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**Title**

Impacts of Sexual Assault Trauma and Mental Health on Graduate Student Retention and Academic Success

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# Impacts of Sexual Assault Trauma and Mental Health on Graduate Student Retention and Academic Success

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## Project Abstract:

This project addresses student retention and success of underrepresented students. It examines the efficacy of current resources, education, and training available for addressing the effects of sexual assault, violence, and post-traumatic stress on graduate student mental health.

I employ a combination of ethnographic research methods, participant observation, interviews, and content analysis, and techniques such as snow-balling and generative survey responses in order to reach particularly marginalized students.

My expected outcomes include increased graduate retention and improved campus climate in regards to diversity and mental health, which, in turn, will encourage the growth of diverse student populations on our campus.

## Project Goals:

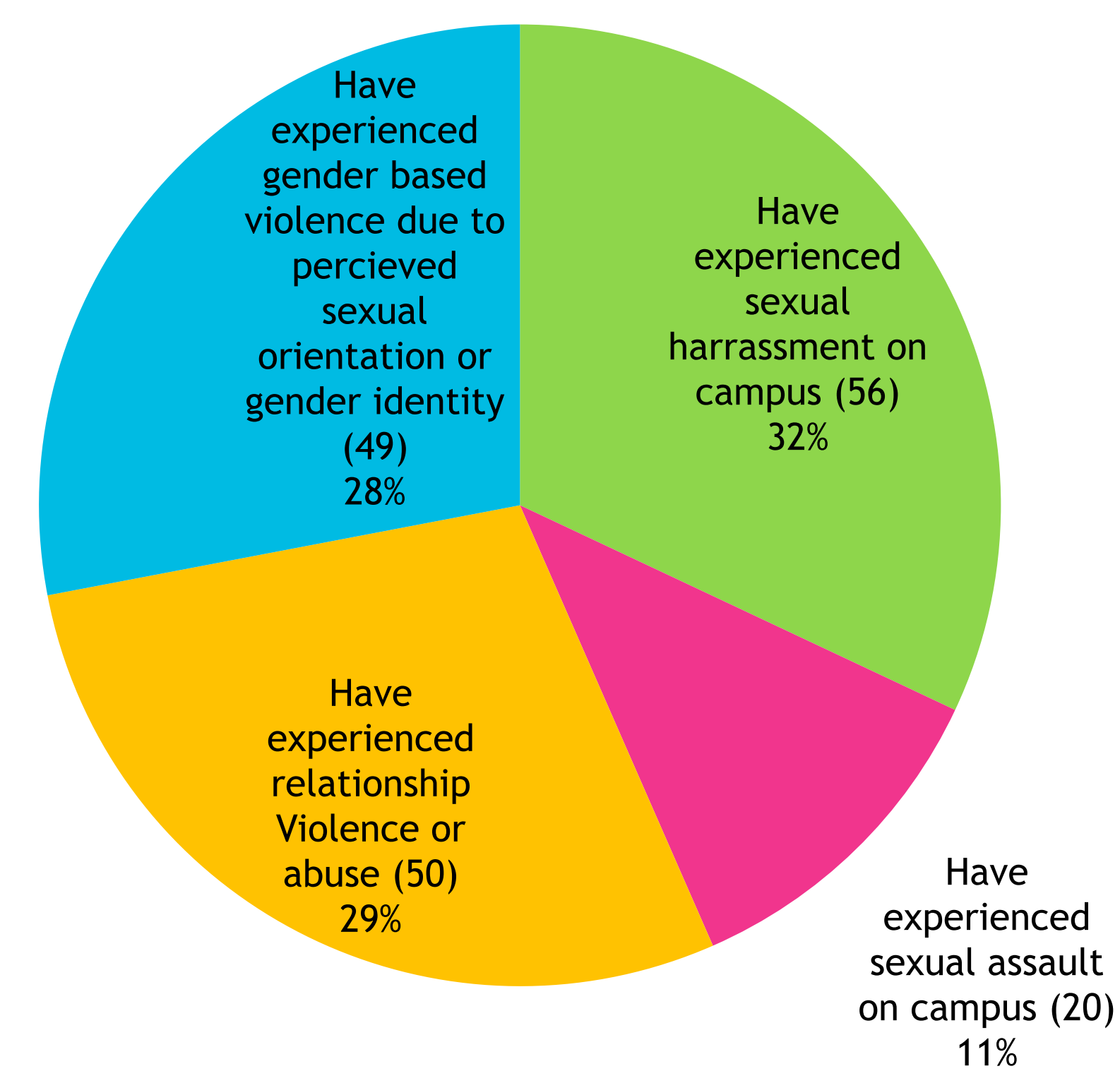
- Identify and assess the impacts of the university task forces regarding sexual assault and prevention resources
- Connect projects, build collaboration, and identify the best practices that can be shared in order to encourage graduate student health and success
- Encourage UCOP and UCSC admin to support the Graduate Student Happiness & Well-Being Survey being applied to our campus
- Identify and assess the efficacy of current sexual assault- and harassment-prevention resources on our campus
- Conduct interviews and/or surveys with graduate students with the goal of uncovering any links between post-traumatic stress, mental health, and retention and academic success
- Identify areas of need for graduate students in regards to training and awareness of campus resources
- Research the programming and best practices of other universities and assess their potential usefulness and possibility of implementation on our campus



