Dear University of Wisconsin-Madison student,

Whether you are new to campus or returning for another year, we hope this year will be one of positive growth for you. With that being said, we would like to take this opportunity to reach out to you to discuss a matter that concerns the University of Wisconsin community and partner with you to set you up for success. We want to talk about the issue of sexual violence, which may be a difficult topic for some readers. Confidential support and reporting options are available.

The university recently participated in the Association of American Universities Campus Climate Survey on Sexual Assault and Sexual Misconduct. Last year, UW-Madison students were invited to answer a survey about sexual violence, in an effort to help the university assess the prevalence of the issue and improve its responses. The survey confirmed much of what we know already—sexual assault remains a serious problem at UW-Madison and on campuses nationwide. It also provides us with useful new information as we improve our efforts.

The survey results revealed that undergraduate women were the most likely to report having been victimized. Perpetrators were overwhelmingly identified as male and a fellow student, often a friend or acquaintance. 27.6 percent of female undergraduates reported experiencing sexual assault (which includes sexual touching as well as penetration) either by force or when incapacitated.

Gender-based violence, including sexual assault, stalking, intimate partner violence, and harassment is a common and devastating reality on college campuses, including UW-Madison. Students who experience these incidents are at risk for long-term physical and mental health problems, and may leave school or otherwise not complete their education. The entire campus community is affected by these issues.

Though alcohol use alone is not the cause of sexual assault, alcohol does play a significant factor in how sexual assault is perpetrated at UW-Madison. Female students who experienced nonconsensual penetration by force indicated that the offender was drinking alcohol 76.1 percent of the time.

As you may be aware, the university is committed to educating our
students about sexual assault and to make you aware of all of the resources available on campus. There is evidence in this survey that some of our efforts in education and prevention are having a positive effect. However, that alone will not solve the problem. We are asking you to unite with us in our efforts to address the issue of sexual violence. Evidence shows that peers play a critical role in the success of one another, particularly related to the choices one makes. It is every Badgers’ responsibility to ensure the health and safety of all community members. One person and one conversation can make a difference.

Moving forward, we will work to encourage a healthy, safe, and nondiscriminatory environment at the University of Wisconsin-Madison by continuing to improve investigations in response to reports to these crimes, expand our prevention efforts and bystander intervention training, develop strategies to more specifically respond to graduate and professional student needs, and increase the availability of confidential victim advocacy services on campus for students.

More information on the survey can be found at uhs.wisc.edu/AAUSurvey.html.

Thank you for partnering with us to help change behaviors and be part of the solution.

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