

anagha & winston **2020** POLICY WHAT IT TAKES. **2020** PAPER

Written by: Anagha & Winston 2020 Policy Team

Safe: West Campus Lighting

Summary

We've all experienced that dreaded late-night walk back home to our apartments through the dark, poorly lit pits of West Campus, constantly looking behind our shoulder for any threats. UT has taken steps to remedy safety concerns about West Campus, most notably through the creation of [SUREWalk](#) and the [UT Night Ride Credit via Lyft](#). However, it's imperative that UT also takes a preventative approach to combat the threat of crime in West Campus, and that starts with **improving lighting in West Campus**, as increased outdoor lighting is a scientifically-proven deterrent to crime, one that does not require the over-policing of students.¹

Background and Policy Recommendations

The landmark "Cultivating Learning and Safe Environments" study, otherwise known as the CLASE study, conducted in Spring of 2017, shed light on student safety concerns at UT. The report most notably found that 42% of students interviewed for the study experienced student-perpetrated sexual harassment, and 16% experienced stalking.² We feel that the campus environment and discussion surrounding student safety in West Campus has not changed since the CLASE study was conducted, especially given recent high-profile incidents of

¹ <https://urbanlabs.uchicago.edu/projects/crime-lights-study>

² <https://www.utsystem.edu/sites/default/files/sites/clase/files/2017-10/ut-austin-R11-V2.pdf>

kidnapping and other violent crime.³ A recent report from the Austin Police Department documented 29 violent crimes that took place in the West Campus area, as well as 460 property crimes, which includes crimes of theft and vandalism.⁴

Lighting is not a catch-all solution to crime and student safety; different studies have shown different results. Studies, however, have shown that taking away lighting in neighborhoods that have a high propensity towards crime only increases crime.⁵ While the university must take a variety of other measures to reduce crime in West Campus, improving lighting is a good first step, especially given the sustained student demand over this issue.

Feasibility

Anagha and Winston recognize that improving lighting in West Campus is a city issue that requires city funding. However, we are prepared to take on this challenge. For one, we will use the advocacy power of Student Government's City Relations Agency to lobby city council officials to allocate more money towards infrastructure and lighting improvements in West Campus, when the city makes its annual budget. We will also encourage students to lobby our city council member, through a coordinated lobbying campaign. Student Government has an enormous opportunity to advocate for students to elected officials. Other universities have successfully used their Student Governments to persuade elected officials to allocate more resources for students. UC Berkeley's students, for example, drafted a resolution that would build more affordable housing and improve infrastructure near campus, and successfully lobbied city Government on the lighting issue, passing a resolution in June of 2019 pledging to make

³ <https://www.kvue.com/article/news/local/austin-police-respond-to-reported-kidnapping-near-ut-campus/269-fe6301f3-af35-4a40-8354-293e6587c148>

⁴ <https://www.kvue.com/article/news/crime/ut-austin-west-campus-crime-stats/269-27edea18-7588-44c7-842b-c97da991b28f>

⁵ <https://www.citylab.com/equity/2014/02/street-lights-and-crime-seemingly-endless-debate/8359/>

West Campus safer, and working with the city's electric utility to improve lighting in the area.⁶

Sustained engagement with Austin's City Council will put pressure on elected officials to turn these promises into reality. We must harness the power of UT's Student Government to do the same, and bring about needed changes to improve the safety of UT students.

⁶ <https://www.kvue.com/article/news/crime/ut-austin-west-campus-crime-stats/269-27edea18-7588-44c7-842b-c97da991b28f>

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Safe: Sexual Assault Prevention

Summary

Sexual assault prevention is key to ensuring that students on campus feel safe. Following the recent conversations surrounding faculty sexual misconduct, it is imperative that Student Government take action to ensure student safety. Anagha and Winston's campaign wants to work with student activists and leaders on the issue to bring about meaningful change - we want to be part of facilitating the dialogue, rather than speaking over the voices of students have led the charge on creating a safer environment for students. That said, Student Government will strongly push for an **increase in the number of confidential advocates** available to survivors, as well as the creation of **Title IX-centered programming during orientation** to better educate students about Title IX.

Background

We need more robust efforts to prevent sexual assault on campus and provide more resources to survivors of sexual assault. Survivors of sexual assault face innumerable mental health challenges that make it difficult to learn and thrive and given the harrowing statistics found in the 2017 CLASE study, it's clear that survivors are by no means a small minority on campus.

Table 1. Prevalence of Sexual Harassment, Stalking, Dating and Domestic Abuse and Violence, and Unwanted Sexual Contact¹

Issue	Prevalence
Stalking	18%
Student-perpetrated sexual harassment	42%
Dating and domestic abuse/violence	31%
Unwanted sexual contact (rape, attempted rape, and other unwanted sexual touching)	34%

Source: 2017 UT CLASE Study

Table 2. Impact of Sexual Violence on the Daily Life of Survivors¹

Impact	Percent
Survivor had to take time off of school	9%
Survivor had to drop one or more courses	5%
Survivor needed medical care	4%
Survivor had to take time off of work	3%
Survivor needed to relocate to another residence	2%

