TO: University of Southern California Graduate Students
CC: President Carol L. Folt
    Provost & Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs Charles F. Zukoski
    Executive Vice Provost Elizabeth A. Graddy
    Vice President for Student Affairs Winston B. Crisp
FROM: Graduate Student Government Executive Board
DATE: October 18, 2019
RE: Statement of Support in Response to AAU Campus Climate Survey Results

Dear University of Southern California Graduate Students,

On behalf of the Graduate Student Government (GSG) we would like to formally acknowledge the implications of the 2019 Association of American Universities (AAU) Campus Climate Survey results earlier this week. While the survey results were disheartening, we admire the courage and strength displayed by students, staff, and faculty who shared their personal experiences with sexual misconduct at USC during the two Town Hall events organized by the USC AAU Campus Climate Task Force.

The findings from the AAU Campus Climate Survey are unacceptable. For both undergraduates and graduates, the prevalence of sexual assaults rose from 2015 to 2019, and instances of sexual harassment remained high. Of students experiencing sexual harassment behaviors, 84% of undergraduates and 87.4% of graduates did not contact any USC resources. USC students should not be subject to the pervasive culture of sexual violence showcased by the survey. The survey’s comparative 2015 and 2019 results exhibit the failure of our campus institutions not only to protect us, but to help us cope with both our individual and collective traumas.

We do not view the survey results as just data points. We view each response as an individual story with its own unique value and right to be heard. As a student governing body, we are here as leaders and advocates to make sure each of those stories is given the time and attention deserved. The words spoken at the Town Halls - held both at the University Park Campus and the Health Sciences Campus - revealed the deeply ingrained flaws in our campus culture and institutions. GSG would like to commend the students, staff, and faculty who had the opportunity to speak, and those that were unable to voice their thoughts due to time constraints. We also want students who may not have felt comfortable sharing their experiences to know that their stories are just as valid, and we hear them too.
Despite our existing campus services, the AAU Campus Climate Survey shows only 23.6% of undergraduates and 23.8% of graduates knew where to get help at USC if the respondent or a friend experienced sexual assault or misconduct. Across our campuses we need to do more to create a safe reporting environment where students feel supported and informed about how to seek help in sexual assault and misconduct situations. We must initiate integrated, campus-wide efforts to provide better critical services to students: new strategies to ensure all students, staff, and faculty are aware of what to do in a crisis and how to report incidents should they occur, and fundamentally shift the way that we provide care and counseling to students affected by sexual misconduct. We can accomplish this with proactive, campus-wide efforts to better educate students, staff, and faculty about the services we provide and appropriate responses to students impacted by sexual assault and sexual misconduct.

GSG is already leading efforts to combat knowledge gaps and accessibility of information about sexual assault and misconduct at USC. We are in the process of updating our website to include a sexual assault and misconduct resource guide under our emergency information tab. We are working with faculty at the Keck School of Medicine to establish a California State funded LGBTQ+ sexual assault response program on campus. GSG additionally lobbies Members of Congress in Washington, D.C. on topics pertinent to graduate students, most recently to address Title IX policies and support current legislation that will call on Universities to implement better sexual assault reporting practices under the existing Clery Act. Although GSG has and will continue to advocate for graduate students, we understand there are many important nuances within sexual misconduct situations. We want to affirm our commitment to including and prioritizing the voices of our constituency in the conversation, and to continue incorporating student feedback as the driving force in our work.

As a campus known world-wide for its academic rigor and student accomplishments we can and should do better to ensure that part of the student experience does not include sexual assault, harassment, or violence. GSG is committed to being a part of the conversation and the solution, but ultimately, it is incumbent upon our campus administration to recognize and validate the experiences of our students, and take all steps in their power to ensure we learn from the AAU Campus Climate Survey by implementing strategies for real change.

We must move forward together toward a trauma-informed USC culture, recognizing the tragedy of our failure to protect students, and committing the full force of the University to eradicating sexual violence and misconduct on our campus.
Every Trojan deserves to feel welcomed, respected, and valued as we pursue our advanced degrees. Please know that there are resources available to members of our community who need support at this time. If you would like GSG to advocate for more specific resources you feel are not currently available, please do not hesitate to contact us at gsgpres@usc.edu.

**Resources for Graduate Students:**

- Campus Climate Survey Data - Results Links & Reports
- USC Student Health - Sexual Assault & Survivor Support
- USC Sexual Assault Response and Survivor Care Guide
- Addressing Sexual Assault at USC - AAU Task Force Summary Document
- Know Your Title IX - College Resources
- Know Your Title IX - Survivor Resources
- National Sexual Assault Hotline Information
  National Sexual Assault Hotline: 1-800-656-4673

Sincerely,

**Graduate Student Government Executive Board 2019-2020**