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Survey: 1 in 5 Female Cadets are Assaulted

Leader Releases Sexual Assault Report in Effort to Educate Cadets

By Bruce Smith, Associated Press

CHARLESTON, SC – Almost 20 percent of female cadets at The Citadel last spring reported they had been sexually assaulted since enrolling at the state military college, according to a survey released Wednesday.

About 4 percent of the male cadets also reported such assaults while attending the formerly all-male school, the survey found.

“I realize that this data makes for sensational copy and sound bites,” said retired Air Force Lt. Gen. John Rosa, who became Citadel president after serving as superintendent of the U.S. Air Force Academy. “These problems are not unique to The Citadel.”

Rosa arrived at the Air Force Academy in the wake of a leadership shake-up following a sexual assault scandal that found female cadets feared they would be disciplined if they reported rapes.

Of the 27 alleged sexual assaults against females at The Citadel, 17 were never reported. Forty-eight percent of the women who did not report assaults said they feared ostracism, harassment or ridicule if they did, the survey found.

“Some wonder why I would release information that reflects negatively on the college,” Rosa said. “My reason is simple. In order for us to address these issues, we must discuss them openly.”

Rosa has used the survey in creating a Values and Respect program that began this semester. The aim is to educate cadets on such topics as sexual harassment, alcohol abuse, the honor code and racism.

“We do hold ourselves and I think this state ... and this country holds us to a higher standard,” Rosa said. “To not attack this problem head-on would simply not be an option.”

A Citadel graduate, Rosa had said earlier the survey found the incidence of sexual assault and sexual harassment higher than at the federal military academies. The Citadel numbers were not released until Wednesday.

Seeing the survey, “I was disappointed because I love this institution,” Rosa said. “Most of what I saw did not surprise me because we are dealing with this in this segment of society across this nation.”

Over the course of a college career, roughly one in five young women experiences a rape or an attempted rape, a federal study has found.

It has been a decade since The Citadel opened its doors to female cadets. Last year, 118 women and 1,770 men were enrolled.

All female cadets and about 30 percent of the men were asked to complete the anonymous online survey. Of those, 114 women and 487 men responded.

The reported sexual assaults included unwanted touching, but 16 of the 27 incidents reported by women and 15 of the 23 reported by men involved unwanted oral sex or other sexual activity.

Most of the reported incidents involving women happened on campus where the alleged perpetrator was another cadet. Some of the cadets reported being subjected to more than one assault.

Sixty-eight percent of the women reported one or more incidents of sexual harassment, including sexual stories and jokes.

A survey of the U.S. military academies released last year found that more than 50 percent of female respondents and 11 percent of male respondents experienced some type of sexual harassment since enrolling.

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