



# Legislative Affairs Council

## Choosing an Issue

**Issue: Sexual Violence On College Campuses**

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**Endorsements:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Proposed Action Agenda Item Title:** \_\_\_\_\_

**1) Describe the Issue (what is the problem & what is the solution).**

Sexual violence on our college campuses is a real issue for all students across the country. Ranging from unwanted stalking or touching, sexual assault, intimate partner violence, and rape. According to The Campus Sexual Assault Study which was done in October 2007, an estimate of one in every five womxn are sexually assaulted while they are in college and only 13% are able to report due to personal or institutional barriers. On top of this, campus environments all over perpetuate victim-blaming, which is a huge part of rape culture that has manifested in our universities where women are told to not dress or act a certain way, never leave drinks unattended, never walk home alone, etc. instead of calling on the perpetrators to simply **not assault**. At Western, our Counseling Center is underfunded and too understaffed to support students who are survivors of sexual violence.

Although there are resources on campus for survivors, the process of knowing where to even begin isn't clear. Trying to navigate through the information that is out can be an additional stressor to the person who is thinking about getting help/wanting to report, and this shouldn't be the case. It should be an easier process.

**2) Please fill out a Strategy Chart.**

Goals	Organizational Considerations	Constituents, Allies, & Opponents	Targets	Tactics
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<p><b>Long Term:</b> Have ample funding for various resources focusing on the prevention of sexual assaults on college campuses, as well as readily available resources for survivors of sexual assault. Create fair processes for universities to prosecute sexual assaults with serious repercussions for perpetrators. Longer term- The elimination of rape culture.</p> <p><b>Intermediate:</b></p>	<p><b>Resources:</b> Western Votes!, LAC, the REP, the AS , Ethnic Student Center, The Women’s Center, The Queer Resource Center, WWU-Admin, USSA (NPCSC, NWC, NQSC, Sexual Committee) American Assoc. for Women (AAUW), Women’s Studies department,</p>	<p><b>Constituents</b> Students, prospective students, Survivors of sexual assault, parents, greater B-ham community</p> <p><b>Allies</b> WSA, USSA, Admin to an extent (re: university priorities 14-15yr include increased \$ to counseling etc.) (CASAS, DVSAAS)</p> <p><b>Opponents</b> MRA’s, some indirect opposition from other resources seeking funding</p>	<p><b>Primary</b> Larry Seaquist, Gerry Pollett, (House Higher Ed.) Barbara Bailey, Randi Becker (Senate Higher Ed.) Ross Hunter (House Approp.) Andy Hill, Michael Baumgartner (Senate W&amp;M)</p> <p><b>Secondary</b></p>	<p><b>Org/Educational</b> Days of action, phonebanking, emailing, letter-writing Social Media Student Testimony (may be hard because of how triggering this issue is, but there are definitely people on this campus who are ready and willing to share their experience and story) Increasing awareness about Western’s resources like CASAS, the ROP, and the EOO</p> <p><b>Base Building:</b> Lobby Days Utilizing all our various networks and supports (WSA, USSA, Western Advocates )</p>
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### 3) Please explain briefly how/if this issue meets the following qualifications:

#### 1. Is it winnable?

Yes, sexual assault prevention campaigns are highly successful on college campuses because there is little opposition to the concept of preventing sexual assault. Our biggest barriers are not direct opposition but a lack of information and a lack of funding for institutions of Higher Ed. We can combat the first by running information campaigns that inform students about what the problem is and what they can do to help. This is a personal issue for many individuals so there will be buy-in from many different communities that can be used to build power. By building the movement we can combat the second barrier, because sexual assault is so pervasive building power will help to pressure legislators into taking action. By working with the WSA and USSA we can show that this is a large enough problem that it deserves to be addressed.

#### 2. Does it directly impact and improve students' lives?

Yes, students that have to worry about sexual assault on campus or students that are survivors of sexual assault on campus both greatly benefit from increased resources on campus. By eliminating or greatly reducing the likelihood of experiencing sexual assaults on campus we can allow students to focus entirely on their lives as students, they can feel safe on campus, focus more in the classroom, and have a better student experience overall.

#### 3. Does it have a clear target?

<http://www.wvu.edu/vpress/docs/AnnualSecurityandFireSafetyReport.pdf>

The primary goal of this item is to see specific and strong support from our legislators to end sexual violence on college and university campuses. Below are statistics from the 2014-2015 Annual Security and Final Safety Report conducted by Western.



