SAFER

STUDENTS ACTIVE FOR ENDING RAPE

Moving Beyond Blue Lights and Buddy Systems:

A National Study of Student Anti-Rape Activists

A Summary Report from SAFER
April 2013

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PURPOSE AND OVERVIEW

SAFER (Students Active For Ending Rape) is a national organization that fights sexual violence and rape culture by empowering student-led campaigns to reform college sexual assault policies. As an organization dedicated to providing students with the resources and support to combat campus sexual violence, we deemed it important to gain a more in-depth understanding of the experiences and needs of current student anti-sexual assault/rape activists. To that end, SAFER's Board of Directors conducted a study of college/university students working to address campus sexual violence (hereafter "student activists"). Findings from this study will inform SAFER's strategic planning as we determine how to best support student activists in their efforts to address sexual violence, and specifically to reform their campus sexual assault policy. We also hope that by providing important information about the activities and perspectives of student activists, these findings will be useful to the broader anti-sexual violence movement.

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 had two components: 1) online survey of current student anti-rape/sexual assault activists nationwide 2) focus groups with student activists. This study was guided by three main questions:

- What types of activities are student anti-rape/sexual assault activists engaging in?
- What are student activists' perspectives on efforts taken by their school to address sexual violence?
- What are student activists' interests and experiences in reforming campus sexual assault policy?

METHODS AND SAMPLE

<u>Survey</u>

The survey was developed by a team of SAFER Board Members led by the Evaluation Coordinator (also a Board Member). The survey was administered during February 2012 via the online survey software, Survey Monkey, targeting two main groups: 1) SAFER student constituents and 2) anti-rape/sexual assault student activists who were not engaged with SAFER.

Outreach and Sample

SAFER constituents were notified about the survey through personalized emails with a unique survey link sent to all eligible contacts (those who indicated that they were undergraduate students) in the SAFER constituent database (N=3,537), an email reminder was subsequently sent to contacts who had not yet taken the survey. In order to reach to SAFER constituents who might not be registered in SAFER's database, announcements about the survey were posted on SAFER's social media presences (Facebook, Tumblr, Blog, and Twitter). These combined efforts resulted in 457 survey respondents (183 from database and 274 from SAFER's social media sites). An additional 11 individuals who completed the survey were referred to the survey by SAFER constituents who had received the email invitation.

In order to reach anti-rape/sexual assault student activists who were not engaged with SAFER, we utilized our partnership with a leading magazine for young women. The magazine posted announcements about the survey through its social media presences (Facebook, Twitter). These announcements resulted in 365 survey respondents.

In order to increase response rate and decrease response bias, a $10 gift card to Amazon.com was offered as an incentive to all those who completed the survey. Only respondents who were current undergraduate students were eligible to complete the survey.[1] Respondents who did not answer a majority of the items or indicated that they were not at all active in efforts to address rape/sexual assault on their campus were also excluded from the sample, resulting in a final sample of 528 students. These students were from a diverse range of colleges and universities, in 46 different states and 6 countries, including a mix of public and private schools with a wide range of student enrollment (see the following tables for more information about the sample, including demographics and school characteristics).

---

[1] Respondents who selected something other than "undergraduate student" in response to the first question of the survey, "Are you a current student?" were not given the opportunity to complete the survey nor to receive the $10 gift card. They were informed that they were not eligible and directed to SAFER's website for more information about SAFER and combating rape/sexual assault on campus.

Age & Grade Level of the Sample %(n)

Grade Level (N=528)			Age (N=477)		
First year/Freshman	16.7%	(88)	*Range = 17-31*		
Sophomore	24.2%	(128)	17-19	18.2%	(87)
Junior	25.2%	(133)	20	17.4%	(83)
Senior (4th or 5th)	32.4%	(171)	21	28.7%	(137)
Other (e.g., post-baccalaureate)	1.5%	(8)	22	18.2%	(87)
			23 and Older	17.4%	(83)

Demographic Characteristics of the Sample %(n)

Sex Assigned at Birth (N=480)			Sexual Orientation (N=483)		
Male	14.0%	(67)	Heterosexual/Straight	76.4%	(369)
Female	86.0%	(413)	Gay/Lesbian	4.1%	(20)
			Bisexual	10.8%	(52)
Gender Identity (N=483)			Queer	5.8%	(28)
Male/Man	9.9%	(48)	Questioning	2.1%	(12)
Female/Woman	86.5%	(418)	Other Sexual Orientation (e.g., asexual, pansexual)	0.8%	(4)
Transgender	0.4%	(2)			
Genderqueer	1.7%	(8)	**Race/Ethnicity** (N=479)		
Questioning/Not Sure	0.9%	(5)	White/Caucasian	69.7%	(334)
Another Gender (e.g. femme)	0.4%	(2)	Black/African American	5.2%	(25)
			Latino/a	7.1%	(34)
Students hail from 46 states, DC, Puerto Rico, Marshall Islands, Guan, Micronesia, and Virgin Islands and 8 countries other than the U.S.			Asian/Asian Pacific Islander	4.8%	(23)
			Middle Eastern/Arab	2.1%	(10)
			Native American/American Indian	0.4%	(2)
			Bi/Multi-Racial/Ethnic	9.2%	(44)
			Other Race/Ethnicity (e.g., Québecois, human)	1.5%	(7)