## Campus Sexual Violence and Assault Survey For Graduate Students

Conducted in collaboration with UAW Anti-Oppression Committee and GSA Solidarity Committee (Amanda Reyes and Jessica Wattcott)  
171 respondents out of grad enrollment of 1637 (Fall 2015)

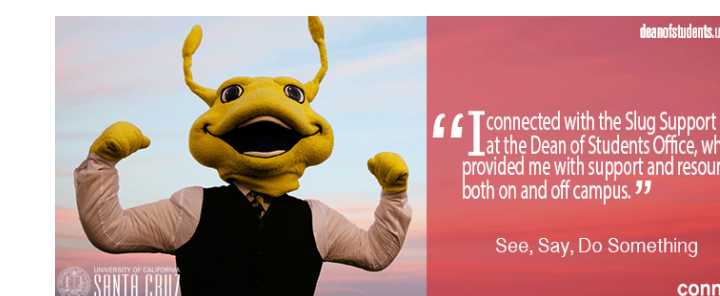
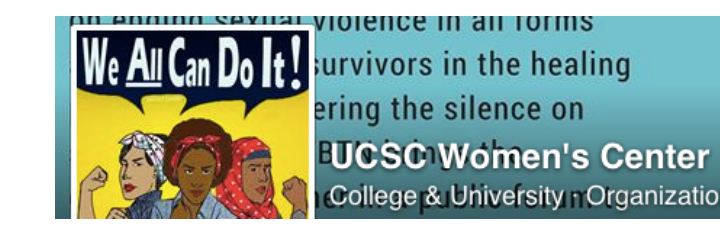
### Grad Student Experiences with Harassment and Violence



### Some Recommendations:

- Use extensive grad-student input to improve language and development of local procedures
- Increase people and programs on campus that address the unique needs of grad students as multiply impacted subjects and victims/survivors of harassment and assault
- Acknowledge and address that harassment and assault by faculty toward grads threatens grad-student well-being and careers
- Have increased grad student and administrator discussion about the role of grads in mandated reporting
- Increase survivor-centered language and culture in discussions and local procedures
- Create opportunities for grad students to hear in-person about resources and policies regarding sexual harassment and assault, as well as to receive training on responding to disclosure, every school year (not just at first-year orientation)
- Offer free self-defense classes for a larger percentage of grad students

