

Jenn Longa Interview Podcast

UConn recently released two annual safety reports on sexual assault and stalking

Alexandra Docken: "My sadness about my own case moved into anger about the entire system and policies they had. And I knew I just needed to do something."

Matt: That was UConn sophomore at the time, Alexandra Docken in 2022, after being interviewed by WFSB-3 about the protests at UConn surrounding sexual assault on campus.

Matt: Sexual assault is an issue that isn't meant to be taken lightly in any given context.

Matt: On college campuses, this issue holds greater weight as issues of sexual assault, intimate partner violence and stalking have made headlines. According to a UConn Today article that was published on September 27th of this year, the university released two annual safety reports. One of those reports was the Clery Annual Security and Fire Safety Report. The second report, according to UConn Today, was from UConn's Office of Institutional Equity, a state mandated annual overview in which all Connecticut colleges and universities outlined their policies and data on sexual assault, stalking.

Matt: And intimate partner violence.

Matt: After reading this article, I wanted to delve into that second report out of the two to

see if there are any drastic differences from the most recent report to say, a report that dates back to five years ago. What trends were apparent?

Matt: What changed then to now?

Matt: Jenn Longa, the Assistant Dean of Students for Victim Support Services and bystander initiatives at UConn's Dean of Students, has joined me to talk about the 2023 OIE report and what it can mean for UConn going forward as an institution. I'm your host, Matt Corpuz and you're tuning into Corpuz's Corner. Now, I had just mentioned what Jenn does in the Dean of Students office. Jenn herself, however, says that she specializes in: Title IX

Jenn Longa: So my job is sort of threefold. One, I, do training programs on sexual assault, intimate partner violence, stalking, sexual harassment and bystander intervention. Two, I work with students who are identified as having been harmed in those kinds of cases. And then third is that I supervise the PAC leaders who are volunteer students who go around and are also interested in teaching on these issues.

Matt: After reading the UConn Today article, I found the most recent OIE report. It tracked numbers on reports of sexual assault from January to December 2023. It was then published in 2024. I wanted to see if there were any trends and drastic differences from a five year old report to the most recent report.

Matt: So I had actually, I was talking about this earlier with you. I had delved into a article by UConn today about the university releasing their annual safety reports. And I was more interested and intrigued by the second report, which is by UConn's Office of Institutional Equity. And I was looking at the numbers from this past year, but also from

2018, because I wanted to see if there were any differences. So in 2018, there were 126 reported incidents of sexual assault. Five years later, and that number has slightly dipped to 118 reported incidents of sexual assault. Whether it be prevention programs or ways of reporting sexual assault. What do you think has changed from, let's say, 2018 to now?

Jenn Longa: A variety of things. I think numbers also sometimes don't cover everything that we deal with. So, for example, if a student worked with me two years ago about an incident that happened to them then, and they then come back this year, that number may not be reflected as being different or being a new number for this year. But, for example, our numbers may look different than the ones the university comes out with. As far as the regulations have changed federally, I think that UConn is doing a really good job of trying to get more information out to students. So hopefully we're stopping incidents from happening before they do. But I think that students have a better awareness of what their resources are if something bad does happen. Federally, it's gotten more complicated on how we adjudicate cases. But of all the cases that come forward, very few does the student want adjudication. Mostly they want support and resources.

Matt: Some other numbers from UConn 2023 OIE report include 68 reported incidents of sexual assault having occurred in 2023, 42 incidents as being connected to UConn, as well as three confidential or anonymous reports. In regard to sexual assault, there were nine total investigations in 2023. There were eight findings of no violation or not responsible. One investigation resulted in finding the perpetrator to be responsible and because of that, be expelled or separated from the university. One investigation was actually appealed in 2023, which I found to be one of the more interesting stats. The numbers may look small in hindsight, but at the end of the day, sexual assault continues

to be a big issue. Jenn in her office do so much to help students who may report instances of sexual assault, intimate partner violence, and stalking. In regards

00:05:00

Matt: to title IX on UConn's 2018 OIE report, there aren't any documented percentages on students who experience sexual and interpersonal violence or harassment. But in the most recent OIE report:

Matt: 29% of students have experienced sexual and interpersonal violence of harassment in 2023, from intimate partner violence to sexual assault. Why do you think it is difficult for students to report on these experiences even if they're given the choice to do so anonymously, which I know is a big thing here, especially at UConn.