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Category/Venue	2011	2012	2013
<b>DISCIPLINARY REFERRALS FOR ILLEGAL WEAPONS POSSESSION</b>	0	0	0
On Campus Tūtai	0	0	0
On Campus - Residential Facilities only	0	0	0
Non-Campus Building or Property	0	0	0
Adjacent Public Property	0	0	0
<b>HATE CRIMES</b>	1	0	1
On Campus Total	1	0	1
<b>MURDER AND NON-NEGLIGENT MANSLAUGHTER</b>	0	0	0
On Campus Total	0	0	0
On Campus - Residential Facilities Only	0	0	0
Non-Campus Building or Property	0	0	0
Adjacent Public Property	0	0	0
<b>NEGLIGENT MANSLAUGHTER</b>	0	0	0
On Campus Total	0	0	0
On Campus - Residential Facilities Only	0	0	0
Non-Campus Building or Property	0	0	0
Adjacent Public Property	0	0	0
<b>FORCIBLE SEX OFFENSES *</b>	0	4	3
On Campus Total	0	4	3
On Campus - Residential Facilities Only	0	3	3
Non-Campus Building or Property	0	0	0
Adjacent Public Property	0	1	0
<b>NON-FORCIBLE SEX OFFENSES *</b>	0	0	0
On Campus Total	0	0	0
On Campus - Residential Facilities Only	0	0	0
Non-Campus Building or Property	0	0	0
Adjacent Public Property	0	0	0
<b>ROBBERY</b>	0	1	0
On Campus Total	0	1	0
On Campus - Residential Facilities Only	0	0	0
Non-Campus Building or Property	0	0	0
Adjacent Public Property	0	0	0



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Students and administrators believe that the number of sexual violence crimes are vastly underrepresented in number of reports, and while the university is currently evaluating its current reportage and processing systems, we need to see support from the state in order to make the strongest, most positive impact for all students on this issue. This may include increased funding for staff and resources for support services, revising definitions of consent and sexual assault, and adopting language into our university policies that eliminates victim blaming.

4. Does it build a measurable amount of power?

Yes. There are many campus groups, community organizations, and individual students who will want to get behind this campaign because sexual violence 1) is an issue that does not discriminate and 2) drastically affects a victim/survivor's ability to remain an active and healthy member of the campus community.

5. Does it have a clear and realistic time frame?

Eliminating something as sensitive and systemic as sexual violence will be an on-going process, but the time to start that process is now. The sooner we receive support from the campus administration and the state, the sooner we can make hard and fast changes to the way we handle sexual violence. On the federal level, the Higher Education Act will be reauthorized during the coming year, and the White House Task Force on Sexual Assault has released proposed changes to how campuses address sexual violence.

6. Does it have a local/state/federal organizing and lobbying angle?

There are many organizations and movements at the state and local organizations working to lobby on the issues of sexual violence everywhere and on campuses including but not limited to WSA, USSA, the "It's On Us" federal campaign, the American Association of University Women (AAUW), and many more.

7. Could students build a diverse campus coalition around this issue?

Yes, students can. Collaborating with offices like the Sexual Awareness Center, the Women's Center, the Queer Resource Center, the Ethnic Student Center, the Equal Opportunity Office, and Consultation and Sexual Assault Support (CASAS) and getting students who would like to be a part of this would be great. There are also strong community organizations that would likely welcome collaboration, including Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Services (DVSAS). There are also many different local, state, and federal organizations that are focusing on this issue that we could potentially collaborate with, some examples would be the It's on Us White House Campaign, the Project Respect Campaign through yesmeansyes, as well as many others.

8. Is it likely to be debated and acted upon by the Legislature in the next year?

Increased attention has been given to sexual violence on college campuses per the national investigation of many institutions on their sexual assault policies. The campaigns launched from the White House also has the attention of many concerned people. It is likely that the legislature will address sexual violence issues within the next year, even more likely if we motivate specific legislators to take a stand with us.



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9. Will it strengthen and expand efforts within WSA?

Yes, it will. Sexual violence on campus has a negative and harmful impact on students who are directly affected by it. Having to carry the weight around on top of trying to balance classes, work, and extracurriculars makes it difficult to perform in all of these areas. Like invisible disabilities, you can't tell just by looking at an individual whether or not they are going or have gone through sexual violence. It's up to us all to make sure we are actually taking action when it comes to providing a safe and inclusive environment for all, and not just say we do.

10. 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 (adopted from the USSA item Ending Sexual Violence on Our Campuses).

11. What creative and/or innovative tactics could we employ to engage the media and excite new students around this issue?

There isn't just one way to go about getting students to work for this issue. One way we can do this is by working to getting a committee together with the equal opportunity office to work on sexual assault, title IX, ending rape culture on campus, and much more. This group could potentially be the one to begin enacting action and change on this campus to combat this issue. Using social media, red square tabling, educational workshops, and national days of action with the USSA will give students the knowledge and resources to be a part of resolving this issue.