses to incidents of sexual violence.

We are doing this in three important areas: police training, crime prevention and education, and developing a dedicated sexual assault investigation team for the police department.

First training, the UConn Police Department is committed to increasing our police officers' level of training in handling these crimes. As a sexual assault investigator certified by the State of Massachusetts, I'm keenly aware of the value of training for both the technical and procedural aspects as well as for the importance of a victim-centered approach to the investigation. The State of Connecticut Police Officers Standards and Training Council (POST) offers four hours of instruction in the Basic Recruit Training Academy. After this, however, officers in Connecticut are required to attend only two hours of mandatory rape crisis training every three years. While all UConn police officers meet this requirement, additional training is always beneficial and the University Police would welcome more comprehensive statewide training on sexual assault.

In order to keep current with best practices and in search of the best programs in the country, we sent officers to training programs as far away as Philadelphia. Four officers attended a program called, "Promoting Effective Criminal Investigations of Campus Sex Crimes." This program offered 24 hours of training on managing current investigations, the implication of victim-orientated investigations, and current trends at colleges and universities. In addition, officers attended another program titled "Law Enforcement Sexual Assault Crimes Training," that covered the characteristics of a rapist, as well as the neurobiology of trauma and the implications of understanding and interviewing victims. On December 6<sup>th</sup> of this year, six UConn Police Officers including myself will be attending a program entitled "Alcohol & Drug Facilitated Sexual Assault" hosted by the Hamden Police Department. This coming January, the State of Massachusetts Criminal Justice Training Committee (Massachusetts' equivalent to POST) has graciously agreed to allow four UConn Police Officers to obtain the same Sexual Assault Investigator certification that I hold. Other training programs included topics on sexual assault prevention, in-service training provided by our own Women's Center and discussions with our supervisory officers facilitated by our Title IX Coordinator.

We are also excited to be planning a training program for our officers in January of 2014. We will be bringing to campus Dr. David Lisak. Dr. Lisak is a clinical psychologist who has devoted his professional life to the study of interpersonal violence. He has done extensive research on the non-stranger rapist. He is also experienced in teaching police officers a victim-centered approach for investigations. We would welcome the participation of the Public Safety and Higher Education Legislators, and we have included a Save the Date for this event within your materials.

Second, along with advancing our investigative skills, we have also expanded our crime prevention and education programming. Last year we introduced a nationally-recognized program called Rape Aggression Defensive (RAD) training. This program provides prevention, safety awareness and self-defense tactics for both women and men. Over the past year we've conducted eight programs with 77 students in attendance. We also created the Safety Techniques and Awareness Resource Team (START). This team teaches students about personal safety and bystander intervention.

In addition, the UConn Police Department has long participated in the campus-wide Community Response Team, a coalition of on and off-campus offices that respond to sexual assault on campus. This type of coordination is critical to our ability to best support victims of sexual assault on our campus.

Finally, we are in the process of developing a dedicated sexual assault investigation team for the police department. Officers assigned to this team focus on investigating the crime with a victim-centered approach, which includes addressing their specific needs as it relates to their physical and psychological trauma. These officers will serve on call 24/7 and will be the first responders to all incidents of sexual violence.

During my 30-year career as a police officer, I have seen the evolution of response to sexual violence on college and university campuses. I believe we are seeing a paradigm shift in the way in which we respond and investigate these crimes. I am committed to doing what is necessary to continue moving our institution in this direction.

Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to speak with you today. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.