School Characteristics of the Sample %(n)

School Type (N=482)			Locale (N=479)		
4-Year College/University			Urban	51.8%	(248)
Public	57.7%	(278)	Rural/Small Town	29.9%	(143)
Private	35.1%	(169)	Suburban	18.4%	(88)
2-Year College/University					
Public	1.7%	(8)	Tuition (N=480)		
Private	1.0%	(5)	Under $5,000	6.0%	(29)
Community College	3.9%	(19)	$5,000-10,000	27.3%	(131)
Vocational, art or technical school	0.6%	(3)	$10,001-15,000	22.1%	(106)
			$15,001-25,000	17.7%	(85)
School Size (N=485)			$25,001-40,000	14.2%	(68)
2,000 or less	11.3%	(55)	More than $40,000	11.6%	(61)
2,001-5,000	17.3%	(84)			
5,001-10,000	20.4%	(99)			
10,001-15,000	13.2%	(64)	Students attend schools in 46 states, DC, Marshall Islands, Micronesia, and 5 countries other than the U.S.		
15,001-20,000	9.9%	(48)			
More than 20,000	19.6%	(95)			
Don't know	7.6%	(40)			

Other Characteristics of the Sample %(n)

Housing (N=478)			Major (N=528)		
On-Campus Dorms	53.1%	(254)	Social Science	34.5%	(182)
Fraternity/ Sorority House	6.7%	(32)	Physical Science	16.7%	(88)
Off Campus	40.2%	(192)	Math, Engineering, Computer Science	9.5%	(50)
			Humanities	20.6%	(109)
			Arts	11.4%	(60)
			Undecided	1.5%	(8)
			Other (e.g., communications, business)	5.9%	(31)

Focus Groups

Focus groups were held at two conferences attended by college/university student campus activists in Spring 2012. One was a national conference held in Washington, DC for young feminist leaders convened by a national feminist organization; the other was a local conference held in New York City about campus sexual violence, specifically for students from traditional marginalized groups (e.g., students of color, low-income students, LGBTQ students), convened by three organizations: a local chapter of a national women's organizations, a national arts-based organization addressing gender violence, and SAFER.

Outreach, Selection, and Sample

Email announcements about the focus group were sent to registrants of both conferences by conference organizers. The announcement included a link to an "interest form" that provided more information about the group and collected interested students' information, including first name, email address, and demographic information (e.g. gender identity, race/ethnicity, year in school, location of school, level of activism, familiarity with SAFER). Only current college/university students were eligible to participate. Students were informed that not everyone would be chosen to participate, given the small number needed for the group (no more than 10 for each group) and the desire for representation from a diverse group of students. Purposeful selections were made to maximize diversity of identities and experiences. Selected students were contacted by email and participation was confirmed.

A total of 19 students participated in the focus groups: 8 in the focus group at the national conference (Focus Group A) and 11 in the focus group at the local conference (Focus Group B, note: 3 of the registered participants did not attend, and instead 4 additional students who were at the conference volunteered to participate. Because they were not registered ahead of time, we do not have demographic information for these 4 participants). The overwhelming majority of participants were cisgender (i.e. non-transgender) females. Participants attended schools in the Northeastern U.S. (exclusively in New York City for Focus Group B), the South, and the Midwest. The types of schools attended by participants included community colleges, state and city universities, private universities, and liberal arts colleges. Participants were mostly sophomores or seniors, along with several juniors, one graduate student, and one first year student. Slightly less than half of the students were White (7), three identified as Hispanic or Latina, three as Asian or Pacific Islander, and two as African American or African (as discussed above, we did not have demographic information for four of the Focus Group B participants). Participants ranged from "not at all" to "very" active in addressing sexual violence issues on their campus, with most being at least "somewhat" active. Many had never heard of SAFER prior to the focus group, some were "somewhat familiar" with SAFER, and few were "very familiar."

Moderation and Analysis

Groups were moderated by a SAFER Board Member following a protocol developed by the Evaluation Coordinator, with guidance and review of other Board Members. The protocol was designed to assess participants' views and experiences in three main areas: general needs, priorities, issues, and resources related to campus sexual violence; campus sexual assault policies; desired resources and support from SAFER.

