

Deante' Baham

Women's Resource Services

Still providing assistance for women and men regarding sexual and relationship violence, the Women's Resource Services combined with Student Services after budget cuts at Nicholls State University in 2008 and has been renamed the University Counseling Center.

The center provides policies and procedures regarding sexual and relationship violence. The UCC seeks to empower other women who have been either a victim of abuse or sexual harassment in particular.

The center offers one-on-one counseling where it can direct the client to other services that would be more beneficial. "One in five college women experience some sort of violence or sexual assault in their college career," Administrative Assistant Chris Coulon said.

Dr. Michele Caruso, dean of Student Services and director of UCC, and Coulon provide advocacy for the student body to be aware that WRSO is still existent through the UCC.

Located in 224 Elkins Hall, the center focuses on women empowerment but it also helps men as well. "For men who have been stalked or sexually assaulted, they can come in and receive counseling as well," Coulon said.

Dr. Caruso is one of the two working counselors, who offer their services to the UCC.

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The UCC no longer offers the ability to go to court and file restraining orders nor take further actions regarding violence on campus. The UCC is open Monday through Friday, from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. For emergencies, the UCC suggests that students should call the University Police for further assistance.

To further assist the students, the UCC has attempted to run several support groups but because of budget cuts, there are not enough resources to keep the support groups going. “It’s more difficult to do when there is not enough staff to help with filing restraining orders; because there is not enough staff, the UCC does their best to hook the students up with other agencies that can help the clients further. There are only two staff members total,” Coulon said.

“Originally, the Women’s Resource Services had a grant and after it ran out, the university picked up the coordinator’s salary causing the center to be one of the services that were cut by the budget,” Coulon said.

Budget cuts have caused for the UCC to come up with majority of its resources on its own. In order to have the financial ability to run the program, the staff puts together certain events to raise money, such as the *Vagina Monologues*, that empowers women to speak out about their experiences as women who have been abused as well as assaulted.

“UCC seeks to offer a safe environment for both men and women who have been violated in some way on campus. The program strives to have a confidential and safe place for students on campus to come in and share their daily struggles to one of the given counselors,” Dr. Caruso said.

The center has many events to raise awareness for the program such as Take Back the

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Night Rally and Candle Light Vigil. “The Candle Light Vigil is an event that really touches base for victims. The event involves the community holding up a candle light for each victim that was killed along with a picture and the name of the victim,” Coulon said.

Dr. Caruso and Coulon said they both have been impacted by the bravery of students who come in for counseling. “There is a stigma attached to going to help, but the only way to ever put a stop to women is to take it out of the shadows and bring it into the light. Violence stops at home,” Coulon said.

“I’d want to students to know there is a safe place on campus where anyone who has been impacted by this type of violence can support. One of my favorite quotes is from Nadezdha Mandelstam: ‘I decided it was better to scream. Silence is the real crime against humanity.’ Everyone needs to use their voice to put an end to this violence,” Dr. Caruso said.