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SMC responds to anonymous sexual harassment flyers

By Vera Kochan

Saint Mary's College students, faculty and staff during the last week in April were met with flyers taped up campus-wide describing alleged unwanted sexual encounters from anonymous victims and demanding the campus community believe survivors and take action on campus, such as reposting the hashtag #SMCProtectsRapists, and to following @smcsurvivors on Instagram.

In response, SMC's Vice President of Student Life & Title IX Coordinator Anthony Garrison-Engbrecht, Ph.D. issued a statement to the SMC community stating, "Over the last few days, the College has been made aware of concerns regarding Title IX. As the Title IX Coordinator, I want to thank our students for holding us accountable and take this opportunity to share updates on what we are doing to build a culture rooted in respect for each other and reaffirm our commitment to prevent and respond to incidents of sexual misconduct."

Under Title IX, discrimination on the basis of sex can include sexual harassment. "In May 2020, the U.S. Department of Education added specific legally binding steps educational institutions must take in response to notice of alleged sexual harassment," according to Cornell Law School. "The 2020 amendment defines sexual harassment to include certain types of unwelcome sexual conduct, sexual assault, dating violence, domestic violence, and stalking."

Garrison-Engbrecht's statement encouraged any victims to immediately contact Title IX Deputies or himself to report an incident, which will be held in confidence. He also noted that SMC has contracted with Grand River Solutions for support training, investigations and review of campus policies and processes. He implored the SMC community to become involved and support any victims of sexual misconduct.

Additionally, several support sources were listed: Campus Assault Response and Education Center (925) 631-4193; CARE Line (925) 878-9207; Counseling and Psychological Services (925) 631-4364; Center for Women and Gender Equity (925) 631-4192; Mission and Ministry Center (925) 631-4366.

SMC is working to schedule a meeting to address any concerns in person and to open a constructive dialogue on how the campus can move forward regarding shared goals.

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