Focus groups were held in a private location at the conference site. So as not to complete with conference programming, the focus groups occurred during lunch at one conference and at the end of the other conference, lunch and dinner were provided, respectively. All participants received $25 cash at the conclusion of the focus group as a token of appreciation for their time. With participants' knowledge, focus groups were audio recorded and moderators took notes during and immediately following the groups. Transcriptions of the recordings and moderators' notes were analyzed to determine common (and uncommon) responses and themes in response to each question.

FINDINGS

Presentation of Findings

Results are organized by topic. Each relevant survey question is presented, followed by results and then related focus group findings are discussed. Frequencies are provided for all quantitative items. The capital letter "N" indicates the total number of students who responded to a given survey question. Lower case letter "n" signifies the number who selected a particular response to a given question.

Focus group responses and responses to survey qualitative items were categorized thematically and for survey items, category frequencies are reported. When appropriate, key findings are presented at the beginning of each section. Student quotes are drawn from responses to focus group questions and open-ended survey questions.

Student Efforts to Address Campus Sexual Violence

Key Findings

- Awareness raising events (i.e., Take Back the Night, Sexual Assault Awareness Month) were the most common types of anti-rape/sexual assault activities that students participated in.
- Approximately a third of survey participants selected a "comprehensive, clear sexual assault policy" as one of the most effective ways to end campus rape/sexual assault.
- Students working on campus sexual assault/rape issues are most likely to also work on: LGBTQ rights, domestic violence/dating violence/intimate partner violence, and sexual harassment.
- Women's Center and Feminist/Gender Studies Departments are key sources of information and support for many student anti-sexual violence activists.

Q: Overall, how would you describe your level of activism regarding rape/sexual assault on campus this past school year?[2]
 (N=522)
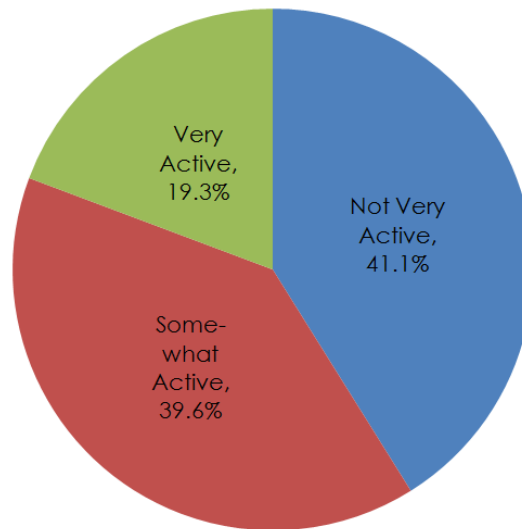
Q: There are many different ways that students have addressed sexual assault or rape at their schools. Have you participated in any of the following activities related to issues of sexual assault or rape on campus? (select all that apply)
 (N=528)

- 36.1% Sexual Assault Awareness Month

- 33.0% Other sexual assault/rape education or awareness activities

- 31.7% Take Back the Night

- 24.9% VDay

- 20.1% Speak Outs or other survivor forums

- 19.4% Reform of campus sexual assault policy

> *"Not only stopping sexual violence once it happens and responding to it effectively, but also changing the cultural conditions in which sexual violence is possible. And that's the kind of things that I'm more interested in doing."*

- 19.4% Organizing or advocacy related to crisis response or survivor services on Campus (e.g., creation of campus sexual assault center, hotline)

- 19.0% Training for campus staff or administration (e.g., judicial board members, police/security officers, health or psychological services staff)

- 16.7% Counseling or survivor support (e.g., hotline, hospital accompaniment)

- 16.7% Advocated/lobbied for local, state, or federal action (including petitions, letters to politicians)

---

[2] An additional 97 survey respondents indicated that they were "not at all active" in addressing campus sexual violence. These respondents were not included in this study of student sexual assault activists.

- 13.9% Worked (including volunteered) with local sexual assault center in the community (e.g., local rape crisis center)

- 7.4% Worked at a campus-based sexual assault/rape crisis center (if school has one)

- 4.4% Other (e.g., Slutwalk, Clothesline Project)

- 25.2% None of the above

Moving Beyond Blue Lights and Buddy Systems: A National Study of Student Anti-Rape Activists

In order to better understand the resources and supports student activists access in the course of their anti-sexual violence work, we asked participants in our focus groups about where they got information or resources regarding their sexual assault efforts. They mentioned the following:

- Women's Centers, Feminist Groups, Gender Studies Programs
  - Feminist group
  - Women's Center (staff, material resources, activities)
  - Women's studies/gender studies program (classes, professors, departments)

- From survivors

- On-campus health-related services
  - Being a peer health leader
  - Health center (counselors, hotline, escort service)

- Other on-campus presences
  - Awareness posters on campus
  - Student center/student groups

