President Jamie Cassels’ statement on sexualized violence  
18 March 2016

The University of Victoria is committed to the principles of equal rights and dignity of all persons and to being a place where students, faculty and staff can learn, work and live with mutual respect in a safe community.

However, on our campus, as well as at other universities and in the wider community, sexual and gender-based violence is a significant issue. I want to make it clear that sexual assault and other unwelcome sexual conduct are utterly at odds with our values and are not tolerated.

UVic has policies and practices related to education, prevention and response to sexualized violence. Recent focus on this issue on our campus and beyond, as well as advocacy by student and other groups, have made it clear that we need to do more.

I therefore reported to the Board, and to Senate, and most recently to the University Human Rights Committee last week that we will be reviewing our current policies, procedures and practices. In the time since I made that commitment UVic and other BC post-secondary institutions have been working with the provincial government to collect best practices and develop a framework that provides guidance and an integrated approach for responding to sexualized violence. This has also involved seeking advice regarding the process for the review and development of a university policy that more directly and effectively addresses the issue of sexual and gender-based violence.

Our approaches need to evolve as we learn from our experiences here and best practices elsewhere for effective supports and services for survivors and clearly articulated and fair processes to respond to reports of unacceptable behaviour.

I will share more information soon about the process and terms of reference for the policy review that the university has committed to. The process will involve extensive consultation with students and other campus stakeholders. Our students have a strong voice in this and I welcome and value their contributions to this important topic.

Sexual and gender-based violence affects every member of our campus, either directly or indirectly. As members of the UVic community, all of us have a responsibility to do our part to help create a culture where it is clear that this behavior is universally understood as unacceptable and that reflects the values of inclusion, safety, wellness and respect as the foundations of a healthy university community. As I earlier stated, there will be more information soon on how as a campus community we can continue to work together to address this significant challenge.