



## ASSOCIATION OF AMERICAN UNIVERSITIES

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### **28 UNIVERSITIES WILL PARTICIPATE IN AAU SEXUAL ASSAULT CLIMATE SURVEY**

#### **Survey, Among Largest Ever on Sexual Assault, Will Begin in April**

The Association of American Universities (AAU) announced today that 28 of its U.S. public and private research universities, along with one non-member institution, will participate in its national sexual assault climate survey this spring.

The participating universities total over 800,000 undergraduate, graduate, and professional students, so the survey is expected to be among the largest ever on sexual assault. AAU and the participating institutions have contracted with Westat, one of the nation's most respected research companies, to conduct and analyze the results of the survey.

“Our primary purpose in conducting this survey is to help our institutions gain a better understanding of this complex problem on their own campuses as well as nationally,” said AAU President Hunter Rawlings. “Our first priority, and theirs, is to ensure that students not only are safe but feel safe. Universities will be using their data to inform their own policies and practices regarding sexual assault. We also hope the survey will help policymakers gain a better understanding of the problem, and that it will make a significant contribution to the growing body of research on sexual assault.”

He added, “We are pleased that we will be able to conduct a climate survey involving so many universities and students from every region of the country. We have an excellent cross-section of our institutions – about half public and half private, rural and urban, with a range of sizes.”

The AAU universities participating in the survey are: Brown University; California Institute of Technology; Case Western Reserve University; Columbia University; Cornell University; Harvard University; Iowa State University; Michigan State University; The Ohio State University; Purdue University; Texas A&M University; The University of Arizona; University of Colorado Boulder; University of Florida; University of Michigan; University of Minnesota, Twin Cities; University of Missouri-Columbia; The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill; University of Oregon; University of Pennsylvania; University of Pittsburgh; University of Southern California; The University of Texas at Austin; University of Virginia; The University of Wisconsin-Madison; Washington University in St. Louis; and Yale University.

Dartmouth College, a member of the Consortium on Financing Higher Education, whose non-AAU members were also invited to join the survey, will participate as well.

Nearly all of the AAU universities not participating in the survey are either carrying out their own surveys or participating in state university system surveys.

A team of experts from universities and Westat is developing the survey, based on an instrument developed by the White House Task Force to Protect Students from Sexual Assault. The survey will document the frequency and characteristics of campus sexual assault and sexual harassment, and assess campus climate in a way that allows for comparability of data across institutions and that protects the confidentiality of respondents.

The survey will be offered to all undergraduate, graduate, and professional students beginning in April. Westat and participating universities will implement a number of communications strategies and incentives to maximize participation.

The same survey will be used at all participating universities except for five questions that will mention campus-specific programs to assess students' familiarity with campus resources, support services, and reporting mechanisms.

AAU will publicly report aggregate results from across the participating AAU campuses. Westat will provide each institution with its own data, and each will decide whether and how to disseminate those results. AAU will encourage institutions to release their institutional data.

The university survey development team is chaired by Dr. Sandra Martin of the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill (UNC). Dr. Martin is Professor and Associate Chair for Research in UNC's Department of Maternal and Child Health and Associate Dean for Research at the Gillings School of Global Public Health. The team includes researchers, practitioners, and other professionals with direct academic and/or practical experience in survey research, sexual assault, gender issues, student affairs, or other related matters.

The Westat team includes Dr. Bonnie Fisher, a nationally recognized expert on sexual assault.

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*The [Association of American Universities](#) is an association of [60 U.S. and two Canadian research universities](#) organized to develop and implement effective national and institutional policies supporting research and scholarship, graduate and professional education, undergraduate education, and public service in research universities.*

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