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UConn: Sexual violence warrants action

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Chronicle Staff Writer STORRS - While 82 percent of students in a recent University of Connecticut survey said they feel safe on **UConn** campuses, university officials said more work needs to be done to curb sexual violence. Fueling that concern is the fact 74 respondents said they were victims of a sexual assault on or near the Storrs campus. In a written statement, **UConn** President Susan Herbst said, "we must continue our efforts to ensure the actual safety of every **UConn** student." On Monday afternoon, University of Connecticut officials discussed the results of an anonymous student survey on campus sexual assault incidents at a press conference. Officials said they believe the Storrs campus has a higher rate of sexual assaults than regional campuses because it is the only campus with on-campus **housing**. Of the 1,496 students from **UConn** campuses across the state who participated in the survey, 1,135, or 76 percent, were from Storrs. Of Storrs students, 74 individuals reported on the survey they were victims of assault either on or off campus. A total of 88 students reported being assault victims. The **UConn** system includes regional campuses in Avery Point (Groton), Hartford, Torrington, Stamford and Waterbury. "We should consider other opportunities to educate and give support, including bystander (Sexual violence, Page 4) (Continued from Page 1) classes," said Michael Gilbert, vice president for student affairs for **UConn**. A recent survey revealed one of out 10 students believe they were victims of sexual assault or attempted sexual assault in or near a **UConn** campus. Of the Storrs students who reported being assault victims, the survey results show 55 told a close friend and 23 told a roommate, the survey said, which also stated only seven of the 74 reported it to police. **UConn** Vice Provost Sally Reiss said "students are most likely to tell their friend first. The reaction of the first person the survivor talks to tells the impact on how they will address it for the rest of their lives." Survey results show 65 percent of students believed their peers are concerned about others welfare, 57 percent said they would intervene if they witnessed a sexual assault and 35 percent said they knew university rules for investigating a sexual assault. Gilbert is hopeful the survey results will help the university better customized its required classes for new and transfer students on assault issues. Specifically, he said "we have a lot of work to do with alcohol safety, bystander intervention, more confidence to intercede safely, where to go for support, or report concerns students have." On **UConn** campuses statewide, 22 students, or 26.5 percent of respondents, said they were unable to "provide consent or stop what was happening" due to being incapacitated such as being passed out, drugged, drunk or asleep. Elizabeth Conklin, Title IX coordinator at **UConn**, said she believes the survey helps the university "better understand and prevent incidents of sexual violence. It provides good information on perceptions, support, and awareness." Conklin coordinates the university's response to claims of sex-based discrimination such as sexual harassment and sexual violence. The survey comes three years after five sexual assault victims alleged the university mishandled their rape cases and **UConn** was as one of 67 higher education institutions reviewed by the Education Department's Office for Civil Rights due to mishandling of sexual assault cases. High-profile attorney Gloria Allred represented the plaintiffs. **UConn** agreed to pay \$ 1.3 million in 2014 to settle the lawsuit, but did not admit any wrongdoing. In an e-mail, **UConn** spokesman Stephanie Reitz said the results can be generalized "to the whole population of 31,624 students with a 95 percent confidence and a 2.5 to 3 percent margin of error." **UConn** chose to use Higher Education Data Sharing Consortium, HEDS, of Walbath, Ind., to conduct the survey, rather than do their own because they wanted results with strong

reliability and validity and where results can be compared to other similar institutions which will be available to **UConn** next fall. **UConn** paid HEDS \$4,349 to conduct the survey. More than 6,000 students were randomly selected to participate in the survey, which was conducted in November 2015. Officials said those who participated in the survey received \$10 in Husky Bucks for their time.

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