

# Advocacy Agenda 2014-2015

## SEXUAL VIOLENCE RESPONSE & PREVENTION

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**The mission of the Graduate Assembly is to improve the lives of University of California, Berkeley graduate students and to foster a vibrant, inclusive graduate student community.**

As colleges and universities across the nation work to reform sexual violence response policies and prevention programs, graduate and professional students are often left out of the conversation. These students face particular and distinct barriers when navigating experiences with or reporting sexual violence, including, but not limited to: lack of clarity or information surrounding student vs. professional roles, responsibilities, or rights; fear of retaliation from reporting a faculty or research advisor; and lack of consistent training and messaging. The Graduate Assembly has committed to addressing this pervasive and complex issue within its 2014-2015 Advocacy Agenda.

**In order to foster a respectful, inclusive and collaborative learning environment that is intolerant of sexual violence, the GA implores the University of California, Berkeley to 1) Recognize distinct and diverse graduate and professional student needs and responsibilities, 2) Tailor sexual harassment and violence prevention trainings accordingly, and 3) Adhere to nationally recognized best training practices.**

### Distinguishing Graduate Student Needs

Nearly 10,500<sup>1</sup> masters, doctoral, and professional students comprise the UC Berkeley graduate student body, many of whom assume myriad academic student employee roles including: Graduate Student Instructor (GSI), Graduate Student Researcher (GSR), Reader, and Tutor. **Graduate students experience sexual violence on campus in distinct ways which can influence their perceived ability or desire to report or seek services.** In their professional capacities, some graduate students are protected by collective bargaining labor agreements, while simultaneously covered under university anti-discrimination policies, such as Title IX, and the distinctions can be confusing. Further, 10% of graduate students are parents,<sup>2</sup> and may face unique barriers to seeking support. Other barriers to consider include:

- 1) Graduate students experience less anonymity in reporting due to smaller cohort sizes.
- 2) Graduate students may fear reporting perpetration by a faculty or research advisor who has power in determining their academic or professional careers.
- 3) GSIs may hesitate to seek support from campus entities for fear of encountering their students in those offices.
- 4) GSIs may hesitate to report or seek services for perpetration by their students due to lack of clarity or confusion regarding their rights.

### Adhering to Best Practices

In April 2014, the White House Task Force to Protect Students from Sexual Assault released a paper from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) on evidence-based primary prevention strategies. According to the CDC, effective prevention programs are comprehensive, skills-based, and multi-session, and focus on behavior and norms change, rather than awareness. *Online interventions do not fall into this category.*<sup>3</sup> Alternatively, the **Graduate Assembly recommends each graduate and professional student attend three mandatory, in-person, small-group sessions, per evidence-based best practice.**<sup>4</sup> Consistent and comprehensive group-specific trainings should include, but not be limited to, the following:

- 1) Graduate student rights, resources and options
- 2) Reporting obligations
- 3) Clear and readily available whistleblower and anti-retaliation policies
- 4) Considerations of power dynamics, coercion, and fear as related to advisor-advisee relations
- 5) Clear information regarding graduate student survivors' reasonable accommodations when assaulted or harassed by research or faculty advisors, undergraduate students, or other professional affiliate or colleague
- 6) Rights, resources and options for graduate student parents and their families

1. UC Berkeley Fall Enrollment Data. Office of Planning and Analysis. 2014.  
2. Financial Support for Student Parents. Berkeley Graduate Division. 2015.  
3. Preventing Sexual Violence on College Campuses: Lessons from Research and Practice. Division of Violence Prevention, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. 2014.  
4. Gualtieri, Gillian. Promising Practices for the Elimination of Sexual Violence and Empowerment of the Campus Community at the University of California, Berkeley. University Health Services. 2012.

