

**Issue:** Ending Sexual Violence on Our Campuses

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**Describe the Issue:** Incidences of rape, sexual assault, sexual harassment, stalking, dating violence, and gendered hate crimes have become increasingly prevalent and increasingly dangerous on college and university campuses. For the purposes of this campaign, we will be using the following definition for sexual violence: Any sexual contact or activity, including but not limited to rape, stalking or intimate partner violence, with someone who has not given their continuous and enthusiastic consent. This is an issue that does not affect only womyn. Sexual violence is something that can affect anyone, including (but not limited to) LGBTQIAP+, womyn, men, students of color, and students with disabilities. Sexual violence affects the entire campus community, and creates a fundamental barrier of access to higher education.

College and university administrations fail students who experience sexual violence by sitting by and letting the toxic environment of their campus grow by not having strong consequences for perpetrators of sexual violence. State and federal legislatures and decision-makers need to apply more pressure to universities and colleges to address the growing and alarming issue of sexual violence. There needs to be a fundamental change in how college and university administration handles instances of sexual violence. Through new measures, legislative pressure, and student involvement on campuses via various direct action organizing, campus administration needs to be held accountable and needs to begin addressing the epidemic of sexual violence.

**USSA's 67th Annual National Student Congress Action Agenda Criteria**

*All submissions for USSA Action Agenda items must meet the following eleven criteria:*

**Is it winnable?** Yes. Ending sexual violence on university and college campuses and creating a safer atmosphere on our campuses is an issue that has a large base of support. It is a relatable, personal issue that also connects back to the university as a whole, meaning students will want to get involved with the campaign. Sexual assault as an issue can create actual, concrete change. The same can be said for Congress.

**Does it directly impact and improve students' lives?** Yes. Sexual violence on college and university campuses constitutes a fundamental issue of student access. With a massive reduction in sexual violence, as well as better reporting system and more stringent punishments, students can begin to feel safe on their campuses, which will ultimately lead to better quality of life, better campus climate as well as a more successful college experience.

Some of the victories that would be a result of this campaign are:

- Creating a more stringent system of accountability for assailants as well as university and college administrators who mishandle cases of sexual violence via criminal and monetary punishments;
- Mandatory funding to campus womyn's resource centers, sexual assault prevention centers, survivor centers etc. Funding cuts to these facilities shall not be permitted;
- Adding gender identity and national origin as categories of bias under the Clery Act's definition of hate crimes;

- Adopting the FBI's revised and more inclusive definition of rape;
- Requiring institutions to ensure the disciplinary proceedings in response to alleged incidents of dating violence, domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking are prompt, fair, and impartial;
- Strengthening protections around victim confidentiality while helping victims to access the support, services, and the disciplinary and legal options available to them and;
- Specifying requirements for programs to prevent dating violence, domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking, including prevention and awareness programs and campaigns.

**Does it have a clear target?** The primary goal of this campaign is to see a massive reduction in sexual violence on college and university campuses across the country, through various demands and changes on individual campuses. Because of this, each campus will have a different target, but consistently, that target will be someone from within administration. Each campus will need to determine which target makes the most sense for their campus. On state wide levels, SSA's and membership schools can also determine who they would like to target, but this will most likely be the Governor. At a federal level, the target can be the Secretary of Education, the main persxn who handles Title IX complaints, as well as the President of the United States.

**Does it build a measurable amount of power?** Yes. Students will be able to take a national campaign with consistent messaging, and apply it to their campus. Students will not only have the ability to create change on a national level, but be able to take this national campaign and make it so that it applies directly to issues on their campus. This creates power at both the federal, state, and campus level.

**Does it have a clear and realistic time frame?** Yes. As far as federal level aspects of the campaign go, the Higher Education Act is getting reauthorized during the coming school year, giving us ample opportunity to be able to get something included in the bill. Obama is also giving a lot of attention to sexual violence and recently the White House's task force released proposed changes to how sexual violence is addressed on campus and is asking for public comment until November of 2014. We will not only be able to use that as an opportunity to get our voices heard, but ensure that our demands are included.

**Does it have a state/local organizing angle?** Yes. With regards to sexual assault and violence prevention, the targets will specifically be local and campus based. In the case with higher education systems like the University of Wisconsin or University of California system, the targets would be state-focused.

**Could students build a diverse campus coalition around this issue?** Yes. Coalitions can be built across student organizations as well as with academic departments and potentially even with university agencies and local, community-based organizations. In addition, there are potential relationships that can be fostered with national organizations such as Students Advocating For Ending Rape (SAFER) and the Association of American University Womyn among many more.

**Is it likely to be debated and acted upon by the United States Congress in the next year?** Yes. There are already several bills being written regarding sexual assault.

**Will it strengthen and expand grassroots investment in USSA?** As stated in Question 7, this campaign is one that must be worked on between students, faculty, crisis centers, health centers, university administration, local and national organizations, and many other groups. This in turn gives students the opportunity to hone in their skills in relationship building.

**Can you provide background information and the current context of the issue?** Historically, national legislative acts such as Title IX and the Clery Act were created to make higher education safer and more accessible for marginalized communities, especially womyn. These legislative acts haven't been enough. Statistics for sexual assault on university and college campuses is higher than in the general population. With the recent release of a White House report on sexual assault on campus, 55 universities were under investigation by the government for mishandling sexual assault. Clearly, this continues to be a severe problem for campuses.

**What creative and/or innovative tactics could we employ to engage the media and excite new students around this issue?** We could use visually stimulating tactics (see tactics on strategy chart), use statistics from college campuses and national data, educational teach-ins that spread awareness about the issue, guerilla teach-ins. Refer to strategy chart.