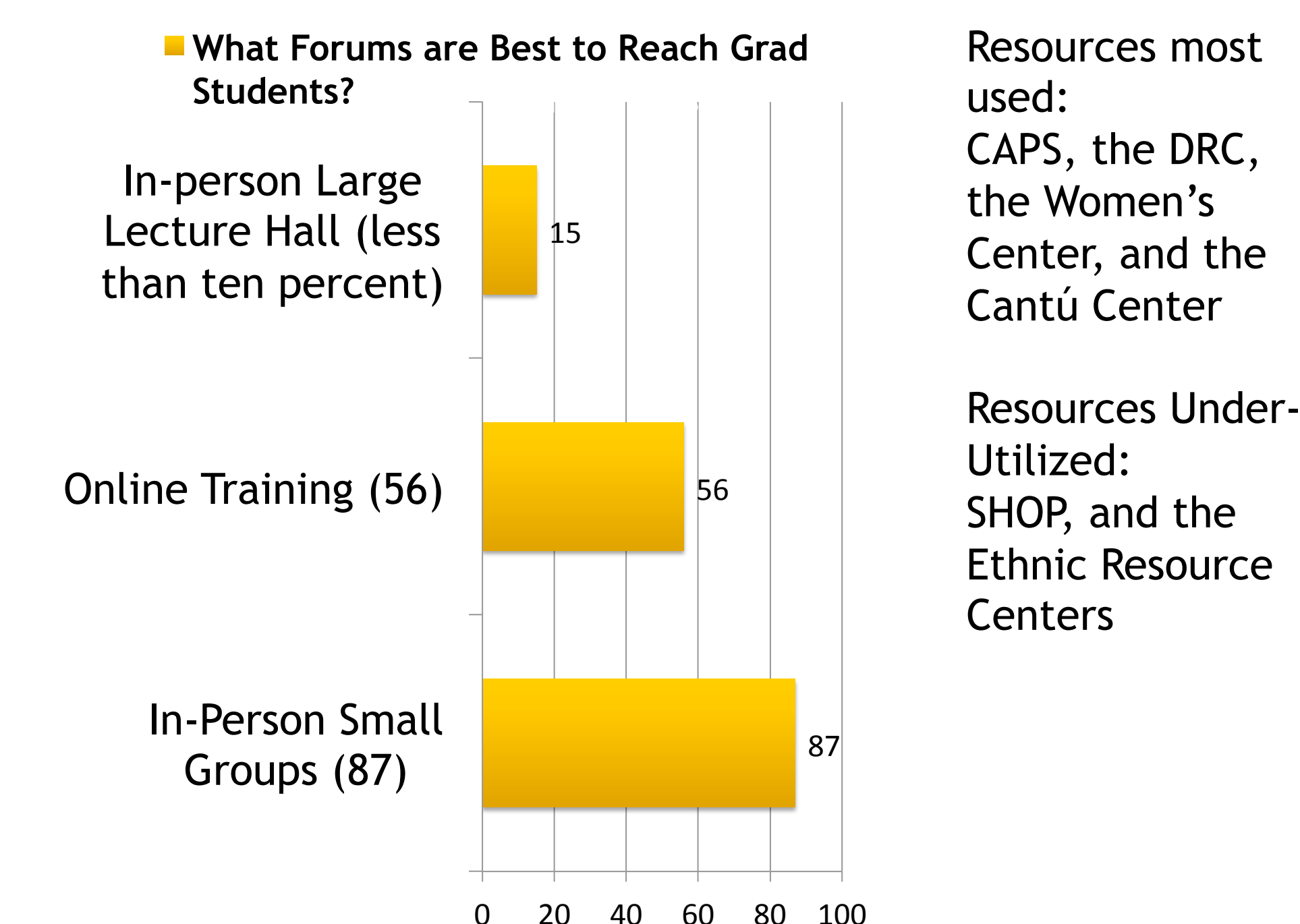
## Positive Experiences and Suggestion For Improvement



Comprehensive resource pages that are encouraging and supportive of graduate-specific needs, and open to changes and additions for graduate outreach: Women's Center, Dean of Students Office and CARE office, and Graduate Student Association

### Additional resources or programs regarding sexual assault and sexual harassment on campus requested by graduate students:

- Paid ongoing yearly training for TAs, faculty, and staff (see chart below for best ways to reach grads)
- More information about what campus resources are offered, and how they can be better tailored to grad needs
- New and improved consent-awareness campaign/ changing campus culture
- Resources to deal with faculty abuse of graduate students without risking grad careers and jobs
- Better lighting in all areas of campus
- More mental health services on campus specific to graduate needs, including an increase in QPOC and Black counselors and DRC staff
- Hotline available 24 hours



Useful Confidential Resources:  
Confidential CARE advocates are available M-F, 9am-5pm  
Email: care@ucsc.edu  
Call: (831) 502-CARE (2273)  
Confidential crisis counseling is available 24/7 through Monarch Services at (888) 900-4232

## Accomplishments Thus Far:

- Participated in the Campus Community Response Team and subcommittees (on public awareness campaign)
- Engaged with graduate concerns and participated in committees and events: BET, Title IX, CCRT, CDAC, WOC Wellness
- Worked with the Dean of Students office—specifically Slug Support; developed emergency outreach emails for grads; increased graduate use of Slug Support by 6%
- Conducted a survey of graduate students regarding SVSH
- Met with Title IX officers to share grad-student concerns
- Met with the head of UCOP Task Force on SVSH to share grad-student concerns
- Organized Title IX training for grads and collaborated with the Graduate Division to implement the graduate well-being survey on our campus
- Participated in Police Advisory Board: discussed safety on campus, lighting at night, police support (though not direct implementation) of self-defense trainings and classes
- Organized focus groups with grad students on pursuing Title IX complaints
- Met with the Director of CARE to discuss future grad-student programming
- Shared concerns about new policy to campus committees (such as Grad Council and the Academic Senate)

## Further Steps:

- Expanding the Campus Sexual Violence and Assault Survey and specifically directing it to communities of color and other underrepresented groups on campus (71% of the respondents identified as "White/European" descent)
- Expanding the methods to include more interviews and small focus group discussion
- Development of graduate-specific language, literature, and fliers for all resources and targeted outreach to graduate groups
- Development of graduate-specific accommodations that address grads' unique and multifaceted positions; increased development of trust between Title IX reporting and graduate students
- Additional counseling and mental-health professionals dedicated to graduate-specific needs and situations

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