Source: 2017 UT CLASE Study

Most notably, survivors of sexual violence are generally unlikely to disclose their incident, even to a close friend or relative. According to the same 2017 study, **68%** of survivors in the study did not report their incident to anyone they knew. Additionally, only **6%** of survivors disclosed their incident to someone at the institution, such as a UT faculty or staff member, the Counseling and Mental Health Center, University Health Services, and/or the UT Police Department.¹ Given recent reports of faculty sexual misconduct², and new requirements under

¹ <https://www.utsystem.edu/sites/default/files/sites/clase/files/2017-10/ut-austin-R11-V2.pdf>

² <https://cbsaustin.com/news/local/ut-releases-list-of-faculty-and-staff-members-they-say-violated-sexual-misconduct-policies>

SB 212 which require faculty and staff to report any incident of sexual assault to Title IX³, it's clear that survivors, as of now, have no trusted place that they can go to seek services. The fact that most students who have experienced sexual violence are unwilling or unable to go through Title IX to report the incident, signals an atmosphere of confusion and misunderstanding of Title IX policies. Title IX is incredibly bureaucratic, and survivors in the past have claimed that the process of investigating their claims forces survivors to relive their trauma without any guarantee of appropriate action being taken against the person accused of assault⁴. Many of these processes are inherent to the Title IX process mandated by federal law, which makes it difficult for students to make meaningful change at the university level and highlights the necessity of alternative options for students who are seeking assistance after an incident of interpersonal violence.

Policy Recommendations

One simple way UT could increase access to resources for survivors is by **increasing the number of confidential advocates** on campus. A confidential advocate is defined by UT as "trained professional staff who provide individual support to students who have been impacted by interpersonal violence." This support could include connecting students to community resources for survivors, providing mental health support, and helping survivors navigate the Title IX process.⁵ The expectation of confidentiality from the advocate exempts them from reporting requirements under SB 212, making them a valuable resource for students seeking institutional support.⁶ Unfortunately, UT only has 2 confidential advocates on staff for a

³ <https://titleix.utexas.edu/faqs>

⁴ <https://thedailytexan.com/2018/11/11/mandatory-reporting-to-title-ix-can-hurt-sexual-assault-survivors>

⁵ <https://deanofstudents.utexas.edu/emergency/advocacysupport.php>

⁶ <https://thedailytexan.com/2019/04/02/campus-activists-respond-to-bill-requiring-university-employees-to-report-sexual-assault>

school of 50,000 students. The university must hire additional advocates in order to lower their caseload and ensure that more students could gain access to this resource.⁵

Additionally, UT must increase transparency surrounding the Title IX process. Title IX is an incredibly byzantine and bureaucratic process, one that the student body as a whole is not familiar with until they experience an incident of sexual assault. Currently, UT's efforts in combatting sexual assault are focused on promoting bystander intervention and peer support. These are undoubtedly noble goals, but a key part of prevention is ensuring that those who are impacted by sexual assault have adequate access to resources and care and are knowledgeable about the resources available to them. This means educating students about Title IX, and one easy way to accomplish this is by incorporating **Title IX education in orientation programming**, especially during the show "Protecting the Herd," which educates incoming freshmen and transfers on the importance of bystander intervention when someone they know is impacted by interpersonal violence.⁷

Feasibility

Adding more full-time confidential advocate staff to the university will undoubtedly cost the university money, and it's not something that Student Government itself can pay for. However, students do want confidential advocates - this is a key demand of many sexual assault prevention activists.^{8,9} Once elected, we hope to work with campus activists and organizations to make this demand into a reality. The cost of adding 1 confidential advocate as a full-time employee will be an additional \$50,000 annually - these funds can come from UT's own endowment, or from the Longhorn Network, which was used to subsidize the cost of

⁷ <https://thedailytexan.com/2018/06/26/how-we-talk-to-incoming-students-about-rape>

⁸ <https://thedailytexan.com/2019/12/06/ut-austin-students-protest-faculty-sexual-misconduct-for-4th-time-this-semester>

⁹ <https://thedailytexan.com/2019/02/28/izzy-elena-campaign-to-recreate-ut>

counseling services in the CMHC, following a bill from Student Government which declared a campus “mental health crisis.”^{10,11} Student Government can also work around university bureaucracy by advocating for systems change, and we will leverage our State Relations and Federal Relations Agency to push for legislation that set a requirement on the minimum number of confidential advocates that universities must have, based on the number of students attending that university; this legislation would model legislation proposed by Senator Tim Kaine (D-VA).¹²

To improve orientation programming, Anagha and Winston will work, immediately after getting elected, with New Student Services to include information on Title IX resources in orientation programming. Given the short turnaround between getting elected and the start of orientation, this is something that may not be incorporated until next year’s orientation, but any step is a good step when it comes to getting students educated about Title IX.

¹⁰ <https://thedailytexan.com/2018/01/17/fenves-announces-cmhc-counseling-sessions-will-now-be-fully-subsidized>

¹¹ <https://thedailytexan.com/2017/11/15/student-government-debates-resolution-declaring-campus-%E2%80%98mental-health-crisis%E2%80%99>

¹² <https://www.kaine.senate.gov/press-releases/kaine-introduces-legislation-to-support-survivors-of-sexual-assault-on-college-campuses>