



**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 regarding UConn's commitment to preventing all forms of sexual violence and our response mechanisms when incidents do occur. My name is Michael Gilbert and I serve as the Vice President for Student Affairs at the University of Connecticut. You may be interested to know that my awareness of Public Act No. 12-78, predated my official start of employment at the University on August 19, 2013. President Susan Herbst, Associate Vice President Elizabeth Conklin, and other University leaders informed me of this important legislation last summer when I visited campus as a candidate interviewing for this position. Our conversations, at that time, included background on this legislation, discussion of our current programs and services, and our respective leadership roles on this issue. Those early conversations with President Herbst and the work we've been engaged with over the past few months confirm, for me, that this University embraces its duty to sustain a healthy and safe community, and recognizes its work won't be finished until we eradicate all forms of violence on our campuses.

In Student Affairs, our responsibility to raise awareness regarding sexual assaults on our campuses, to review all related policies and response protocols, and to afford appropriate assistance to the victims of sexual violence is paramount to our mission. As a campus leader, I am personally committed to sustaining our current prevention programs and support services that align with national best practice standards. I also am committed to partnering with the UConn community, and particularly with our elected student leaders, to identify new prevention, education and support strategies that promote campus safety.

Given today's agenda I thought it would be appropriate for me to highlight some of the University's current initiatives to educate students, prevent sexual violence and to provide victims with support services in this important area.

The University's Student Code reflects best practices and is fully compliant with state and federal law. UConn's Office of Community Standards has monitored legislative developments on the state and federal level for many years and whenever there is potential legislation, the Code is examined to ensure compliance. This on-going review also includes monitoring all related correspondence and cases coming out of the Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights. Community Standards' staff is active in the Association of Student Conduct Administration, a national organization providing professional development and professional resources for Universities, including regular updates and guidance on best practice policies and procedures in this area. Community Standards will continue its practice of benchmarking policies and procedures against other leading institutions of higher education and will look for new opportunities to educate students on their rights and responsibilities as members of this community.

New students are informed of the Code at admission to the University and are asked during the Summer Orientation program to verify they've reviewed this document, understand their rights and responsibilities, and indicate they will support the Code both on and off-campus. During Summer Orientation in-coming students, including transfers, attend a 90 minute educational session that addresses sexual assault on campus, highlights the University's definition of consent and engages students in a workshop that demonstrates the importance of bystander empowerment.

The Women's Center facilitates the *Violence Against Women Prevention Program*, which prepares peer educators to facilitate student workshops focused on preventing all forms of sexual violence, intimate partner violence, stalking, and sexual harassment through education, outreach and advocacy. They also lead a *Men's Project*, an 11-week training program for men focusing on gender socialization, and gender violence prevention; a *Greeks Against Sexual Assault Program* in collaboration with the Office of Fraternity and Sorority Life; a *Summer Orientation Program for Student Athletes*, and various other workshops for the community including *Undergraduate Student Government Sexual Assault Training*, *First Year Experience Programs*, *Division of Student Affairs Student Employee* and *Community Standards Hearing Officer Training*.

Full-time Women's Center staff provides support services to students, staff and faculty who are primary or secondary survivors of sexual assault, intimate partner violence, stalking, and sexual harassment. These services include crisis intervention, evidence protection, referral, and *Stronger* a counseling group facilitated by the University's Counseling and Mental Health Services and the Sexual Assault Crisis Center of Eastern Connecticut. Other on-campus support services are provided by the Office of Community Standards to students who want more information about the student conduct process or who would like to submit a complaint regarding a sexual assault. Department of Residential Life staff often serves as first responders with student emergencies. They are knowledgeable about community resources and are trained to help survivors get assistance. The Office of Student Services and Advocacy assists survivors with academic and personal concerns that arise after an assault. Counseling and Mental Health Services

provides both immediate crisis intervention and longer term therapy to recent or past survivors of sexual violence. Students can choose to be seen individually or participate in a group with others who have experienced similar trauma. Student Health Services and the Office of Women's Health provide crisis and follow-up care for victims of sexual assault and violence. This office provides free medical examinations, testing and crisis counseling and assistance with referral services for evidence collection. Each of these organizations is experienced with providing services to victims, and each works in close partnership with off-campus service providers, University Police and the Title IX Coordinator.

In summary, the prevention programs and support services I have highlighted today have been developed at UConn with great attention to existing state and federal regulations, and reflect best practices as they have developed among leading institutions of higher education. During my 32-year career in higher education leadership, including appointments at several other prominent public universities, I've witnessed how other institutions establish and sustain excellent programs and services. I am eager to partner with my new colleagues and our students to continually assess the quality and impact of our work, and to lead necessary innovation and change to promote student health, safety and success on both sides of the classroom door.

Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to speak with you today. I would be happy to answer your questions.