

To whom it may concern,

As a graduate student at the University of Hawaii at Manoa, I can speak to how it feels to be a female in the campus setting. For the most part, I've appreciated studying in such a warm and welcoming environment, many of my classes end as late as 8:00pm, when the campus is poorly lit and I feel more vulnerable. I recognize that, as far as we've come in terms of women's rights and equality, that I often have to think about my surroundings and safety, because I can't trust that my right to my own body and autonomy is a given to most people.

I recognize the need for a societal shift. People need to be educated regarding respect, consent, and boundaries, and the university setting is the most natural start to implement such a change. When young people are experiencing independence, new friendships, and intimate relationships for the first time, they are being fed many messages by their environment. Having already lived in a campus setting while obtaining my undergraduate degree, I am all too familiar with these messages. Men are taught that their status as men rests on how many women they are able to get into bed with them. Little is mentioned as mutual enjoyment, safety, respect, or communication. Nothing is mentioned about the partner's ability to say no.

I believe that change is in motion, and that the University of Hawaii System should be on the right side of this movement. Whenever a paradigm change is to occur, there is going to be resistance, but that is why we must be active. Integrating education regarding resources, help, consent, and healthy relationships into the college experience may save many students from falling into the promoted norms of rape culture. PAU Violence is the best way for this to happen.

By providing prevention education and direct intervention resources for students, PAU Violence is on both ends of making sure that students are living and studying in an environment that is promoting their well being and supporting them. Education and promoting an image that is embraced by students that sexual assault and interpersonal violence are not acceptable is a campaign that can be led by this program, and will not be launched on its own. Further more, until we see an absolute change in the environment where NO person falls victim to these traumas, the university is responsible to provide the resources to allow students who have experienced interpersonal violence and assault to go about their academic studies in the most positive and healthy way possible.

In summary, I believe that PAU Violence is key to providing the necessary environment and elements for change that the university setting demands to ensure that all students can have positive experiences and overcome the pressures of engaging in a negative culture of objectification and lack of respect. Please allow the PAU Violence program not only to continue, but also to expand to support students in new and creative ways.

Thank you,
Sarah Connor
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