Jenn Longa: I think that sometimes people aren't identifying what's happening to them, particularly in intimate partner violence. They may not be at the point where they're identifying their relationship as being abusive. You know, when we see it on tv, there's usually physical assaults. The majority of relationships, unfortunately, aren't at that level. So if your partner is regularly putting you down and making you feel terrible and is controlling your behaviors, is tracking you everywhere you go, that, for us, would be a problematic relationship. But a student may not be ready to call it that. There's still a lot of concern over, if I report, what will happen. Will my parents found out I was drinking? Will my parents know something bad happened? So I think there's a multitude of reasons. You know, there may be cultural reasons for individual students. There may be a sense of, will I be supported? Will I be believed? What will be the next steps? And also sort of the, what will I do with this now that this happened? How do I handle it, and how do I move forward? So we're doing it sort of from a roundabout angle, because

when somebody is in a trauma state, they're not thinking about reporting. They're not thinking about, you know, what are my resources on this campus versus outside? They're thinking about, I just got to get through this next day. So we really want to utilize other people to help them.

Matt: How does the annual OIE Report and its numbers help not just your department, but the university in promoting a safer and unified community? Because I know in recent years, too, like UConn has taken, like you said, a lot of initiative with bystander intervention programs and just helping promote a safer community. But how do you think the annual report and its numbers kind of help UConn gauge what next steps they could take forward?

Jenn Longa: Sure. I think part of it is letting people know they're not alone. You know, I think that when somebody is harmed, they often feel like it's never happened to anybody else. No one will understand. So I think sometimes those numbers can help people to realize, okay, it's happened to other people. And it gives us a sense of what are the trends we're seeing. Are there certain areas we should be addressing? and it helps us to figure out where are areas we need to get into to make sure people are aware of what's happening, People are aware of resources. Are we training the right people on.

Matt: The right topics with what Jenn in.

Matt: Her office does here at UConn there.

Matt: Has been an immense amount of support and resources that those who have been affected could use. From 2023's OIE report, 65% of people who reported sexual

assault were given support and resources. This is a high and promising number and something Jen's office could use for future reference to expand upon and increase how many people receive support and resources. What's concerning, however, is that 35% of reports weren't taken seriously. With UConn being a university predicated on promoting a safe campus community, this specific statistic is of concern and something that should be evaluated going forward. It just blows my mind because more than 50% of people who reported sexual assault here at UConn received the support and resources needed to slowly move forward. But then you see that 35% of those who reported didn't have the report taken seriously, and you have to think to yourself, why was this person's report not taken seriously? What could have possibly prompted someone to essentially disregard a sexual assault report? There is hope, however, with bystander intervention programs here at UConn. A notable program is Protect your Pack. This program is specifically for all incoming first years and transfer students at UConn. It happens during fall orientation and is a great way for students to understand how they can help when witnessing something. In terms of bystander intervention, 68% of people intervened when they saw someone trying to hook up with someone else who was unable to consent. 58% intervened when they thought someone might be in an abusive relationship. 55% stepped in when they witnessed someone make an unwanted sexual regard or gesture. Just like the percentage of people who reported sexual assault and received support, the number of bystander behaviors here at UConn shows great promise for the future ahead.

Matt: How could students utilize your department as a resource in fighting and reducing sexual assault, stalking, intimate partner violence, etc.?

