

Academic Consequences

New UNH research finds campus sexual violence significantly affects academics

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NEW FINDINGS THAT CAMPUS SEXUAL ASSAULT HAS A SIGNIFICANT IMPACT ON VICTIMS' ACADEMICS COULD HELP UNIVERSITIES BETTER SUPPORT THESE STUDENTS WITH PROGRAMS AND RESOURCES THAT ADDRESS THEIR ACADEMIC NEEDS.

It's no surprise that victims of sexual assault on a college campus experience considerable physical and emotional issues. New research from UNH shows that sexual assault has significant impact on victims' school work as well.

The findings, among the first to explore the importance of academic consequences for victims of campus sexual assault,

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could help universities better support these students with programs and resources that address their academic needs.

“We know from counselors and advocates that schoolwork suffers for these students, but there hasn’t been a large body of research that helps support and sustain the important programs on campus to help these victims,” says [Victoria Banyard](#), a professor of psychology and part of the [Prevention Innovations Research Center](#) at UNH and lead author of the [study](#), recently published in the *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*. “When it comes to discussions about helping address specific issues for these students, there is much more research about services that help victims with emotional stressors than research to document academic ones.”



VICTORIA BANYARD, PROFESSOR OF PSYCHOLOGY AT UNH, WAS LEAD AUTHOR OF THE STUDY.

“We hope this study will better help universities and counselors devote resources to programs that will help victims physically, mentally and also academically,” says [Ellen Cohn](#), professor of psychology and co-author of the study. “Universities strive to offer a higher education to their students, and when violence like this happens, it affects their overall mission.”

The [study](#) found students who experienced sexual violence on campus had higher stress and were significantly less confident in their academic abilities, less committed to remaining at their

current university and less diligent at meeting academic commitments and responsibilities.

“We hope this study will better help universities and counselors devote resources to programs that will help victims physically, mentally and also academically.” — Ellen Cohn

Researchers used questionnaires to survey 6,482 students (men and women) from eight universities in New England. They identified stressors around four areas of sexual violence: unwanted sexual contact, unwanted sexual intercourse, intimate partner violence and stalking. The study measured four academic outcomes — academic efficacy, collegiate stress, institutional commitment and scholastic conscientiousness — that are important for college success and might be affected by sexual violence. Overall, there were significant

findings for three of the four forms of victimization across all four of the academic measures.

Past studies have shown approximately 19 to 25 percent of women will experience attempted or complete rape while enrolled in college and approximately 20 to 50 percent of students will experience intimate partner violence during their college years. Sexually victimized students, before or during college, are more likely to drop classes, change residences and have lower GPAs. Because of that, universities are increasingly being confronted with the question of how to attend to the needs of these students.

In addition to Banyard and Cohn, co-authors of the study were UNH researchers Jennifer Demers, doctoral student in psychology; Katie Edwards, associate professor of psychology; Mary Moynihan, affiliate associate professor of women’s studies;

Wendy Walsh, research associate professor of sociology; and
Sally Ward, professor emerita of sociology.

WRITTEN [Robbin Ray '82](#) | Communications and Public Affairs |

BY: robbin.ray@unh.edu | 603-862-4864

CONTRIBUTORS: [Beth Potier](#) | Communications and Public Affairs

| beth.potier@unh.edu | 2-1566

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