

News Release

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NASPA[™]

Student Affairs Administrators
in Higher Education

NASPA, AFA, ACPA and ASCA issue joint statement

All accusations of sexual assault should be handled in a manner that protects the rights and well-being of victims of sexual violence

WASHINGTON, D.C. —The Association of Fraternity/Sorority Advisors (AFA); College Student Educators International (ACPA); the Association of Student Conduct Administrators (ASCA); and Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education (NASPA); issue this statement in response to the recent fallout from the Rolling Stone article regarding the student and institutional responses to sexual assault at the University of Virginia. These events illuminate the duty of all professionals on our campuses to ensure that accusations of sexual assault, including those involving members of fraternities and sororities, are handled in a manner that protects the rights and well-being of victims of sexual violence.

First and foremost, we share the concerns of many about the harm that could result from the Rolling Stone article to our nation's fight to empower and encourage victims of sexual violence to come forward to disclose and report their experiences. Therefore, we wish to reconfirm our and our members' commitment to do our part in preventing sexual violence by responding to student reports of violence in a manner that will assist the reporting student and encourage other students to report incidents of sexual harassment and violence when they occur.

Second, we firmly believe that college and university administrators have a duty to protect their students and communities from sexual and other kinds of discriminatory violence, regardless of the status of a parallel criminal investigation. Knowing that a very small percentage of reported sexual assaults ever result in criminal conviction, we find the notion that colleges should be forced to sit on their hands while their students' rights to dignity, bodily integrity and equality are violated to be completely unconscionable. College administrators have a responsibility to address sexual violence, and have been doing so for decades, separately from the criminal justice system, because such violent acts are not only criminal, but also create civil rights violations that the criminal justice system cannot address even in the rare instance where a case is prosecuted.

We also have confidence that college administrators have the skills and commitment to constantly improve their investigations and resolutions of sexual misconduct. Well-trained campus investigators are fully capable of conducting high-quality, impartial, fair and unbiased investigations related to reports of sexual misconduct as outlined by the institution's code of conduct and applicable federal and state laws.

Finally, we support both students' rights to freely associate and in rare cases, temporary, well-defined and purposeful suspensions of fraternity/sorority activities in response to widespread allegations of misbehavior, especially misbehavior that harms other

students. Temporary suspension of the activities of student groups does not violate student association rights however, pausing the activities of student groups for a reasonable, defined period of time can be a useful mechanism in helping a reeling group evaluate and assess in a time of crisis, especially when that crisis may be related to the group's activities, as may be the case with sexual violence, hazing, and binge drinking.

We call on the leadership of both our campus based professionals and our fraternities and sororities to work collaboratively with other campus partners, including administrators, to protect the rights of all students and work to improve the fraternity/sorority experience and the safety of our campus communities.

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NASPA is the leading association for the advancement, health, and sustainability of the student affairs profession. Our work provides high-quality professional development, advocacy, and research for 13,000 members in all 50 states, 25 countries, and 8 U.S. territories.