**Statement on Sexual Assault**

**Passed by the Council March 25, 2022**

Sexual assault isn’t new, but that doesn’t mean we should turn a blind eye to what is happening within our community. Survivors of sexual assault aren’t just hurt in the moment, their hurt can last a lifetime. Fear, suffering, shame, second guessing if you should trust another person or not...the impact is forever.

The Rutgers culture of sexual assault is not something that has come on recently. The creation of the Office for Violence Prevention and Victim Assistance, the Office of Student Conduct, and Title IX Office all serve survivors in our Rutgers community and those who care about them. Our Council appreciates these offices and the role their staff play as they educate and advocate for our members. Sexual assault should never have a place in our university community. At Rutgers, and especially within Greek life our community should be built on respect, care and the safety of others. Throughout the past year and a half, our Council paid close attention to conversations about sexual assault at Rutgers.

Since the publication of our last statement in November 2020, Panhellenic has spent time reflecting on the culture of violence and assault on campus and worked to open up conversation amongst our chapter members. We have worked closely with representatives from VPVA to facilitate meaningful conversations and focus groups dedicated to awareness, prevention, and support.

To all survivors within our community, our family, no matter if you are in MGC, PFC, IFC, or a Panhellenic chapter, we believe you. Believing you should come before any relationship one chapter has with another. Believing you is not hard, even if we know the perpetrator and “thought they seemed nice” or that “their organization would never allow that”. The culture of silence needs to end. When our members become aware of an assault it is our responsibility to speak out against sexual violence. It is our responsibility to create the Greek community that we deserve. If we don’t speak out about offenders, or offending organizations we continue a painful cycle of silence. We need to listen to the needs of any survivor that comes forward to us. Not every survivor may want to or be ready to report. Support starts with creating a space where survivors can actually come forward and having these conversations. Each member of the Greek community needs to ask themselves, “am I really supporting my peers, and how can I support my peers?”

To our friends in other organizations, we need you to hold your members accountable. Sexual assault and all forms of interpersonal violence needs to end. Harassing people on the dance floor, on social media and from your front porch needs to end. Going out to a party, a bar or having a few drinks does not imply consenting to sex. Studying with each other, getting someone’s number, going to a date party together does not imply consenting to sex. Membership in a popular organization or being a “nice person” does not give you a free pass to do whatever to another person. Consent- a real, verbal, voluntary, reversible and continuous “yes”.

To ALL survivors, nothing else matters but that you feel heard. We hear you, we believe you and we stand with you.

The fight does not stop now and everyone has a role to play in ending violence. Our council pledges to continuously open the door for conversation and continue to work to prevent all forms of violence and assault in the Greek community and Rutgers as a whole.

If you are a survivor, secondary survivor, or simply have questions, the Office for Violence Prevention and Victim Assistance is a free and confidential resource available at any time. Their phone number is 848-932-1181, and more information can be found at [vpva.rutgers.edu](http://vpva.rutgers.edu/).