Good morning. My name is Kathleen Holgerson, and I am the Director of the Women’s Center here at the University of Connecticut. I would like to thank you all for the opportunity to share with you the work that has been, and is continuing to be done, by the Women’s Center to address Sexual Assault, Dating Violence, Sexual Harassment, and Stalking on campus.

Most of our work comes out of our Violence Against Women Prevention Program (VAWPP). VAWPP was established in 1980 after a sexual assault occurred on campus that resulted in a campus wide conversation about the issue of rape. At that time, it was known as the Rape Education Program, which reflected the primary issue being addressed at that time – sexual assault. In the early 1990’s we changed the name of the program to more accurately reflect the spectrum of issues we focus on (specifically to include intimate partner violence and stalking) and to foreground our commitment to prevention.

Grounded in a social justice and feminist perspective, VAWPP is dedicated to addressing and preventing all forms of violence against women through education, outreach and advocacy. The program consists of three major components - the peer education program, the coordination of awareness campaigns, and the provision of advocacy and/or support services for survivors. VAWPP workshops are interactive discussions, facilitated by peers or professional staff, which explore the entire continuum of gendered violence and emphasize a primary prevention approach that engages all stakeholders in the campus community to examine their role in ending violence against women by addressing its root causes in oppression. The peer educators are trained through a one credit Women, Gender and Sexuality Studies course sequence, WGSS 3271 & 3272.

We have a menu of programs that we offer that reach students at various points during their tenure at the University, however today, I would like to focus on several of our signature programs. These reflect both long-standing activities, as well as newer initiatives, all of which align with best practice in the field.

• **Orientation**
  During Summer Orientation, including the sessions for transfer students, incoming students attend an educational session addressing sexual assault on campus, specifically the University’s definition of consent and the concept of bystander intervention. These sessions are facilitated by trained peer educators, except for the
Transfer student sessions, which are currently done by professional staff. The peer-facilitated session is also provided to International students and Study Abroad participants during their Orientation. Additional sessions are provided to student athletes as part of their Summer course with the Counseling Program for Intercollegiate Athletes and students at the Avery Point campus during their Summer Orientation.

It is of note that we began this programming as part of Orientation in 1991, and we are often called upon by other institutions to provide technical assistance with establishing Orientation programs. In addition, prevention and education programming for incoming students has been identified as one of the minimum standards by the Office of Violence Against Women in their Campus Grant Program.

• First Year Experience
We have developed a menu of workshop offerings with the broad goals of ALL of these workshops being:
  o To engage students in critical conversations about power and victimization across the continuum of sexual violence from sexist attitudes to assault;
  o To empower students to take an active role in changing the cultural norms that support sexual victimization; and
  o To provide students with basic information about support and crisis intervention resources on and off campus.
Workshops are 45 - 50 minutes in length, and usually involve brief film clips, interactive exercises, and discussion.

• Men’s Project
An eleven-week training for men that focuses on topics relating to gender socialization, masculinities, privilege and gender violence prevention. Our goal is to create an opportunity for men to more actively engage in critical thinking in these areas, with the hope that they will then positively influence their peers by challenging other men to examine their own socialization and to work towards active engagement in dismantling the culture that perpetuates violence against women.

• Greeks Against Sexual Assault
This is a newly established program in collaboration with the Office of Fraternity and Sorority Life. This seven week program brings together 20 - 25 participants from the Greek Community to engage in discussions and activities to critically analyze what it means to be a woman or a man in a sorority or fraternity community. The goal of the program is to leave participants empowered to make a change in their sphere of influence to shape their environments for the better. The Women’s Center serves as the placement site for the interns who co-facilitated the program.

- **Domestic Violence Awareness Month**

- **Sexual Assault Awareness Month**
  Events sponsored by the Violence Against Women Prevention Program this past year included: Project Unbreakable, a photography exhibit that promotes survivor healing through art, and Take Back the Night, which is an annual rally that includes guest speakers and performances and a candlelight campus march, followed by a survivor speak out session.

**Women’s Center Advocacy**

- Full – time Women’s Center staff provide support to students, staff, and faculty who are primary or secondary survivors of sexual assault, intimate partner violence, stalking, and/or sexual harassment. Individual advocacy services can include accompanying a survivor through the complaint/hearing process and/or assistance with navigating other resources as requested. On an institutional level, our efforts are directed across the campus to provide technical assistance related to best practice and emerging trends in the field. The advocacy mission of the Women's Center is directly tied to our educational and support service activities.
Women’s Center Support Services

• Crisis intervention
  Short-term individual support is available to anyone experiencing issues related to sexual harassment, sexual assault, relationship violence, or discrimination.

• Information and referrals
  The Center works closely with on and off campus resources and provides information about options and services, so survivors can make informed choices about next steps.

• Stronger
  The Women’s Center hosts this group which is co-facilitated by Counseling and Mental Health Services and the Sexual Assault Crisis Center of Eastern Connecticut for survivors of sexual assault and relationship violence.

One final note in regard to our institutional herstory in addressing these issues – UConn, through the Women’s Center, was a recipient of the Department of Justice’s Grants to Combat Crimes of Violence Against Women on Campus program during both the inaugural round of funding (FY’99), and again in FY ’01 and served as the lead institution for the Connecticut Consortium Project in partnership with the Connecticut Sexual Assault Crisis Services (CONNSACS). In FY’09, we were funded as part of the Connecticut Campus Coalition to End Violence Against Women, which was led by Southern Connecticut State University.

Thank you for your time and attention.

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