

A Multidisciplinary Approach to Mitigating Campus Sexual Assault

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The problem of campus sexual assault has been the focus of recent federal and state policy initiatives, including the Senate Campus Safety and Accountability Act of 2015; 2014 White House Council on Women and Girls' report, *Rape and Sexual Assault: A Renewed Call to Action*; and the Virginia Governor's Task Force for Combating Campus Sexual Violence, on which President Ángel Cabrera, served. Related hearings, executive actions, media attention, and public scrutiny seek to address campus sexual assault, a problem still unresolved by earlier efforts (such as Title IX of the Educational Amendments of 1972 and the Clery Act of 1990).

Statistics cited by the Department of Justice and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) state that as many as 1 in 5 women are raped while attending college in the United States. Though these numbers are disputed by some, the imperative to act nonetheless seems evident. Students under threat of sexual assault, most often by classmate acquaintances, do not have equal access to educational opportunity. The vast majority of victims decline to report the offense, and perpetrators are seldom held accountable. Those who experience sexual assault often experience disruptions to their education, and suffer physical and mental health consequences.

This proposed project brings the forces of multiple disciplines to bear in analyzing and mitigating the persisting, pernicious problem of campus sexual assault. The primary goals are to inform policy, enhance the health and well-being of college students by diminishing the likelihood of their experiencing sexual assault and to improve processes and outcomes for victims in the event that assault occurs. Findings from this research will be published in academic journals and articles in the popular press; disseminated through social media; shared widely with organizations concerned with sexual violence, on campuses and beyond; and inform and contribute to the implementation of the practices and goals identified by the Governor's Task Force on Combating Campus Sexual Violence and in George Mason's Task Force on Sexual Assault and Personal Violence. Partners and funders will be sought from among this latter group during the course of the proposed research.