Combating Campus Sexual Misconduct

Creating safer and more supportive campus and community environments for graduate students

Instances of sexual misconduct, harassment, abuse, and assault are pervasive on college campuses. Graduate students are subject to unique risks and power dynamics such as financial support, future academic success, professional connections, and job placements that are often dependent on advisors and other faculty. SAGE advocates for sexual misconduct policies that foster academic environments conducive to the personal and professional safety of all students.

Among graduate and professional students, the 2019 American Association of University’s (AAU) Campus Climate Survey [1] found that:

- 2.5% of men, 10.8% of women, and 14.6% of transgender and gender non-conforming students reported instances of nonconsensual sexual contact involving physical force or an inability to consent or stop
- From 2015 to 2019, graduate women experienced a 2.4% increase in the rate of nonconsensual sexual contact
- Only 17.1% of students felt “very” or “extremely” informed about their school’s reporting process
- Only 45% of students who had experienced nonconsensual contact felt their institution was "very" or "extremely" likely to take a report of sexual assault seriously
- Among those who have reported sexual harassment, an alarming portion of incidents were perpetrated by faculty members or instructors: 24% for women and 18.4% for men; these rates are 4x higher for graduate students than for undergraduates

Oppose Changes to Title IX Regulations

The Department of Education’s proposed Title IX regulations negatively impact survivors of sexual misconduct. Provisions within the proposed regulations act as undue burdens that could retraumatize survivors, limit the scope and jurisdiction of institutions, and act as determinants against survivors coming forward with reports of sexual misconduct. [2]

SAGE Recommends:

- Support H.R. 4674 College Affordability Act (Higher Education Reauthorization)
- Support H.R. 5388 to provide that the Secretary of Education may not issue or enforce certain rules that weaken the enforcement of the prohibition of sex discrimination applicable under Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972

Invest in Support for Graduate Student Survivors

The following bills would ensure graduate student survivors have access to the resources and support they need as well as providing universities with the tools to employ proven prevention practices.

SAGE Recommends:

- Promote services in broader communities to supplement limited campus resources
  - Support H.R. 1585 Reauthorization of the Violence Against Women Act
  - Support H.R. 1082/S. 402 Survivors’ Access to Supportive Care Act
- Enhance research and transparency to reduce sexual misconduct on campuses
  - Support H.R. 36 Combating Sexual Harassment in Science Act of 2019
  - Support S. 976 Campus Accountability and Safety Act