

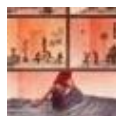
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A summons that haunts

# Forum examines campus sexual assaults

By Matt Rocheleau | GLOBE CORRESPONDENT JULY 14, 2014



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HANOVER, N.H. – US Representative Ann McLane Kuster told an auditorium filled with men and women at Dartmouth College that sexual assault on college campuses is “a problem that can and must be solved.”

The New Hampshire Democrat returned to her alma mater Sunday night to help kick off a five-day conference on how to combat sexual violence and support victims, issues that have drawn heightened concern from numerous sectors — from local advocates to federal administrators.

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“Summits and conferences and hearings lead to awareness and policy but mean nothing without a true change in behavior and that takes leadership,” Kuster, a 1978 Dartmouth graduate, said. “As a nation we will reach a tipping point where nonconsensual sexual encounters on our college campuses are a thing of the past.”

The Dartmouth Summit on Sexual Assault on College Campuses is expected to draw about 300 people from White House staff to local, state, and federal officials to advocates and law enforcement. Administrators, faculty, students, staff, lawyers, counselors, and researchers from more than 50 colleges and universities are also on tap to attend .

Attendees are expected to discuss issues including the role of media in promoting “rape culture,” a recently released report by a federal task force, as well as strategies for preventing sexual assault, aiding victims, investigating cases, and disciplining student offenders.

Dartmouth president Phil Hanlon said the college is “committed to being a leader in addressing sexual assault.”

“This summit is an important piece in continuing the conversation,” he said in a statement. “By bringing together a diverse consortium of people with a vested interest in this issue, we can incorporate different perspectives and think creatively about finding solutions.”

“

*‘As a nation we will reach a tipping point where nonconsensual sexual encounters on our college campuses are a thing of the past.’*



The conference's Ivy League host, however, has been a source of controversy as administrators were accused of mishandling sexual assault cases. As a result, the college has taken steps to prevent sexual violence and better respond when it does occur.

But it is far from the only school under fire.

More than 60 others are under investigation by the US Education Department for possibly violating federal policies in their handling of cases of sexual assault on campus.

Among those schools are nine from New England: Amherst College, Berklee College of Music, Boston University, Emerson College, Harvard University's undergraduate college, Harvard Law School, the University of Massachusetts Amherst, the University of Connecticut, and Dartmouth.

This spring, Tufts University initially denied, but later accepted, findings from an investigation by the education department that said the university was out of compliance with rules for handling sexual assault cases.

Numerous other schools that are not under federal investigation have been sued or publicly blamed for similarly failing to adequately respond to specific instances of sexual assault, including the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Northeastern, Brandeis, Brown, and Yale universities locally.

Critics, including President Obama and lawmakers such as Kuster, have said the issue is one that virtually every campus is failing to adequately combat. This spring, the White House unveiled new guidelines to help schools address the issue amid growing activism.

*Matt Rocheleau can be reached at [matthew.rocheleau@globe.com](mailto:matthew.rocheleau@globe.com).*



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