

STUDENT CAMPUS CLIMATE SURVEY

BRIEF 1: PERCEPTIONS AND ATTITUDES

INTRODUCTION

In fall 2014 the University of North Alabama (UNA) administered a Student Campus Climate Survey. The purpose of the survey was to provide UNA with critical information regarding our campus climate, campus resources, and experiences of our students. This is the first brief in a series of four that presents key findings from the survey along with recommendations for developing effective prevention and intervention programming for our students. The focus of this brief is on data pertaining to UNA students' perceptions of the general campus; perceptions of campus leadership, policies, and reporting practices as they relate to sexual assault, rape myth acceptance, and bystander attitudes and behaviors. The full report is available at una.edu/title-ix

METHODS

All measures in the survey were taken directly from the White House Task Force Report (2014). Perceptions of the general campus climate were assessed using the School Connectedness Scale and the Trust in the College Support System Scale. Perceptions of campus leadership, policies, and reporting practices relating to sexual assault were assessed using adapted versions of the Department of Defense Equal Opportunity Climate Survey and the Carleton College Campus Climate Survey. Rape myth acceptance was assessed using the Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance Scale. Bystander attitudes and behaviors were assessed using the Bystander Readiness to Help Scale and the Bystander Attitudes Scale.

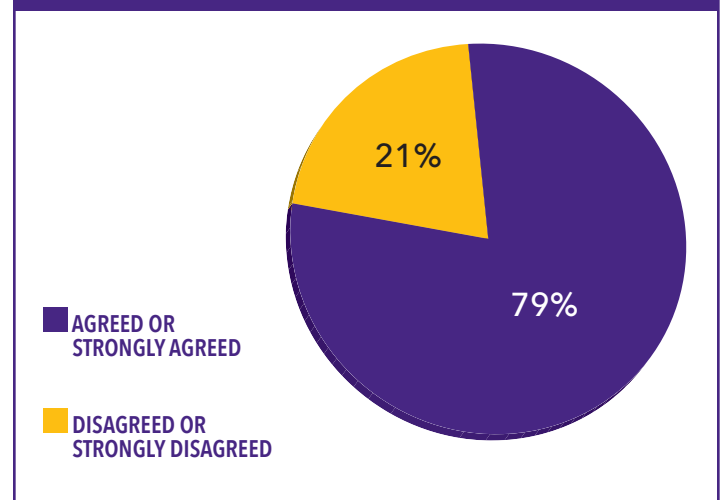
SAMPLE

A total of 978 surveys were completed. The median age of participants was 21 years old. Seventy-three percent (73%) of the sample identified as female, 26% identified as male, and approximately 1% identified as transgender or other. The class standing of participants was as follows: 20.2% freshman, 17.4% sophomore, 26.4% junior, 29.0% senior, 6.6% graduate student, and 0.4% special student. The racial composition approximated well the racial makeup of the University.

PERCEPTIONS OF GENERAL CAMPUS CLIMATE

The overwhelming majority of survey respondents (79%) "agreed" or "strongly agreed" with statements indicating they felt valued and connected to the university, faculty, and administration, while 21% "disagreed" or "strongly disagreed" with those statements.

FIGURE 1.
VALUED AND CONNECTED TO THE
UNIVERSITY, FACULTY, AND ADMINISTRATION



In contrast, only 38.7% of survey respondents "agreed" or "strongly agreed" with statements indicating the university system does enough to protect students' safety and provides a good support system for students who experience difficulties, while 61.3% "disagreed" or "strongly disagreed" with those statements.

PERCEPTIONS OF CAMPUS LEADERSHIP, POLICIES, AND REPORTING PRACTICES

Nearly 70% of survey respondents indicated that if they were to report a sexual assault they believed our campus authority would be “very likely” or “moderately likely” to take the report seriously, protect the safety of the person making the report, and take appropriate corrective action.

However, only half of survey respondents (50.2%) “agreed” or “strongly agreed” with statements indicating that if they or a friend were assaulted they would know where to get help and that they understand UNA’s formal reporting procedures.

RAPE MYTH ACCEPTANCE

It is critical to examine rape myth acceptance in any college community, because rape myths blame victims and minimize their experiences, justify the actions of perpetrators, and discourage victims from reporting and seeking help (King & Roberts, 2011).

The majority of our sample disagreed or strongly disagreed with statements indicating acceptance of rape myths. However, the degree of neutrality and agreement with statements indicating rape myth acceptance was concerning on three subscales in particular.

