URI and Its Students: A Contract for the Provision of a Safe Environment

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INTRODUCTION: This project focuses on topics and trends related to college campus safety, exploring the pitfalls and essential needs for improvement, and how to recognize, report, and respond to emergencies on campus. It is imperative that the URI community has an increased awareness of safety related concerns in order to prepare for emergency situations. Knowing how to act in an emergency can save a life, so it is crucial that the entire community is involved in emergency response procedures and continuous education efforts. An efficient and productive college campus relies on a foundation where they aren’t consumed with risks to their health and wellbeing. Similarly, professors and college faculty are better equipped to educate students and perform their daily tasks more effectively if they were to experience high levels of stress and anxiety due to an unsafe campus environment. While not all stress factors can be precluded on campus, safety related stressors can be mitigated by incorporating strategic methods of improvement to promote a safe and healthy college environment. Addressing the needs of campus safety is essential because it strengthens the college community as a whole. Increasing awareness of potential dangers on campus means acknowledging which areas need improvement.

CONCERNS:
• Campus safety primary concern among students and faculty at URI and U.S. universities
• Crime rates and safety-related incidents are consistently rising
• Drugs and alcohol are contributing factors to safety related incidents on campus
• Cause: universities lack adequate resources, have outdated policies, and additional actions, e.g., self defense training, publicly available trauma + medical kits
  younger drivers + speed on campus + students crossing without looking = high risk

SOLUTIONS:
• Provide proper lighting around campus, e.g., commuter parking lots, walkways to reduce incidents of crime and violence
• Implement pedestrian collision avoidance system
• Add campus safety to URI 101 curriculum
• Provide emergency education training to students, faculty & staff, e.g., how to respond to an active shooter, how to assist a pedestrian struck by a vehicle
• Incorporate self defense education into curriculum
• Encourage personal safety alarms & make accessible to URI community
• Promote public safety & reduce risks, e.g., infiltrate enhanced lighting systems at crosswalks & resident buildings
• Employ solar flashing crossing-pedestrian signs and stop signs to increase pedestrian awareness.
• Incorporate trauma response + medical stations in all public buildings

CONCLUSION:
Higher education should include educating students and faculty about how to recognize, respond, and report an emergency in an environment that allows individuals to feel in control and prepared. Campus safety transparency and education can provide necessary life skills, of which can benefit students in the long run, protecting students’ safety in the academic setting but also in their daily lives.

1 IN 5 undergraduate women experience sexual assault while in college.

The Rape Crisis Council for the Lehigh Valley an event, 1980

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Crime Statistics: Clery Data

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN:
• Violence against women remains an imminent threat -- Femicide in the U.S is rising
• Women should know how to protect themselves -- their lives should not rely on just an emergency call system, or police response.
• URI Emergency Blue Light call system is sub par at best
• Issues with emergency lighting, numbered devices, and many do not work at all
• Female students face considerable stress and anxiety on campus, as well as fear for their safety on a continual basis
• One in five women will be raped or sexually assaulted in her lifetime, this tragic statistic leaves women feeling vulnerable and unprepared in the event of an emergency
• Women are less inclined to report incidents of sexual assault and violence to authorities because they felt it was a personal matter, or that it was not important enough to report
• Women continue to experience guilt and shame for their assailants’ actions
• 9% believe that the police would not or could not do anything to help

Works Cited

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Sponsor: Judith Swift, Communication Studies / Coastal Institute

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