**What is Sexual Assault?**

In its simplest definition, sexual assault is *unwanted sexual contact*. Sexual assault includes the act of rape (oral, anal, or vaginal intercourse without consent) or forced penetration by a foreign object (including a finger). It also includes non-penetrating acts such as touching an unwilling person’s sexual parts (e.g. breast, buttocks, genitalia), naked or through clothing, or forcing an unwilling person to touch another's sexual parts. Force includes the use of physical aggression, threats of physical aggression, or sexual contact with a person who is unable to consent (e.g. unconscious, too intoxicated to consent, asleep, etc.). Non-forceful coercion can also be used, for example, threatening to reveal secrets, to tell others that the victim and perpetrator had sexual intercourse, to fire an employee or fail a student (these cases also fit the definition of sexual harassment) or threatening the victims friends or family members are all forms of coercion. Sexual assaults are committed by both strangers AND people the victim knows. *In fact, the vast majority of rapes and sexual assaults are committed by someone the victims knows, ranging from friends and acquaintances to dates, romantic partners, and spouses or domestic partners.* Although people often think of rape as something that only happens to women, this is not the case. Both men and women are sexually assaulted, as are people of every ethnicity, age, culture, religion, economic background, or sexual orientation.

Although these definitions seem clear, people are often confused as to whether they have been sexually assaulted or not, or even if they have been raped or not. This is particularly true when the survivor knows their assailant, as they may often feel that they somehow led the person on, or that they are in some way responsible for the assault. In many cases, survivors may feel that because they were not seriously hurt physically, it wasn’t really rape. This is not true. ANY sexual contact forced upon you by someone against your will is illegal, against the Student Code of Conduct and against college Policy. It is illegal and wrong, even if you have been sexual with that person in the past or are currently being sexual, but don’t wish to go past certain limits. Examples include:

- A stranger grabs your breast at a party or in a bar
- A date insists that you have sex even after you tell them you don’t want to
- Your romantic partner of 4 years forces you to have sex
- Someone gets you drunk or slips a rape drug into your drink in order to get you to have sex with them