- Off campus
  - Internships, volunteer experiences
  - Domestic violence/rape crisis organization

- Online
  - Twitter
  - Facebook
  - Tumblr
  - Social media (general)
  - Specific sites mentioned; Feminist Majority Foundation, SAFER, Planned Parenthood, RAINN, Jezebel, Ms. Magazine, government sites

Student Involvement in Other Issues and Activities

Key Findings
- Less than half of student activists surveyed were involvement in other issues or activities on campus.
- Students working on campus sexual assault/rape issues are most likely to also work on: LGBTQ rights, domestic violence/dating violence/intimate partner violence, and sexual harassment.
- With regard to campus activities, student anti-sexual violence activists are most likely to be involved in social or political actions and/or volunteer/community service.

Q: Some people who work on sexual assault/rape issues on campus also work on other social or political issues, other people focus solely on sexual assault/rape issues. Do work on any of the following issues on your campus? (N=527)

- 41.2% Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) rights

- 37.8% Domestic violence, dating violence, intimate partner violence

- 30.2% Sexual harassment

- 22.4% Human rights

- 18.2% Stalking

- 19.9% Racism

- 15.2% Abortion

- 14.4% Environment

- 11.8% K-12 education

- 10.8% Immigration

- 9.9% Child welfare/abuse

- 9.1% Economic reform/anti-poverty

- 8.7% Criminal justice/prison reform

- 8.7% Anti-war/peace

- 5.1% Another issue (e.g., bullying, mental health issues, other feminist issues)

- 29.4% I don't work on any of these other issues at my school

Q: Do you participate in any of the following activities at your school? (N=498)

- 46.1% Volunteer or community service
- 33.5% Social or political action (e.g. Amnesty International, Gay Straight Alliance)
- 24.1% Performing arts (theatre, music, dance, comedy, etc.)
- 18.9% Visual arts (painting, photography, etc.)
- 17.7% Student government (e.g., student council, class officer)
- 16.9% Athletics (intercollegiate, intramural)
- 16.2% School publications (e.g., newspaper, yearbook, literary magazine)
- 15.9% Greek life (fraternity, sorority)
- 14.4% Religious groups (e.g., campus ministry, Hillel)
- 14.2% Identity affiliated groups (e.g., Black Student Union, Latina/o Student Group)
- 12.9% Residence life (e.g., as an RA)
- 5.6%   Another activity (e.g., campus radio, tour guide)

Student Perspectives and Priorities on Efforts to Address Campus Sexual Violence

Key Findings
- Awareness raising activities, safety initiatives, and social norm/social marketing approaches were deemed to be the most effective ways of end campus rape/sexual assault. Raising awareness, changing rape culture, and providing survivor services were identified as top priorities for student activities
- The intersection of alcohol and sexual violence is a pressing issue for some student activists.

Focus group participants were asked about their priorities in addressing campus sexual assault. Below are the types of priorities were mentioned, with specific examples included.

- "Everything" (referring to all of examples mentioned by moderator as examples: services for survivors, education for potential perpetrators, Self-defense, campus sexual assault policy, environmental changes like blue lights and better lighting, etc., awareness raising like Take Back the Night marches)

- Raising awareness
    - About relations between sexual assault and alcohol
    - Telling others what learned at [this] conference

- Survivor services
    - Support, advocacy
    - Raising awareness about services available, including campus point people (e.g., Title IX Coordinator)

- Culture change
    - Changing rape culture
    - As related to primary prevention

- Training
    - Of police
    - Campus staff (how to advocate)

- Encouraging involvement
    - Of apathetic student body
    - Making ideas accessible to others (not just amongst activists)

- Cultural sensitivity
    - Not speaking for others but empowering them

Students in Focus Group B (included only students in New York City area schools) were also asked about the most pressing issues related to campus sexual violence. The discussed:

Moving Beyond Blue Lights and Buddy Systems: A National Study of Student Anti-Rape Activists

- Intoxication and consent (by far, the most commonly discussed issue)
    - Culture of binge drinking and the sexual activity that arises
    - Educating each other about being that intoxicated, educating ourselves just on alcohol awareness
    - Alcohol policy, don't have an amnesty clause

- Peer pressure, of both men and women

- Underreporting of sexual violence

- Campus policy issues
    - Victim blaming policy, in that we tell the victim what to do, but it's up to the victim to take those steps
    - Don't have a set rule or policy on what our campus is, i.e., where the campus begins and ends geographically, may especially be a problem in urban schools

- Issues with commuter schools (long response time)

Q: There are many different approaches to ending sexual assault/rape on campus. What do you think is most effective way to ending sexual assault/rape on campus? Please select the THREE approaches that you believe to be most effective. (N=528)

- 40.9% Awareness raising events (e.g. Take Back the Night)

