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IN HONOR OF SEXUAL ASSAULT *ACTIVISM* MONTH, SAFER RELEASES RESULTS OF NATIONAL STUDY OF STUDENT ANTI-RAPE ACTIVISTS

U.S. Colleges/Universities are Not Making the Grade: Half of Students Give Their Schools a C or Worse in Addressing Campus Sexual Violence

(NEW YORK, NY) April 1, 2013 – Every April for the past 10 years advocates across the country have spoken out against rape during Sexual Assault Awareness Month (SAAM). Two years ago, Students Active for Ending Rape (SAFER) challenged campus communities to recognize SAAM as Sexual Assault *ACTIVISM* Month and pledge to change how their campus prevents and responds to sexual violence. This year SAFER continues to observe Sexual Assault *ACTIVISM* Month by sharing the voices and experiences of student activists from across the country.

Today SAFER releases [*Moving Beyond Blue Lights and Buddy Systems: A National Study of Student Anti-Rape Activists*](#). The study was conducted through an online survey of 528 undergraduate students from 46 US states and the District of Columbia along with a series of focus groups with student activists. The study examined students' activities, priorities, perceptions, and needs related to various efforts to address campus sexual violence, with a specific focus on campus policies. Students also reported on their school's efforts to address rape and sexual assault.

"This study demonstrates the critical role that students can play in combating campus sexual violence and underscores the need for increased resources and supports for students seeking to make change on their campuses." said Dr. Emily Greytak, SAFER's Evaluation Coordinator and primary researcher on the study. "At the same time, it illustrates that while some schools are ahead of the curve and are effectively addressing campus sexual violence, many colleges and universities continue to lag behind, failing to adequately address the issue and often ignoring students' needs."

The results of this study also highlight the ongoing struggle to shift away from individual risk reduction efforts, like self-defense tactics and increased security measures, towards a focus on institutional change and primary prevention. Students rated awareness raising and safety initiatives as the top two most effective ways in combating campuses sexual violence. Not surprisingly then, student activists were most likely to have participated in awareness raising activities, such as Take Back the Night and Sexual Assault Awareness Month. Far fewer engaged in organizing or advocacy to reform their campus policies or implement programming or services, such as a sexual assault centers. Similarly, awareness raising efforts and risk reduction and safety initiatives were the most commonly report strategies implemented by schools as well. Although these were also the tactics most endorsed by students, overall, students indicated that their schools were not succeeding in their efforts; when asked to assign a grade to the job their school does in addressing rape and sexual assault, half gave their school a C or lower.

“We agree with the students in our study that raising awareness is an important step towards addressing campus sexual violence, yet we know it cannot end there. Students can harness this awareness and build a movement for change,” explained Selena Shen, Chair of SAFER’s Board of Directors, “And while information about risk reduction strategies should be available to all students, focusing on these strategies alone not only perpetuates rape culture by putting the onus on the victim to avoid rape, but it will ultimately fail in eliminating sexual violence in that ignores its root causes.”

“We urge both schools and the student activists and themselves to move beyond the risk reduction strategies of blue lights and buddy systems, and to extend their efforts to addressing primary prevention, whether through encouraging bystander intervention or working to change rape culture on campus,” continued Shen. “SAFER believes that a strong, comprehensive campus sexual assault policy is a key tool to achieving primary prevention and sustainable institutional change, and it is our mission is to provide students with the resources and support as they embark on reforming their campus policy. Schools can improve their response to campus sexual violence by involving students, such as the activists in our study and those we encounter in the regular course of our work. It is our hope that this study will provide some insight and guidance for all of us, students, administrators, faculty, and advocates alike, working to create safe campus communities, free of sexual violence once and for all.”

Throughout Sexual Assault ACTIVISM Month, SAFER will be sharing key findings from the study on our blog at www.safercampus.org/blog. A full summary report of [Moving Beyond Blue Lights and Buddy Systems: A National Study of Student Anti-Rape Activists](#) is also available.

Select Key Findings

Student Activists Report On Addressing Campus Sexual Violence	Percentage of student activists reporting
<i>Student Activists’ Most Common Activities</i>	
Sexual Assault Awareness Month	36.1%
Take Back the Night	31.7%
V-Day	24.9%
Other education or awareness activities	33.0%
<i>Top Three Rated Most Effective Approaches</i>	
Safety initiatives (e.g., blue lights, safe rides homes)	48.5%
Awareness raising events (e.g., Take Back the Night)	40.9%
Social norming or social marketing approaches (e.g., “real men don’t rape” campaigns)	38.1%
<i>Most Common Strategies Used By Colleges / Universities</i>	
Safety initiatives, (e.g., blue lights, safe rides homes)	66.4%
Awareness raising events (e.g., Take Back the Night)	59.2%
On-campus survivor services (e.g., counseling)	46.4%
<i>Grade Assigned to College / University Efforts (not counting those who were “not sure”)</i>	
A	9.8%
B	40.2%
C	33.6%
D	13.2%
F	3.2%

Student Activists Report on Campus Sexual Assault Policies	Percentage of student activists reporting
College/university has a policy	67.4%
	(No: 6.9%, Don't Know: 25.7%)
Believe that campus policy is one of key tools in sexual assault prevention and intervention	74.1%
Participated in campus policy reform efforts	19.4%
Most common reasons for not engaging in campus policy reform:	
1) don't know how to reform policy	32.1%
2) busy addressing rape/sexual assault in other ways	33.7%

About the Study

Outreach for the survey was conducted through SAFER's constituent database and social networks, and in order to reach student activists who were not engaged with SAFER, we utilized SAFER's partnership with a leading magazine for young women. The magazine posted announcements about our survey on its online social media sites. 528 undergraduate student activists completed the online survey. They were from a diverse range of schools, in 46 different states and 6 countries, including liberal arts colleges, community colleges, and state universities. 19 students participated in the focus groups held at two conferences – a national conference for young feminists and a local conference for campus anti-rape activists. By design, a portion of the participants were familiar with SAFER prior to the study whereas a portion were not. To increase participation and reduce sample bias, monetary incentives were provided to both survey and focus group participants. Both the survey and the focus groups explored students' activities, priorities, perceptions, and needs related to various efforts to address campus sexual violence, with a specific focus on campus policy. For more information about survey methods and sample, see the [full summary report](#).

About SAFER (www.safercampus.org)

Students Active for Ending Rape (SAFER) is a volunteer-run organization that has been training and supporting student activists for a decade. SAFER offers comprehensive programming to support student-led movements for campus sexual assault policy reform. In addition to the Campus Accountability Project Policies Database, SAFER's website houses the Activist Resource Center, an online library of tools for organizers. SAFER also runs a national, in-person training program to help students kick-start policy reform campaigns and offers ongoing mentoring through the Activist Mentoring Program (AMP!).

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