

**PRESENTATION NOTES**  
**Raising Social Work's Visibility on Campus:**  
**Sexual Assault on Campus as a Case Example**

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Noël Busch-Armendariz, PhD, LMSW, MPA  
School of Social Work  
The University of Texas at Austin  
Professor and Associate Dean for Research  
Director, Institute on Domestic Violence & Sexual Assault (IDVSA)

Rationale for Sexual Assault as a Case Example

- Sexual assault on campus promises to be an issue relevant to every IHE over perhaps the next decade as our learning and standards about how to best respond to the issue continue to develop.
- As a case example, sexual assault on campus provides a rich example of the ways social work *is or could be more visible* in the campus setting and *provide leadership* external to our campus setting.
- If you are a reader of the Chronicle of Higher Education, then you noticed the many stories about campus sexual assault.
- There have also been numerous national meetings both about research and in response to pending and forthcoming legislation and Department of Education initiatives.

Two Caveats

- To acknowledge that many other social work colleagues are also doing this important work on their campuses.
- These issues that I will talk about are not meant to be mutually exclusive, rather these issues in the context of sexual assault on campus, in particular overlap on a continuum in important ways.

Social Work's Five Spheres of Influence

- A. Knowledge development
- B. Direct practice and advocacy
- C. Defining the narrative
- D. Influencing policy
- E. Advisory role

## A. Knowledge development

### 1. Social work framework to building knowledge

- Perhaps one of the most obvious roles for our faculty to engage is as researchers related to their areas of scholarship.

### 2. In the area of sexual assault on campus this is particularly relevant because of the pending Campus Accountability and Safety Act by Senator McCaskill and her colleagues. If passed, and most agree it will pass and be implemented for the fall, it will require that all colleges in America collect data on sexual assault and report the data online.

- These surveys will explore incidence and prevalence of victimization and perpetration, evaluate school efforts to address interpersonal violence, and examine post-assault behavior of students.
- These surveys will establish compliance with pending federal legislation.
- The specific climate study instrument is only one decision.
  - Currently we are collecting all available surveys—there are seven alternatives.
- University administrators should be concerned about quality of the data, process, dissemination of results, etc.
- Social work researchers could have a role in implementing this research.
  - Although vetting traps would be important.
  - There is quite a bit of controversy about who owns the data and some faculty, even seasoned faculty, have had difficulty with administrators about the release of results and findings.

## B. Direct practice and advocacy

Two quick direct service examples, although different perspectives of spheres of influence.

### 1. A sphere of influence related to ethics

Direct practice could be related to any number of system responses to the issue of sexual assault on campus, particularly in the areas where we need to tease out ethics. It seems that social work faculty have major contributions in discussions around ethical decisions such as:

- Are the response and reporting systems designed to respond to victims and accused students holistic and ethical?
  - You may have read the Rolling Stone article, its retraction, and the many articles in response to it, the coverage by the Columbia student who carried her mattress or Harvard faculty who have protested the decisions by DOE practices.
  - After the initial Rolling Stone article, I was interviewed for a follow up, but that was after the redaction or corrigendum.
- What is the standard practice around the confidentiality of student counseling records? You may have followed the discussion at the University of Oregon to turn over counseling records in a lawsuit of a victim of sexual assault.

- These discussions should not simply be left to legal counsel or counseling centers at universities, for example.

## 2. A sphere of influence as related to reach

Another initiative having to do with direct practice. In August 2015, we will deliver *A Blueprint for Texas Law Enforcement*. The Blueprint is a comprehensive manual to address campus law enforcement's response to sexual assault crimes.

- Our effort derives from our fifteen years of research in this area and the *Blueprint* itself will be evidence driven.

### The possibility of its reach

- The Blueprint is a partnership with our University of Texas System Department of Police and the Office of the Governor.
- The UT System Department of Police encompasses all 14 campuses in the UT System.
- UTDOP is the state's third largest police force serving over 350,000 Texans.

## C. **Defining the narrative**

This sphere of influence is multi-pronged:

### 1. As a voice with media

- Interviews such as with the Chronicle of Higher Education, Rolling Stone (although it didn't get published because it was immediately after their redaction of the UVA story), city newspapers, and local TV.
- Alicia Menendez, Tonight Show <http://fusion.net/video/19655/no-silver-bullet-in-the-fight-against-campus-sexual-assault-lessons-from-ut-austin>

### 2. Sphere of influence making connections using deliverables

- Sphere of influence related to narrative and secondary issues
  - As with the *Blueprint* that I mentioned, we have had some initial conversations with a federal funder about working with a national advisory group to translate it and use it as a national model.
- Sphere of influence related to tertiary issues
  - In a related issue I wrote an Op Ed that was picked up by the Houston Chronicle. It was read by the president of the Association for Crime Labs who invited me to their national conference to speak about my ideas, in large part because they are 'different' from the national narrative in testing sexual assault kits.
  - The Op Ed defines the narrative to perhaps push practice in a direction that is helpful, perhaps edgy, and possibly contrary, at least in this case to what is being said.
  - Not for the sake of being controversial, but based on evidence, or the lack there-of.

- Agenda setting
  - Our work and previous research in sexual assault in the criminal justice system, led to us being named as 1 of 4 universities in the White House's *Not Alone* campaign.
  - *Not Alone* was the White House's official launch of addressing campus sexual assault.
  - I should add that 2 of 4 lead researchers named in *Not Alone* are social workers (UT Austin and Rutgers).
  - Social work has a role in the conversation with federal, state, and university officials about next steps.
  - Needs assessments, practice wisdom, and findings set the road map for priorities.

#### **D. Influencing policy**

Legislation at state and national levels

- I originally prepared the White Paper (see handout) on campus sexual assault after a request from a member from Congress.
- With legislative sessions in full swing, social workers have a place to educate on bills related to campus sexual assault.
  - Met with a member of the House of Representatives
  - Asked to testify as an expert at hearings

#### **E. Sphere of influence as advisors**

1. University presidents and administrators
  - 2015 Inside Higher Ed Survey of College & University Presidents*
    - 1/3 of respondents to the survey agree or strongly agree that sexual assault is prevalent at American colleges.
    - Only 6% of respondents agree or strongly agree that sexual assault is prevalent at their institution.
2. Faculty
  - About their role as 'responsible employees'
3. Students

#### Conclusion – Thoughts

- I want to be careful not to overstate my particular sphere of influence in the area of campus sexual assault.
- While accurate, a social work feminist framework reminds me this work is accomplished through collective action.
- Social work has a unique, distinct role.

### Possible Strategies for Increased Visibility

1. Read the tea leaves –what is contextually relevant
2. Resources
  - Return on Investment
3. Negotiation
4. Administration and faculty
  - Quid pro quo—social work on campus as a valued resource