- 48.5% Safety initiatives, i.e., blue lights, safe rides home

- 38.1% Social norms or social marketing approaches (e.g. "Real Men Don't Rape" campaigns)

- 32.3% A comprehensive, clear sexual assault policy

- 30.7% Education for potential victims/survivors, including self defense classes

- 31.7% Bystander intervention/education

- 29.0% On campus crisis response (e.g., hotline, in person advocacy)

- 28.8% Education for potential perpetrators

- 22.3% On campus survivor services (e.g., campus sexual assault center, counseling)

- 15.2% Training for campus staff (e.g., campus police/security officers, health and psychological services staff)

- 9.8% Training for those involved in campus judiciary hearings (administration, Faculty, and/or students)

School Efforts to Address Campus Sexual Violence

Key Findings
- Awareness raising activities, safety initiatives, and social norm/social marketing approaches were deemed to be the most effective ways of end campus rape/sexual assault.
- Half of students surveyed gave their college/university a "C" or lower when grading their school's efforts to address campus sexual violence.

> *"My campus, it's a really powerful place where you can come and get support and everyone's supported…they do have a bystander training, they have a men's group called men acting for change which I think is really important."*

Q: To the best of your knowledge, which of the following sexual assault/rape efforts exist at your school? (please select all that apply) (N=453)

- 66.4% Safety initiatives (i.e., blue lights, safe rides home)

- 59.2% Awareness-raising events (e.g. Take Back the Night)

- 46.4% On-campus survivor services (e.g., campus sexual assault center, counseling)

- 46.1% On-campus crisis response (e.g., hotline, in-person advocacy)

- 45.0% Comprehensive, clear sexual assault policy

- 43.3%% Education for potential victims/survivors, including self-defense classes

- 32.9% Social norms or social marketing approaches (e.g. "Real Men Don't Rape" campaigns)

- 28.3% Training for campus staff (e.g., campus police/security officers, health and psychological services staff)

- 22.1 % Bystander intervention/education

- 18.1 % Training for those involved in campus judiciary hearings (administration, faculty and/or students)

- 16.1% Education for potential perpetrators

Q: If you had to assign an overall grade to the job your school does in addressing rape and sexual assault, what grade would you give it? (N=470, not counting additional 12 students who were "not sure") *Top response bolded.*

- 9.8 % A
- **40.2% B**
- 33.6% C
- 13.2% D
- 3.2% F

Efforts and Attitudes Regarding Campus Rape/Sexual Assault Policy

Key Findings
- Almost three-fourths of students viewed campus policy as "one of the key tools" in addressing rape/sexual assault
- The majority of students reported that their school had a rape/sexual assault policy, yet a sizable portion were not sure whether their school had such a policy.
- Most students had not taken action to advocate for or reform a campus rape/sexual assault policy.
- Two of the most common reasons given for not engaging in advocacy to implement or reform campus rape/sexual assault policy: 1) not knowing what to do or how to do it, 2) seeing other anti-sexual violence efforts as higher priority

Student Attitudes and Knowledge about Campus Policy

Q: Some people believe that a school's policy on rape/sexual assault can play an important role in prevention and intervention. Other people think that a policy does not make a difference one way or the other. Which of the following best describes your views about campus rape/sexual assault policy? (N=522)
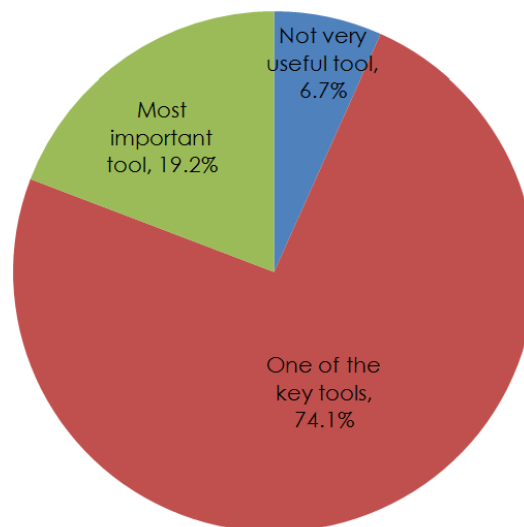
Focus group participants were asked about what first comes to mind when they think about "campus sexual assault policy." Most of participants in both focus groups were not very familiar with their campus sexual assault policy and a number of students expressed that they rarely, if ever, considered their campus policy. And for many of these students, they believed policy to be solely the purview of discipline and consequences. For some others the words "campus policy" conjured up notions of "bureaucracy" and a process very difficult to navigate.