FIGURE 2.
STUDENTS WOULD KNOW WHERE TO GET HELP

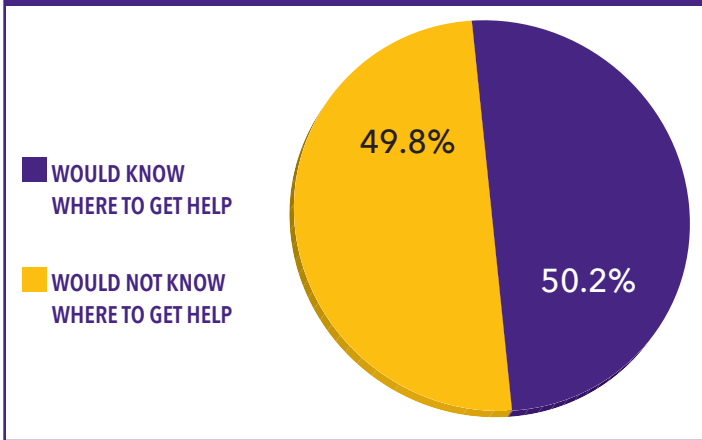
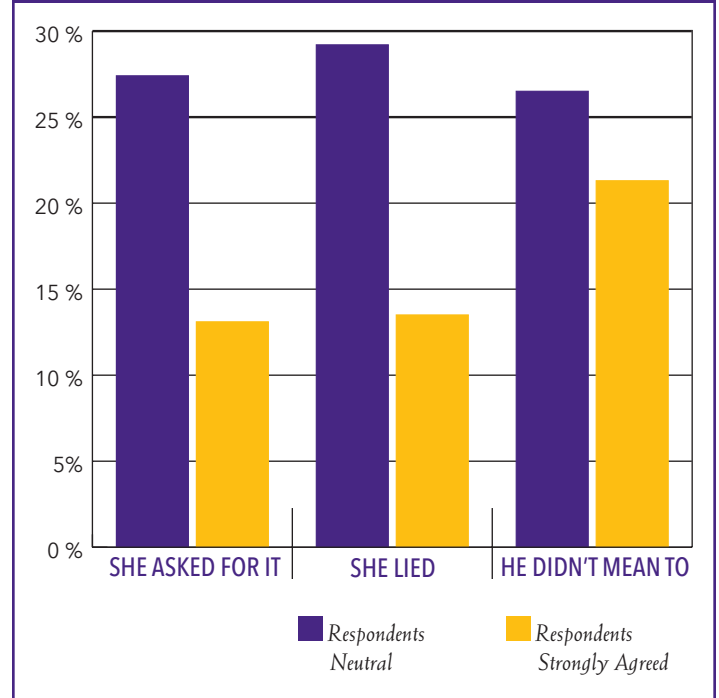


FIGURE 3.
RAPE MYTH ACCEPTANCE



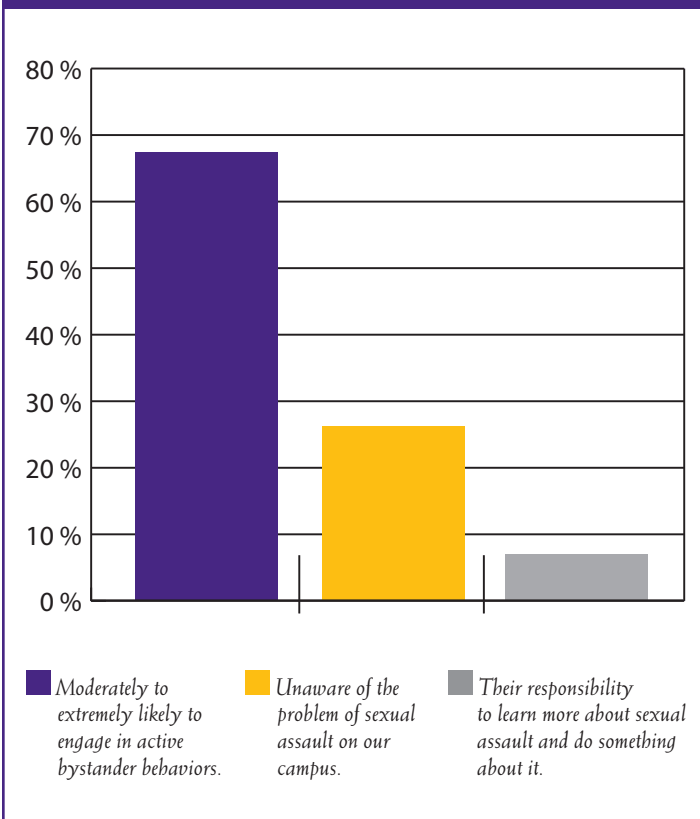
- She Asked For It (e.g., “When girls go to parties wearing revealing clothes, they are asking for trouble.”) - 27.4% of respondents were neutral and 13.1% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with statements in this subscale.
- She Lied (e.g., “A lot of times, girls who say they were raped agreed to have sex and then regret it.”) - 29.2% of respondents were neutral and 13.5% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with statements in this subscale.
- He Didn't Mean To (e.g., “Guys don't usually intend to force sex on a girl, but sometimes they get too sexually carried away.”) - 26.5% of respondents were neutral and 21.3% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with statements in this subscale.

