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By Deejay Pepito and Christine (Cici) Ambrosio

A ribbon, a T-shirt and a pair of denim jeans — all used to symbolize the reality of sexual assault globally. During the month of April, which is recognized nationally as Sexual Assault Awareness Month, UC Berkeley is standing in solidarity with all survivors of violence and fostering a culture of consent, respect and support in all of our communities. We invite all members of the campus to take part in this year's theme: It's time to talk about it. Your voice. Our future. Prevent sexual violence.

It is time to talk about campus sexual assault, a national issue that unfortunately has impacted many universities. UC Berkeley is no exception. Survivors and allies are courageously standing up and sharing their stories, giving voices and identities to nameless statistics. So when we hear that the new UC campus climate study results indicate that 7 percent of all undergraduates at UC Berkeley have experienced “unwanted sexual contact” or that the **percentage** of women reporting attempted or completed sexual assault during their academic careers is about 20 to 25 percent, we need to recognize that these are people we know — a classmate, a person standing next to us, a coworker, a friend or maybe even ourselves. Where are our voices?

The reality is that even one assault is too many. Unfortunately, sexual assault affects all people, regardless of background, affiliation or identity — sexual orientation, gender identity, age, race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status or ability. With the support of leaders such as President Obama, who in January established a White House Task Force to Protect Students from Sexual Assault, or our very own Chancellor Dirks, who committed much-needed resources to sexual assault, we can do our part in creating a positive campus culture.

More importantly, providing survivors with support and information is crucial to recovery and healing. Last month, the university issued a new **policy** on sexual harassment and sexual violence, which addresses new requirements of the Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act that are applicable to colleges and universities. In addition, the **Campus Sexual Violence Elimination Act** covers a broad set of prohibited behaviors such as stalking, dating and domestic violence and sexual assault, and provides survivors enhanced rights, increases transparency about the scope of sexual violence on campus, provides for standards in university conduct proceedings and establishes campuswide prevention education programs. Under the new policy, a consent standard is defined as informed, voluntary, revocable and incapable of being given if a person is incapacitated.

In recent months, UC Berkeley has taken new steps to support a safe and supportive campus. As outlined in the chancellor's Feb. 25 letter, UC Berkeley is moving forward with creating new staff positions focused on sexual assault support, prevention and education including a survivor resource officer at UCPD and a confidential survivor advocate.

The campus also has developed a **Sexual Harassment and Violence Support and Education** website, which is a resource for those who are ready to report sexual assault. Reporting these behaviors can be important for creating a safe and supportive campus, but it is a hard thing to do, even for those who are ready to report to an official or authority. Please know that there are many ways to report, including confidentially or anonymously, and you can talk to campus and community resources about these options. To learn more, please go to survivorsupport.berkeley.edu.

So, what is our future — UC Berkeley's future? We encourage you to get involved in programs and events on campus this month that can help you become better educated, aware and empowered. Sexual Assault Awareness Month information is available during April at lunchtime tabling — weather permitting — near Sather Gate. There, you can find out about videos and workshops and pick up the distinctive teal ribbon to show solidarity with survivors. UC Berkeley's annual Take Back the Night will take place April 17 with the important theme "Shatter the Silence. Stop the Violence." Find out more about the Clothesline Project and Denim Day, planned by student organizations, campus units and others at the Sexual Assault Awareness Month [website](#).

Preventing sexual assault is not just about education one month per year or going to a workshop. Our call to action — to be informed and vigilant regarding campus sexual assault — is how we root out campus sexual violence and harassment in all its forms. Most importantly, it is about shifting the culture not only on our campus, but also in our larger society and world — a culture in which people respect each other and their boundaries, communicate freely, look out for one another, encourage sexual agency, support each person's decisions and hold one another accountable.

There are many people on campus working hard to prevent sexual harassment and sexual violence and to educate and support those impacted — student volunteers, university staff, members of student government and others. We sincerely thank them for their continuing efforts and dedication.

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