Moving Beyond Blue Lights and Buddy Systems: A National Study of Student Anti-Rape Activists

Several students in the focus groups expressed the belief that schools need policy both to articulate consequences for committing an assault, but also for providing services for survivors. Another common theme that arose was a perceived disconnect between the existence of the policy and the actual impact of a policy in practice. One student commented, "it's only as much as it does." Students discussed situations where, even though their school had a "decent" policy, rape culture still thrived, as demonstrated through: stigmatization and revictimization of survivors; few consequences for perpetrators; little accountability for school to follow through; and underreporting of sexual assaults. Although, a few students did identified policy as a possible force for culture change, a greater number of students explicitly stated that a policy does not change rape culture, including a student who asserted that "the cultural conditions that give rise to violence are not going to be addressed by changing the law."

Regardless of their opinions about its efficacy, many students expressed difficulty in accessing their campus policy – either because it was difficult or impossible to locate, for example, "hidden in handbooks" or because the language and was confusing and not understandable. One student explained how this confusion resulted in her abandoning on addressing policy issues altogether, "it looks like a bunch of gibberish that I have no idea…we like stared at it for like 5 minutes before we just decided to like give it up because we're like, 'I have no idea what it's saying.'"

When asked specifically about the role policies have in addressing sexual violence on campus, focus group participants mentioned the following:

- Consequences for perpetrators that would reduce re-perpetration; serve as a deterrent

- Creating anti-rape culture

- Underreporting is problem

- Not important to someone unless they've had personal experience

- Title IX tool to threaten administration with loss of funding

- Can inform community of danger (identify perpetrator, notify)

- Useful for identifying what is/isn't rape (consent)

Q: Does your school have a rape/sexual assault policy? (N=518)

Don't Know, 25.7%

No, 6.9%

Yes, 67.4%
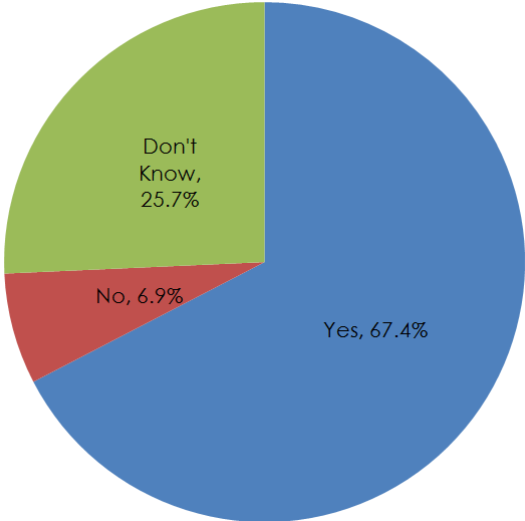
Q: Can you tell us about your experience with your school's rape/sexual assault policy?
(*Of those whose school does have a policy,* N=480)

I've read it and worked to reform it, 13.5%

I've read it, 29.6%

I've never seen it, 34.8%

I've seen it, but I haven't read it, 22.1%

Moving Beyond Blue Lights and Buddy Systems: A National Study of Student Anti-Rape Activists
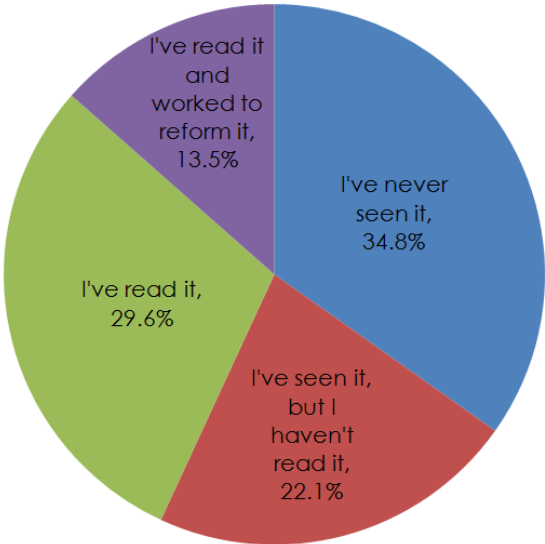
Q: How did you learn school does not have/does have policy?

	School Has a Policy (N=349)	School Doesn't Have A Policy (N=36)
During orientation	42.1%	NA
In course of anti-rape/sexual assault activism work	44.1%	40.5%
Looked for it because I or someone I know was victimized	14.9%	53.8%
Looked for it because I or someone I know was accused of committing rape/sexual assault	9.1%	41.0%
Looked for it in order to submit it to SAFER's Campus Accountability Project	11.1%	5.6%
Some other way (e.g., reading through handbook, need to for job)	11.5%	2.8%

Student Engagement in Campus Policy Reform

Of the small portion of students in the survey who reported that their school did not have a sexual assault campus policy, less than half (44.7%) indicated that they had engaged in efforts to try and institute such a policy. Of students who said that their school *did* have a policy, only a few students (13.5%) had worked to reform the policy.

