



students active for ending rape

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For Immediate Release

**Building SAFER Campuses:
SAFER Launches Campus Activist Mentoring Program**

April 8, 2008, New York—This month, Students Active For Ending Rape (SAFER) launches its new Campus Activist Mentoring Program. Developed in response to student requests, the Activist Mentoring Program will pair a student group with an experienced organizer for one-on-one conversations about the specific details of developing a campaign to change how sexual assault is prevented and responded to on their campus. This new program is part of SAFER’s ongoing response to the pervasive campus rape epidemic and the frequent unwillingness of college administrators to recognize the problem. SAFER is committed to providing students with resources to hold their colleges accountable for combating sexual assault in their on- and off-campus communities. SAFER will offer student groups up to 36 hours of mentoring free of charge.

“Through this service, the group can assess their community’s readiness to develop a grassroots movement against sexual violence, strategize about how to gain allies and a critical mass of supporters, develop a complete and campus-specific list of goals for a revised sexual assault policy, and brainstorm solutions to organizing roadblocks as they occur,” said Executive Director Margaret Mikkelsen. “This service allows students to draw on knowledge provided by experienced organizers while tailoring our support to their busy schedules and the specificities of their campus situations.” SAFER will continue to offer the programs it already has in place to support students, including the training manual *Change Happens* and on-site training programs, as well as its website and blog.

“Our goal is to ensure that every college puts in place prevention and education programs, crisis services, fair and transparent disciplinary procedures, and community outreach programs,” Mikkelsen said. “Sexual assault is the number one violent crime on college campuses.

About 20 to 25 percent of college women will be victims of sexual assault or attempted sexual assault at some point during their college years. Yet current college policies are often inadequate and ineffective, tend to retraumatize survivors, and exclude students and community members from input.”

To date, SAFER has worked with a range of college communities ranging from Skidmore College and Simon’s Rock College of Bard to Georgetown University and Harvard University. “We believe that our new Campus Activist Mentoring Program will help us assist more students every year,” said Jeff Senter, SAFER co-founder and board of directors member. “We’re very excited to bring the expertise of our organizing mentors to students in the most accessible and personal way possible.”

SAFER’s blog, www.safercampus.org/blog, has recently drawn national attention through an online editorial posted on the *LA Times* website. “In our blog, we report on current events related to sexual violence and highlight quality media about sexual assault, especially stories written by students. We also share insights into the challenges of organizing on campus and connect students to other resources for combating sexual violence on their campuses,” said Nora Niedzielski-Eichner, a graduate student at Stanford University and member of SAFER’s board of directors. “Our blog helps create a sense of community among activists from different schools and keeps students from feeling like they are working in isolation.”

Also in response to student requests, SAFER is currently developing a database of college sexual assault policies nationwide, with comments on specific positive and negative policy elements. This database will enable students to be better informed about the various policy options available, and to see how their school compares to similar schools.

SAFER began as a student group at Columbia University in 1999, organizing a successful grassroots student campaign that culminated in a new office devoted to sexual assault prevention and education, a range of committees devoted to improving the school’s response to campus sexual violence, and improved disciplinary procedures with greater oversight and transparency. “We began receiving emails from students at colleges across the country asking for advice and guidance on how to build a movement to improve their own sexual assault policies,” said Sarah Richardson, SAFER co-founder and board of directors member.

SAFER was incorporated as a 501(c)3 non-profit led by students and recent graduates in 2000 and offered its first organizing training for students in 2001.