

## Media Relations

# UNH Experts Available To Discuss New Federal Legislation Aimed At Protecting College Students Against Sexual Assault

December 10, 2010

DURHAM, N.H. – Researchers with the University of New Hampshire’s nationally and internationally recognized sexual and intimate partner violence prevention program, Bringing in the Bystander™, are available to discuss new federal legislation that recommends universities implement bystander programs to help protect college students from sexual assault.

HR 6461, “The Campus Sexual Violence Elimination Act (SaVE Act)” was introduced on Dec. 1, 2010, by Rep. Thomas Perriello (D-VA) and Rep. John Duncan (R-TN). It would require college and universities to offer prevention and awareness programming for incoming students and new employees, including bystander intervention and prevention campaigns to promote this information to students and faculty.

Sharyn Potter, associate professor of sociology, and Vicki Banyard, professor of psychology, both at the University of New Hampshire, have extensively studied sexual violence prevention and the bystander phenomena -- what influences people’s decision to intervene or not when they see a crime occurring -- and are available to discuss it. They co-direct UNH’s research and training unit UNH Prevention Innovation, which administers the Bringing in the Bystander™ Program.

In addition, Mary Mayhew, director of UNH’s Sexual Harassment And Rape Prevention Program (SHARPP), is available to discuss how universities can effectively implement sexual assault and relationship abuse prevention programs. UNH has long been regarded as a leader in addressing violence against women on campus. In 1988, the university began funding UNH SHARPP, one of the country’s first on-campus crisis centers to provide comprehensive confidential direct services and prevention programming to UNH students, faculty, and staff.





“Bystanders weigh the costs and benefits of intervening. Bystanders are worried about whether there will be retaliation against them by others, whether they will lose social status, or whether they will be physically hurt. We need community norms that work against those costs to support bystanders for making the choice to help,” Potter said.

The Bringing in the Bystander™ Program is based on studies that show the role of community norms is a significant cause of sexual and domestic violence, particularly in communities such as college campuses. It is one of the few programs of its kind that has an in-person program, A Prevention Workshop for Establishing a Community of Responsibility™, and the Know-Your-Power™ social marketing campaign. Both components of the program were developed, administered and evaluated by a multi-disciplinary team of UNH researchers.

“The Bringing in the Bystander™ Program helps prevent sexual violence by instructing community members to take an active part in preventing violence. Community members are encouraged to interrupt situations that could lead to assault or during an incident, speak out against social norms that support sexual violence, and have skills to be an effective and supportive ally to survivors after an assault,” Banyard said.

The Bringing in the Bystander™ Program is one of the few programs of its kind that has been scientifically evaluated and found to be effective. The program and the social marketing campaign do not have unintended, significant “backlash” effects leading some participants to worsen their attitudes or behaviors following participation in the program or exposure to the social marketing materials.

Earlier this year, UNH researchers met with White House officials to discuss the Bringing in the

	
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Bystander™ Program. The in-person prevention program and the social marketing campaign are being used at a number of institutions of higher education and other organizations throughout the United States.

UNH Prevention Innovations is a research and training unit that develops, implements and evaluates cutting-edge programs, policies and practices that will end violence against women on campus. It is a multidisciplinary center that includes faculty from the sociology and psychology departments as well as representatives from the UNH SHARPP and Women's Studies Program. The center's clients include colleges, universities, local governmental agencies and not-for-profit organizations. For more information, visit <http://www.unh.edu/preventioninnovations/>.

The Bringing in the Bystander™ Program is led by researchers Victoria Banyard, professor of psychology; Sharyn Potter, associate professor of sociology; Mary Moynihan, research associate in women's studies and justice studies; and Jane Stapleton, research associate women's studies and family studies.

The University of New Hampshire, founded in 1866, is a world-class public research university with the feel of a New England liberal arts college. A land, sea, and space-grant university, UNH is the state's flagship public institution, enrolling more than 12,200 undergraduate and 2,200 graduate students.

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