Q: You indicated that you have worked on reforming your schools rape/sexual assault policy. Can you tell us about what you have done? *(Of those who have worked to reform policy and responded to question (N=58) [open-ended, qualitative item])*

- 55.2% Advocated with administration (President, Deans, etc.)

- 37.9% Discussed or worked with other members of campus community (e.g., other students, faculty, student groups)

- 24.1% Served on official campus policy review/revision committee

- 17.2% Garnered negative publicity about policy (e.g., wrote article for student newspaper)

- 10.3% Drafted model policy or rewrote aspects of policy (without official standing)

- 8.6% Engaged in direct action (rallies, sit-ins, petitions)

- 8.6% Assessed school's policies to identify problem areas

8.6%   Researched policies from other schools: 8.6%

- 6.9%   Sought out assistance/support from off-campus organizations (e.g., SAFER, local rape crisis centers)

- 34.5% Unspecified/other activities to reform campus sexual assault policy (e.g., conducted surveys, writing thesis about policy reform)

> *"We have changed the investigation policy to allow for a victim to pursue justice through the university without having to file a concurrent suit through the local or state police departments. We have been working towards a more victim centered policy that creates as little extra strain as possible to the victim as they go through the difficult process of reporting."*

Q: What are the reasons you have not worked to advocate for/reform campus sexual assault policy? *(Of those who have not engaged in efforts to obtain or campus policy)*

	School Has a Policy (N=415)	School Doesn't Have A Policy (N=21)
Don't know what to do to obtain/reform policy	32.6%	47.6%
Believe the current policy is good enough	32.4%	NA
Don't know what kind of policy to advocate for/what to assess policy	31.7%	18.2%
Busy addressing campus rape/sexual assault in other ways	28.2%	56.5%
My school administrations would not be receptive to changing policy	15.5%	NA
Not interested in policy	6.3%	5.0%
Some other reason (e.g., too emotionally hard because I'm a survivor)	3.5%	20.0%

Almost none of the focus group participants had worked to improve their campus sexual assault policy. When asked why they had not, they identified some similar reasons as survey respondents. Some talked about not knowing how to change policy, or feeling as if they didn't have the ability to actually effect policy change. Other logistical barriers were policy being inaccessible and the process of changing policy being too lengthy and difficult. Other students did not see policy change as the top priority in addressing campus assault. As one student explained, "The policy will have to

Moving Beyond Blue Lights and Buddy Systems: A National Study of Student Anti-Rape Activists

come later because you know, what's happening now, you know, who may be potentially assaulted this weekend or tonight."

Focus group participants also discussed some additional reasons for not engaging in policy reform work. Specifically, that policy is not an effective way to combat rape culture, prevent assault, or even to encourage reporting. Several students explained that sexual assault policy is just not on students' radar unless they themselves or someone they know has been assaulted.

> *"It's that the immediacy of the issue at hand, and I just feel like the policy will have to come later because [we need to focus on] what's happening now, who may be potentially assaulted this weekend or tonight."*

A powerful theme arose in the focus group taking place at a conference of students from traditionally marginalized groups (Focus Group B). Many of these students attributed their lack of policy reform efforts to the historical and political role of policy for traditionally marginalized people, in that law and policy did not serve to assist or protect them, but in fact, it had often been used to oppress them. As one student explained, "a lot come from these cultures where policy and government is not on their side…they all are out for themselves, they're not looking after me"

We asked the students in the focus groups to share what advice they had for increasing student engagement in campus policy reform work. They recommended the following:

- Show them why policy is important to them
    - o   even if they aren't a victim of rape or do not know someone that is

- Convey that they can change policy,
    - o   Demonstrate that they have power to make change, that it is attainable,
    - o   Provide specific examples of policy change that students have made happen

- Focus on how to make campus a more woman-safe campus, e.g. having a women's center

- Raise awareness about the issue of sexual violence in general

- Providing information about community organizations to bridge gap between community and policy

- Stress the kind of skill set that students develop when working on policy, useful to future career

Students' Assessment of their School's Policy

Q: If you had to assign a grade to your school's sexual assault policy, what grade would you give it? (N=295) *Of those who have seen/read the policy*
Top response bolded.

- 9.8% A

- **48.4% B**

- 26.8% C

- 6.9% D

- 4.2% F

- 3.9% Not Sure

> *"What frustrates me at my school is that we've had people expelled for cheating, but nobody has ever been expelled for rape."*

To provide greater insight into how students view their school's policy, we asked focus group participants to tell us about the specific sexual assault policies of their schools. Students identified these policy's contents and merits (or lack thereof), as such:

- School handles incidents badly, wants to engage in dialogue with two parties

- Insufficient penalties, e.g., "just move accused to other housing," provide warnings, put on probation, impose academic consequences

- Changed policy from two years to one year to report

- Revicitimization of survivor

- Recently added amnesty clause

- College says have to report incident to police

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Findings from this study demonstrate that many students are actively engaged in addressing sexual violence on their campus. Though their activities are diverse, ranging from awareness-raising and survivor support to staff training and policy reform, students are by far most likely to be involved with efforts to raise awareness about the issue (e.g., Take Back the Night, Sexual Assault Awareness Month). While awareness is an important step for demonstrating support for survivors and the need for change, few students have mobilized this increased awareness to organize for change.

