National Campus Climate Survey Informs Efforts at the University of Arizona

TUCSON, Ariz. — Students at the University of Arizona report that sexual assault or misconduct are significant problems on university campuses, according to a national campus climate survey released today by the Association of American Universities.

The 2019 AAU Campus Climate Survey on Sexual Assault and Misconduct is a follow-up to the inaugural 2015 Campus Climate Survey. A total of 181,752 students from 33 colleges and universities completed the survey. The survey was deployed at the University of Arizona in February and March to more than 35,000 undergraduate and graduate students, with 14%, or 4,906, responding.

“Every student expects to have a safe environment in which to live, learn and socialize and we are committed to making this university even safer,” said the University of Arizona President Robert C. Robbins. “The data from this survey shows opportunities to adjust our programs and better educate our campus community in the prevention of sexual assault and misconduct. The changes we have implemented to raise awareness and focus on prevention have resulted in an increase in the reporting of events that are historically underreported nationally, and I and other campus leaders will use the data from this report to inform our ongoing work to create and maintain a safer campus.”

Student respondents at the University of Arizona reported:

- The prevalence of nonconsensual sexual contact by physical force remained the same from 2015 to 2019, with 11.5% of students at the University of Arizona reported having experienced at least one incident since enrolling at the university. Undergraduate women reported the highest rate at 28.6%, up 1% from 2015. Conversely, undergraduate transgender, genderqueer and non-binary students reported dramatically lower numbers, from 32.4% in 2015 to 20.1% in 2019.
- Students reported a dramatic increase in the perception that sexual assault or misconduct is a significant problem on university campuses. At the University of Arizona, 27.5% of students perceived it as a significant problem, compared with 16.7% in 2015, and nearly 34.7% of undergraduate women indicated it was a significant problem, as compared with 20.4% in 2015.
- A larger percentage of students expressed a perceived knowledge of the definition of sexual assault and misconduct, with 30.1% responding affirmatively, nearly 9% more than in 2015. The greatest increase, from 20% in 2015 to 30.7% in 2019, was among undergraduate women.
- The student respondents showed a slight uptick in the percentage of students — 24.8% in 2019 versus 23.6% in 2015 — who reported knowing where to make a report of sexual assault or
The self-reported knowledge of where to get help if they or a friend experience sexual assault or misconduct slipped from 2015 to 2019, from 26.6% to 25.4%.

The report’s findings will be presented to University of Arizona student groups, faculty and staff in the coming months. Several new and existing programs are underway to address the issues surrounding sexual assault and misconduct.

In 2018, the Dean of Students Office launched a Survivor Advocacy program designed to offer confidential support services to student survivors of sexual- and gender-based violence. When the program launched, the Survivor Advocates were met with an immediate uptake in student requests for support.

The leadership of the Inter-Fraternity Council proactively determined that fraternity men must step up and address how men can contribute to facilitating a safe campus by partnering with the Emerge Center Against Domestic Abuse in Tucson and A Call to Men, a national organization which helps shift attitudes and values to prevent violence against women, sexual assault, and harassment and bullying. A bystander intervention program, Step Up, created by Arizona Athletics staff, is offered across campus.

A complete listing of the programs and services offered in support of students, faculty and staff at the University of Arizona is available online at survivoradvocacy.arizona.edu/resources.

“The results of the AAU Campus Climate Survey provide us with direct opportunities to collaborate with campus experts to address key student communities. Students and their families expect us to take thoughtful action as a result of this latest iteration of the survey,” Dean of Students Kendal Washington White said.

Among peer institutions, the overall rate of non-consensual sexual contact by physical force or inability to consent since a respondent enrolled as a student at their school was 13%, with the rates for women, and transgender, genderqueer, and non-binary students significantly higher than those for men.

There were significant increases from 2015 to 2019 in national student reports of their knowledge about school definitions and procedures related to sexual assault and other sexual misconduct. The largest change was for knowledge of the definition, where there were increases of 11.5 percentage points for undergraduate women and 12.4 percentage points for undergraduate men.

A team of AAU university experts worked to design the survey instrument, which included optional customization of university-specific questions. The AAU partnered with Westat, a leading social science research firm, to design and administer the survey in the spring of 2019. The 33 participating colleges and universities were provided their own campus-specific data to further inform how to address sexual assault and other sexual misconduct on campus.

The raw data from the 2019 survey completed by students at the University of Arizona is posted online: https://arizona.box.com/s/20ghac6pwtkf26ss172c0e6rhtczfh

###
The University of Arizona, a land-grant university with two independently accredited medical schools, is one of the nation's top public universities, according to U.S. News & World Report. Established in 1885, the university is widely recognized as a student-centric university and has been designated as a Hispanic Serving Institution by the U.S. Department of Education. The university ranked in the top 25 in 2018 in research expenditures among all public universities, according to the National Science Foundation, and is a leading Research 1 institution with $687 million in annual research expenditures. The university advances the frontiers of interdisciplinary scholarship and entrepreneurial partnerships as a member of the Association of American Universities, the 62 leading public and private research universities in the U.S. It benefits the state with an estimated economic impact of $4.1 billion annually.