CAMPUS NEWS

Rape crisis center petitions for involvement in conduct code review

By: Matt Rocheleau | April 30, 2010 | ShareThis

A campus rape crisis center is petitioning that a member of their staff be added to a special commission which will review the student conduct code and present recommended changes to the code by mid-November.

The 17-member commission, created in response to the University of Massachusetts' admission that it improperly sanctioned a student who allegedly confessed to an on-campus rape, will review the entire Code of Student Conduct (CSC) for the first time since the mid-1990s.

The Everywoman's Center (EWC), said it has contacted the commission's administrative leader, Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs and Campus Life Jean Kim, who told the center she would not add a member of its staff to the committee, but has not given a clear reason why.

Kim did not return a call seeking comment yesterday.

"We have lots of ideas about how that code could be amended," said EWC Training and Educational Specialist Angela Bruns, 30.

Though the commission does include a student member from EWC, educator advocate Kelleyanne Curley, the center is requesting that University administrators add a full-time EWC staff member and expert.

"I feel it's really essential to have someone with that expertise on the commission," said Bruns, who received a graduate degree from UMass and has worked for EWC for two years.

Without representation from an EWC staff member, Bruns said, "I'm afraid of [changes to the conduct code regarding sexual assault offenses] getting lost in the shuffle."

EWC staff created an online petition, Ipetitions.com/petition/endsexualviolence, which had 500 signatures – about halfway toward their goal – as of Thursday evening. The petition will stop accepting signatures at the end of today and will be presented at an in-person meeting between EWC and Kim next week.

The center, which provides sexual assault crisis counseling and various women's studies programs to on- and off-campus students and community residents, held a "Take Back the Night" rally earlier this month and complied around 100 signatures – separate from the ones on the online petition – during the event.

According to the petition, "[UMass'] current Code of Student Conduct concerning sexual assault is inadequate and does nothing more than state that 'Sexual assault or any other uninvited behavior of a sexually explicit nature' is a violation of the Code … [and] that a new sexual assault policy must be written, and that the expertise of a staff person from Everywoman's Center is essential to the

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construction of a sexual assault policy that meets the needs of students at UMass Amherst."

To raise awareness of the petition, junior Nina Goodwin, a 20-year-old public health major and educator advocate at EWC, created a Facebook group which had around 675 members as of last night.

"I think that what [UMass] is trying to do is great. But I don't feel comfortable as a student and as a woman to not have someone who is an expert in this [on the commission]," Goodwin said. "I'm glad that [the issue of sexual assault] is staying fresh in people's minds, but I'd like to see a lot more people on campus taking action."

Both Goodwin and Bruns expressed disappointment about the University's response to its mishandling of the alleged rape case, which made national headlines earlier this semester.

"It's definitely frustrating, because I want to know that where I'm going to school is taking this seriously," said Goodwin. "I wish they'd say a little bit more. I don't really feel like I know why they've made some of the decisions they've made."

"I think the Dean of Students office response to that was unfortunate, because I want to see perpetrators of sexual assault held accountable," Bruns added. "I feel for them … There are certainly more things I'd like info about, but I understand there are boundaries."

For continued coverage on this story, visit DailyCollegian.com's special page, "Breaking the Silence."

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One Response to "Rape crisis center petitions for involvement in conduct code review"

Ed says:
May 3, 2010 at 7:18 am

""[UMass'] current Code of Student Conduct concerning sexual assault is inadequate and does nothing more than state that 'Sexual assault or any other uninvited behavior of a sexually explicit nature' is a violation of the Code…"

Exactly what more would they like to have? The existing code is broad enough to cover almost anything – and is often used as such.

FIRE already has UMass on the "Red Light" list, wanna see if we can get onto the super-special "Red Alert" list?

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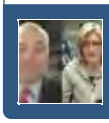

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