

Q: Can you tell me more about how NMSU handles the issue of sexual assault?

A:

The New Mexico State University community has a multi-pronged approach toward reducing the incidence of sexual assault on campus that involves collaboration among many constituents. Our overall strategy is to address the culture that has permitted sexual assault while improving the safety of our physical spaces. In addition, it remains a priority to ensure that as an institution, NMSU remains a safe space for students to earn their education.

Culture Change

Students have taken the lead in changing the cultural attitude toward sexual assault on campus and in 2017, they brought [It's On Us](#) to campus. This national movement recognizes that students play a central role in the problem of sexual assault and so must have a central role in the solution. It's On Us combats college sexual assault by engaging and changing campus culture through [survivor support](#), [bystander intervention](#), and [consent education](#). Since the start of the initiative in September of 2014, over 440,000 individuals have taken the It's On Us Pledge.

The messages of It's On Us are amplified by allies throughout campus. Students are introduced to these messages at freshman orientation and hear them again from programs run in the residence halls. Others who engage in this educational outreach include the [WAVE program](#), NMSU Police, and the Dean of Student's Office. The Police Department also provides self-defense programs throughout the year.

Physical Spaces

Most sexual assaults take place in private spaces, as was the case in last year's reported incidents. Although lighting and security cameras were not a factor in the 2018 cases, a number of safety improvements are underway at NMSU. Juniper Hall is the first housing facility built with security cameras, and Devasthali Hall also has security cameras. We have over 325 security cameras on campus, and are constantly pushing for more. Garcia Hall Residence Center is in the process of getting cameras; they will then be installed in Piñon Hall and Chamisa Village Apartments, following a strategic safety plan created by Housing and Residence Life.

ASNMSU has been a strong partner in making campus safer. They secured \$250,000 in Capital Outlay funding in 2018 from the Legislature for cameras and lighting improvements, and that will add 4 cameras and some upgraded lights along Williams Avenue. They obtained another \$450,000 in funding in 2019 that will also contribute to security improvements, and they are already working on Capital Outlay requests for the 2020 to start tackling the problem of bicycle thefts (our number 1 crime on campus).

ASNMSU also has long-standing programs to assist students to travel safely. [Crimson Cab](#) is available to students around town, daily from 7:00 pm until 5:00 am. [Pete's Pick Up](#) escorts students from campus locations to their cars or dorms from 6:30 pm until 12:30 am, Sundays through Thursdays.

Institutional Culture

NMSU faces allegations of sexual assault openly and takes steps to ensure that every community member understands that we are committed to ensuring that our students have a safe place in which to learn. We provide services to victims and we support student efforts to change the campus dialogue around sexual assault. This is contrary to a narrative promoted in the media of institutions that avoid dealing with sexual assault cases to avoid a perception that their campus is not safe.

Some context for the numbers

NMSU conducts ongoing training for students around sexual violence prevention, and that awareness encourages self-reporting and bystander reporting. That training also makes students aware that behaviors such as acquaintance rape and lack of consent are also considered sexual violence or exploitation. Notably, sexual assault is likely the most under-reported victim-based crime in the United States, and increasing reporting is crucial to changing the culture. At NMSU in 2018, a large percentage of sexual assaults were reported by friends of victims who wanted help for their friend. This is exactly the type of culture we want to continue to build.

National victim and climate data shows that sexual assaults occur to approximately 1 out of 4 college-age women. Extrapolated to our student population, this means that there could be over 1,750 NMSU students who are victims of sexual assault during their time at NMSU.

One final note: At NMSU, increases and decreases in assaults are magnified by the small number of cases that are reported. In 2016, we had 8 reported cases, only 3 in 2017, then 12 in 2018.

Read more in the [AAU 2019 Campus Climate Survey](#)