



OFFICIAL STATEMENT

To: The Madonna University Community

Statement for Sexual Assault Awareness Month:

In the United States, April is recognized as Sexual Assault Awareness Month. The goal of Sexual Assault Awareness Month is to raise awareness of sexual violence, who it affects, and how to prevent it. It is up to us as a Madonna University community to not stand idly by while both men and women are terrorized by sexual predators and memories of past traumas. The Franciscan values that Madonna University was founded, does stress a reverence for the dignity of each person and respect for each and every one of God's creations. Sexual assault is a crime that robs a victim of their very dignity. It is of paramount importance that we do not blame the survivors of such violence, but to be understanding and supportive following the worst moment in an individual's life. By not supporting or respecting each and every survivor of sexual violence, we become no better than the rapist or sexual predator who committed the crime.

It is up to all of Madonna University's administration, faculty, staff, and students to aid in the fight against sexual violence on campus and in the community. The best way to combat sexual violence is through the creation of a uniform definition of consent and education about what a consensual sexual encounter looks like. The University should also educate students about alcohol abuse, how it is connected to sexual assault, and how a bystander can intervene if they witness an event or situation where sexual assault could occur.

Former Vice President Joe Biden wrote a letter to college administrators stating that they "have an obligation to stand up, to speak out, [and] to foster the safest and most inclusive environment possible for every student that walks onto your campuses"¹ and that sexual assault should be treated with the "same seriousness and resources as you would any other epidemic."¹ By admitting that sexual assault is a problem, creating a definition for consent, educating students about how to be proactive to decrease the prevalence of sexual violence, and providing proper resources for survivors, Madonna University's administration would be taking much needed steps to create an environment where "all students are treated with dignity and respect."¹

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¹<http://college.usatoday.com/2017/01/05/biden-its-on-us-final/>