Jenn Longa: Few ways. One, we are always open to coming in and doing training

00:10:00

Jenn Longa: programs in res halls, in student orgs, in, Greek life, wherever. for example, last night, four of the Pack leaders and I did a training program for USG, which was a great way to get more students to understand what are the issues, what are the resources, what is the realities going on out there? You know, so then if, then we see somebody who is at a level of incapacitation and somebody's looking to take them home from a party or from a bar, we're more likely to step up and do something. So one part is the training, and we're happy to always come in and train wherever the other part is letting people know that we are a non judgmental place, that people can come and talk about it and get the support that they want. We don't push people to make a report, not make a report. We're here just to help them.

Matt: Within your answer, you had brought up an interesting point about incapacitation, especially when people are trying to take other people home from bars. As someone who lives off campus, how important are not just like on campus numbers, but also off campus numbers? Because I feel like there are many instances that kind of just fly under the radar and don't really get acknowledged when it comes to things that happen off campus, but still they're so, so close to the university.

Jenn Longa: We don't differentiate in this office about where something happened. If it's off campus, on campus, it's something bad happened to someone and we're here for them. you know, whether there's alcohol, whether there's drugs, whether people are stone cold sober, we're here to provide that support. But absolutely, we're trying to get more training out there about taking care of each other.

The most recent OIE report has the numbers on sexual assault at UConn

Matt: When discussing the who, what, and where of sexual assault at UConn, the most recent OIE report has the numbers. After doing comparable research and stacking up 2018's numbers and the most recent numbers, I found that the 2018 report didn't have more of a numbers breakdown, when talking about sexual assault and the analytical aspect of it. Some numbers I found that shocked me from the most recent OIE report were that 45% of perpetrators were an acquaintance, 34% were other employees, which is quite disturbing to think about. 15% were considered other, while 8% were considered coworkers. 22% of sexual harassment occurred online. With everything today being technological, it's apparent why the number displayed is quite high. 21% occurred at a residence hall/ dorm. A shocking number was how 16% of sexual assault occurred in a classroom or academic building. Again, something like sexual assault shouldn't be taken lightly because it could happen anywhere. Another interesting statistic I found was how 8% of sexual harassment occurred in off campus housing. I found this to be interesting because as, someone who has lived off campus for the last year and a half or so, you don't really consider it because you think that with housing or off campus housing being away from UConn, that nothing could happen. But again, it comes to show that anything can happen and it could happen to anyone. After getting to know Jen and her thoughts on some of the numbers surrounding the 2023 OIE report, she leaves us with several things to consider in promoting a safe campus community here at UConn.

Matt: And is there anything you'd like to talk about that I hadn't already mentioned or asked?

Jenn Longa: I think we really want to make sure that people understand to respect each other's boundaries. That consent really is about making sure that you are checking in with a partner every step of the way, that they want to do what you want to do, that people have the right to change their mind. And I think that we all have to take care of each other. Whether we see something happening to a friend or somebody we don't even know. As a society, we need to do a better job of stepping up and taking care of people. Whether it's around Title nine or around racism or around mental health, we need to step up and take care of each other.

Matt: Interviewing Jenn put into perspective the amount of support and resources here at UConn when it comes to tackling issues like sexual assault, intimate partner violence and stalking. With programs like Protect your Pack for bystander intervention and other resources used to help combat these big issues, UConn continues to get closer in promoting a safer campus community. There are concerns, however, with some of the numbers that I saw when doing my own research on this important topic that should be taken more seriously. When you're a top public university that attracts students because of sports extracurriculars, you have to make sure that your students feel safe and that they can report something that happened to them with no harm, but rather immense support and resources. Thank you for tuning into Corpuz's Corner. I'm, your host, Matt Corpuz. I hope that if you could take one thing away from this episode, it's that if you see something or are experiencing something of your own, find someone you can confide in and say something. It goes a long way and helps UConn

00:15:00

Matt: in becoming the unified community that I know that they can be.

00:15:03