

VIA EMAIL

May 7, 2013

Dr. Susan Herbst  
President  
University of Connecticut  
352 Mansfield Road, Unit 1048  
Storrs, CT 06269-1048

Dear President Herbst:

University of Connecticut student Carolyn Luby, in an open letter to you dated April 24, 2013, urged your administration to begin “communicating a zero-tolerance atmosphere” for sexual violence on campus, “increasing or vocalizing support to violence-against-women prevention efforts on campus in the face of such events, [and] increasing support to student run programs that seek to work with athletes on issues of violence as well as academic issues.” Regrettably, in response to this reasonable request, Ms. Luby has herself received threats of sexual violence that would seem to confirm the claims made in her letter.

The Committee on Women in the Academic Profession, a standing committee of the American Association of University Professors, recently issued a policy statement about the growing problem of sexual assault on college and university campuses. The enclosed statement on *Campus Sexual Assault: Suggested Policies and Procedures* incorporates the Association’s longstanding view that the freedom to teach and to learn is inseparable from the maintenance of a safe and hospitable campus climate. As our statement emphasizes, such a climate is central to managing sexual assault effectively.<sup>1</sup>

We would like to highlight observations and findings from our document that may be relevant to recent events at the University of Connecticut:

- incidents of sexual assault are under-reported to authorities by victims for many reasons, including embarrassment, humiliation, and fear of encountering official skepticism, negligence, disrespect, blame, confusion as to what qualifies as “consent” and “sexual assault,” and ignorance that sexual assault may be a criminal offense;
- for some of the same reasons, institutions also under-report incidents of sexual assault and sexual violence, though required by law to report all such incidents annually; in addition, they may wish

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<sup>1</sup> The statement, which is attached for your information, was approved in November 2012 by the Association’s Council and is posted on the AAUP’s website at <http://www.aaup.org/report/campus-sexual-assault-suggested-policies-and-procedures>.

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to avoid negative publicity, believe allegations of sexual assault are too difficult to investigate and adjudicate, and fail to understand the criminal nature of some incidents as well as definitions, reporting requirements, and other institutional responsibilities under the law;

- despite under-reporting, the vast majority of research studies conclude that sexual assault is widespread on all types of campuses;
- sexual assault often has serious and long-lasting consequences for the individuals assaulted;
- the traumatic effects of a sexual assault are frequently compounded by universities' failure to respond effectively;
- such failures, including efforts to silence victims, compromise the core educational mission of the institution, diminish the academic freedom of all members of the campus community, and erode the trust that is fundamental to a hospitable campus climate.

In short, it is imperative that institutions commit time and resources to the development of sound policies and procedures for managing sexual assault on campus. In our recommendations for responsible policy development, we emphasize the importance of having the commitment of senior administrators, involving faculty in the process, of consulting experienced professionals on and off campus including local law enforcement officials, and of continuing to educate the entire campus community. Our statement also cites research studies, existing policy models, and state and federal guides for addressing campus sexual assault.

We hope you will find this information useful.

Sincerely,



Professor Ann Green  
Chair, Committee on Women in the  
Academic Profession



Professor Donna Potts  
Member, Committee on Women in the Academic Profession

Enclosure

cc. Professor E. Carol Polifroni, President, University of Connecticut Chapter of AAUP