

Ancora

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Project Summary

Campus sexual violence is a nationwide epidemic. According to the Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network (RAINN), 13% of undergraduate and graduate students experience rape or sexual assault through physical force. Among undergraduates, 26.4% of female students and 6.8% of male students experience rape or sexual assault. Yet, as our project exposed, many students are unaware of the resources their university offers them or the basic reporting processes or options they have despite the prevalence of campus sexual assault. As detailed in our initial VOICE application, the ultimate underlying goal of Ancora is to “direct, inform, and distinguish sexual assault and harassment resources, reporting options, and the navigation of the bureaucracy for college students in the Northern California region.” While we initially envisioned Ancora to be a website, numerous unexpected challenges led us to convert our format to a live conference. This report details my project’s expenses, early and post-conference challenges, and the impact on the campus community pertaining to the 2023 Valuing Open and Inclusive Conversation and Engagement (VOICE) Initiative award used for Ancora, or as it became, the Know Your Rights and Resources: Title IX & Sexual Violence Conference.

Impacts

Roughly 40 attendees came and listened. We had more projected to come, but due to the safety concerns, our rapid transition to Zoom meant we lost some prospective participants. All attendees were undergraduate students at UC Davis. Overall, I believe this project’s objectives were met. The project addressed a widespread lack of awareness of existing institutional resources, the reporting process, and encouraged student civic engagement.

First, this conference shone a light on existing campus resources and options related to reporting sexual violence or receiving care. We brought staff members from all existing campus options related to sexual violence, confidential and not confidential alike: the Center for Advocacy, Resources, & Education (CARE), the LGBTQIA+

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Resources Center (LGBTQIARC), the Office of Ombuds, and (HDAPP). Attendees varied in awareness levels of the resources UC Davis offers, and this conference helped bridge the gaps. One attendee stated, “I had not heard of HDAPP and how someone can utilize them.” Given that HDAPP is the office students go through to report sexual violence, this conference critically made attendees aware of the basic reporting process and their options. The conference also strengthened the understanding of those with a slightly greater awareness of the campus’ resources. One student wrote, “I learned that there are numerous organizations on campus who support survivors. I initially only heard about the WRC and LGBTQIA Resource Center, but it’s cool to hear spaces like the Ombuds Office who offer impartial support.” The conference additionally highlighted differences between confidential and nonconfidential options with an attendee writing, “I enjoyed learning about the differences between CARE and HDAPP.” This conference provided a space for students to focus and learn about the broad array of options available. Without knowing what their options are, students cannot make informed decisions, possibly retraumatizing those who have experienced sexual violence.

Secondly, this conference addressed student concerns pertaining to privacy and liability, thereby encouraging future student reporting and advocacy. As discussed, campus sexual violence is an epidemic. Undergraduate students care deeply about this issue and should be able to discuss an issue that directly affects them without fear of reprisal or consequences. Liability and privacy ranked chief among student concerns

that shaped their likelihood to engage in student activism and civic engagement. Numerous students communicated their appreciation for Professor Kelly Behre and Assistant Campus Counsel Maleah Vidal’s insight. Students were concerned with liability laws, self-censorship and chilled speech, and potential consequences of student advocacy and reporting. One student wrote that they “appreciated hearing about the liability laws” and noted “a lot of times people feel a lot of fear about reporting so it’s nice to hear that there are systems in place for both reporters to be protected and people being protected from fake reports.” Learning about student privacy also alleviated students’ reluctance to report. One student was heartened to learn that “student records are protected under federal regulation such that even university employees are not able to access or share student documentation/information.” Ultimately, students may hold themselves back from reporting or speaking about sexual violence issues for a variety of reasons. However, by providing information from experts alleviating these concerns, we were able to get our attendees to understand that they

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could act without fear. Students shared they felt more comfortable with engaging in protesting and advocacy, exchanging ideas and thoughts with peers, and even criticizing university officials and authority figures for Title IX related decisions. A robust exchange of ideas and protecting dissenting opinions is foundational to the First Amendment. Ensuring students, our future leaders, are civically engaged in issues as important as sexual violence is critical to the health of our democracy and our progress as a society.