BYSTANDER ATTITUDES AND BEHAVIORS

Bystander attitudes and behaviors refer to individuals' perceptions and actions when they are present in risky situations that could lead to sexual assault, as well as their beliefs about their responsibility to raise awareness and prevent sexual assault in their community (Banyard, 2008).

The majority of respondents (67.4%) indicated that they would be moderately to extremely likely to engage in active bystander behaviors (e.g., "Check in with my friend who looks drunk when they go to a room with someone else at a party"). However, only one quarter of respondents (26.2%) indicated that they were aware of the problem of sexual assault on college campuses and only 7% believed it was their responsibility to learn more about sexual assault and do something about it.

FIGURE 4.
BYSTANDER ATTITUDES AND BEHAVIORS



CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

The overwhelming majority of students in our sample felt valued and connected to the university, but they believed the university could do more to protect students from harm and provide a better support system to students who experience difficulties. These findings suggest that the vast majority of our sample felt that if they were to report a sexual assault to a campus authority that the university would take the report seriously; however, only half of the students in our sample indicated that they have a clear understanding of UNA's formal procedures for reporting sexual assault.

It is recommended that UNA promote knowledge of its resources by incorporating this information into First Year Experience courses, its online training program, and campus-wide education events. It is also recommended that the university consider establishing a student advisory board that will work with university staff (e.g., UNA Police Chief, Title IX Coordinator, Student Conduct Director) in order to engage students and increase transparency.

As aforementioned, rape myths blame victims and minimize their experiences, justify the actions of perpetrators, and discourage victims from reporting and seeking help (King & Roberts, 2011). Therefore, it is critical that rape myths are specifically addressed in all sexual assault prevention programming by incorporating this information into First Year Experience courses, online training, and campus-wide education events.

Only one quarter of our sample indicated that they were aware of the problem of sexual assault on college campuses, and only 7% believed it was their responsibility to learn more about sexual assault and do something about it. Therefore it is not surprising that the majority of our sample had not participated in events to learn more about or prevent sexual assault. However, the results offered some reasons to be optimistic. It is encouraging that the majority of our sample indicated that they would be likely to engage in active bystander behaviors, particularly when one considers our campus has not yet conducted student bystander trainings. Based on the survey findings, it is recommended that UNA develop and implement student bystander trainings into First Year Experience courses, online trainings, and campus-wide events.

PROJECT COLLABORATORS

The principal investigators for the Student Campus Climate Survey were UNA faculty members Drs. Amber Paulk, Andrea Hunt, and Yaschica Williams from the Department of Sociology and Family Studies. Once the initial survey was compiled, the UNA Title IX Education and Prevention Advisory Board reviewed the survey. The advisory board includes UNA's Title IX Coordinator, Ms. Tammy Jacques; UNA faculty, staff, and students; representatives from UNA Student Counseling Services; the UNA Police Department; and Rape Response.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

For more information, please contact UNAs Title IX Coordinator, Ms. Tammy Jacques, at tmwells@una.edu or **256-765-4223**.

REFERENCES

- Banyard, V. (2008). Measurement and correlates of prosocial bystander behavior: The case of interpersonal violence. *Violence and Victims, 23*, 83–97.
- King, L., & Roberts, J. (2011). Traditional gender role and rape myth acceptance: From the countryside to the big city. *Women & Criminal Justice, 21*, 1-20.
- White House Task Force to Protect Students from Sexual Assault (2014). *Not alone: The first report of the White House Task Force to Protect Students from Sexual Assault*.