Students' reports of their school's efforts reveal a similar focus on awareness raising and risk reduction strategies, and a surprising lack of primary prevention efforts. This study also illustrates the variability of schools' efforts to address campus sexual violence. According to the students in our study, some colleges and universities are providing a myriad of survivor services, investing in effective prevention efforts, and have implemented strong, comprehensive policies. Unfortunately, even more schools may fail on one or all of these fronts, leaving students without the support and protection they deserve.

Although students do rate safety initiatives (i.e., blue lights and safe rides home) and awareness raising events as the top two most effective strategies to combating sexual violence, the use of social norming/marketing approaches was rated the third most effective strategy. The value student activists place on social norming approaches is promising, given that these approaches often target potential perpetrators or bystanders (e.g., the "Real Men Don't Rape" campaign). However, these campaigns may also be focused on changing other aspects of social norms, such as binge drinking. And while a third of students report that their schools use social norming/marketing approaches, only approximately one in five report that their school specifically provides education for potential perpetrators or bystanders (as opposed to over 40 percent for education for potential victims/survivors). By devoting more resources and attention to risk reduction strategies (focused on potential victims) than primary prevention (focused on potential perpetrators and bystanders), schools may be sending the message that victims are more responsible for preventing sexual violence than are the perpetrators themselves, thereby perpetuating rape culture. Students and other stakeholders (staff, faculty, and off-campus anti-sexual violence organizations) should advocate with their school for an increased focus on primary prevention, in addition to important safety initiatives and survivor services.

Given SAFER's focus on supporting student activists as they reform campus policy, we were specifically interested in students' experiences and perspectives regarding their school's policy. We were somewhat disheartened to learn that an overwhelming majority of the activists in our study have not engaged in policy reform, and in fact, many of them were not even familiar with the contents of their policy. This study

provided insight into the main barriers for student engagement in policy reform. Many students appear to have a limited view of policy, as merely a potential means to hold perpetrators accountable. Given this view and activists' main interest in putting a stop of sexual violence and providing immediate support to survivors, it is not surprising that these students do not prioritize working on policy. Therefore, it becomes our challenge to demonstrate the value of policy, beyond its disciplinary role.

Still, findings from this study indicate that even those who recognize the value of policy in culture change and survivor support may shy away from engaging in policy reform. When policy reform is inaccessible to students – whether because the actual policy itself is hard to locate or understand or because the process of change can be daunting – students are less likely to engage with policy. Indeed, one of the most commonly cited reasons for students' lack of involvement with policy reform was a lack of knowledge – both about what components make a strong policy and about how to actually change a policy. Therefore, students need to have the tools to interpret their policy, consider what they would want in a policy, and navigate the policy change process. In addition, campus administration must ensure that their policy is easily accessible and comprehensible to all students, and should actively work in involve students in the policy development and reform process.

Despite these identified obstacles, a small portion of student activists who participated in our survey has worked to reform their campus policy, to varying degrees of success. They used many of the same strategies, most commonly advocating directly with their campus administration and working with other members of the campus community, such as student groups and faculty. In addition, almost a quarter of those who worked on policy indicated that as a result of their work, they were now working with administration in an official capacity to revise the policy. Most students utilized multiple strategies and often encountered a number of setbacks. Some who found success in one area of policy reform found their efforts thwarted in other areas. These findings demonstrate the iterative nature of policy reform, and suggest that activists might benefit from using multiple approaches and be prepared for mixed results. Managing expectations may help to avoid frustration and burn out. In addition, our findings demonstrate that students can and are changing their campus sexual assault policy, although it is sometimes a difficult process, many have found it is one worth pursuing. Their efforts have resulted in institutional change that will be sustained well beyond their time at the school.

However, once policy is reformed, it cannot end there. Students in our study identified a disconnect between policy and practice – too often having a good policy was not enough, as the conditions of students' lives and the campus culture remained unchanged. Therefore, it is as important to focus on the implementation of policy as it is the reforming of policy. The policy itself should include mechanisms for monitoring and

holding administration accountable for implementation. Once a strong policy is in place, activists, whether students, staff, faculty, or off-campus advocates, should regularly assess its implementation and advocate for appropriate measures to ensure the policy is being put into action.

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.

To learn more about SAFER (Students Active For Ending Rape) or to get involved, visit our website and social networking sites.

safercampus.org