

Opinions

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Editorial

UF needs to educate students on consent

To be clear, a number of resources are available to victims of sexual assault at UF. According to the University of Florida Policy on Sexual Assault, victims are encouraged to report to the University Police Department's Special Investigation Unit, the Gainesville Police or the Alachua County Sheriff's Office, all of which are staffed with professionals trained to assist victims.

The UF Office of Victim Services provides civilian support through the Victim Advocate Program, a confidential service that ensures victims know their rights and are treated with respect and fairness. The UF Counseling & Wellness Center offers confidential individual or group counseling for anyone dealing with "any form of sexual exploitation." The services are available to students at no cost.

Alachua County also has a Victim Services and Rape Crisis Center, which provides 24/7 phone support to victims of rape and sexual assault. The hotline number is 352-264-6760.

While it's commendable both UF and Alachua County offer victim services, current campus-rape statistics and the stories of female students who have been raped or sexually assaulted suggest a need for a more proactive approach to stopping rape. It's simply not enough to offer women BlueLight apps and tailored self-defense courses, especially since the National Institute of Justice reported that about 85 to 90 percent of college women who report sexual assault know their assailants.

According to Psychology Today, college rapists are not strangers in the night, as the most common rape myth stipulates. One study on personality traits of college rapists revealed that assailants are repeat offenders who see nothing wrong with their behavior and often aren't caught.

Statistics on Vassar College's Sexual Assault Violence Prevention page presented more unsettling information: 84 percent of college men who committed rape said what they did wasn't rape.

The most commonly suggested proactive approach to ending rape culture is implementing consent education.

If UF simply added a sexual-consent workshop during Pre-view and mandated that fraternities educate their members on sexual consent, perhaps we could see lower rates of rape and sexual assault on and around campus.

Rhiannon Holder, a youth worker for Brook, a sexual-health charity in the United Kingdom, told The Guardian that society needs to better clarify what informed sexual consent entails.

"Too often [consent] is viewed as a simple yes or no, and it's much more complex than that," says Holder. "I don't think many young people are offered the opportunity to explore all of the factors involved in giving consent: peer pressure, alcohol and drugs, self-esteem, coercion, gender issues."

Experts have weighed in, and data doesn't lie: Moving forward, colleges — including UF — need to engage college men by making sure they know that if a woman is intoxicated, she can't consent. If a woman is asleep, she can't consent. And if she doesn't explicitly say "yes," she's not consenting.

Reader response

Today's question: Do you like OneRepublic?

Monday's question: Will you download Chipotle's game app?

32% YES
68% NO
42 TOTAL VOTES

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Column

Dating? 'Nah, man, we're just talking'

The college-dating scene seems to be a culture of not-quite-caring — an awkward landscape pocked with holes and valleys that trip us up on the way to understanding our relationships. Try drafting one text to the dime from last weekend. The metaphor will crystallize pretty quickly when you find yourself eight drafts deep and still unsure of what to say.

Dating as we knew it is dead. Experts call our version of dating the "hookup culture," characterized by flippancy and insincerity. Although they're not certain what caused the change, they believe technology could be the culprit.

We never put all our cards on the table, and we never make a real emotional investment. The disconnect introduced by technology is manifesting now as a disconnect in feeling.

Dating no longer means dinner and a movie. Instead, it's a cycle of Facebook messages, texts and Snapchat exchanges that require multiple friends to decode. What started with "let's not label it" has become a full-fledged and seemingly permanent change in dating culture.

Today's "dates" are "one step below a date, and one step above a high-five," said Shani Silver to The New York Times.

Instead of trying a new restaurant together, we fire off texts on our way out the door with a nonchalant, "Hey, I'm going out if you want to meet up."

The walls start with the vocabulary. The romantic lexicon of our age group consists of irritating phrases like "We're just talking" and "We're hanging out." While these things may be true, we talk to and hang out with a myriad of people every day.

The way we discuss the people we're attracted to sets them on a plane of equal importance with the majority when, ideally, we'd like to think we make one another feel a little more special.

Instead, we create confusion about where we stand with one another — as if we need help with the insecurity.

The advent of texting, Facebook messaging and the



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rest has made it somehow taboo to call each other. Now Snapchat has been added to the mix. Bless this hilarious, wonderful app for allowing routine ugly picture exchanges, but damn it for adding to the haze.

So why is it not cool to care? People can openly and unabashedly obsess over a Netflix series, but enter an interesting human being and suddenly the raving, obsessive TV fans seem completely ambivalent.

This is not to say we should all declare our burning love for one another on the first date. That will never not be weird. But if we can shout our love of "Game of Thrones" from the rooftops, there is no reason we should be unable to say "I like someone." Dating someone, which used to be the No. 1 sign of coolness, has instead become a liability to that coolness.

A study commissioned by eHarmony reports that since 1995, typical venues for meeting others in person like work, church and social gatherings are on the decline, while the Internet's role as a meeting place has expanded significantly. UF students are lucky to attend such a large university, which is one of the last arenas to meet others in person on a regular basis.

Going to college for an MRS isn't the point — that's as outdated as quitting school to work harvest season on the family farm. Instead of shrugging off our attractions and playing cool, let's put down the smartphones and go play miniature golf or something. Stop wasting time with Emojis and try actually emoting instead.

Dating customs, like chivalry, change over time like any other social construct. While chivalry may be dead, it should be our common goal not to let sincerity of emotion follow suit.

Katie McPherson is a UF English junior. Her column runs on Tuesdays.

The views expressed here are not necessarily those of the Alligator.