Dear Colleagues,

This morning, Jon Krakauer’s book “Missoula: Rape and the Justice System in a College Town” was released. I want to share with you my thoughts about sexual assault and the University of Montana because it is such an important topic that all college campuses – student groups, staff, faculty, and administrators – must address.

UM has strong relationships with city and county officials, with the business community, and with so many groups across the valley. When our community faces challenges, we work together to find answers.

Here are my thoughts about the book, and about addressing sexual assault at UM:

- We have learned a great deal over the past three and a half years and are aware of the work ahead of us. My team and I welcome feedback on how we can serve our students best, and we view this book as part of that learning process. We agree on the importance of listening to survivors, learning from their experiences, and supporting them.
- UM is focused on providing a safe learning and living environment for all of our students. We have implemented many steps on our own, and many in concert with the U.S. Departments of Justice and Education. These steps include revised policies, mandatory training, new and improved programs, and additional personnel. UM is stronger, safer, and better aligned with best practices because of our continuing work.
- Although we cannot, and will not, discuss individual students or cases, we encourage discussion about sexual assault – how to prevent it, how to educate all members of our community about it, how to support our students best as we respond to it, and how to conduct a fair review when it is reported. So many people across our campus and Missoula have worked hard on this issue, and our efforts and dedication continue.

Earlier this spring, The Chronicle of Higher Education invited me to submit a short essay as part of a package called “Sexual Assault on Campus: 9 Views on What Will Signal Progress.” That, too, is a good indication of the national discussion and complexity of this issue: http://chronicle.com/article/Sexual-Assault-on-Campus-9/229279/?cid=at&utm_source=at&utm_medium=en.

If you want more detail about the initiatives and resources that UM and Missoula have put in place, please go to our webpage: http://www.umt.edu/safe/.

Other resources are available as well. Officials from UM and Missoula worked in recent months to update a brochure and website about resources called “It’s Your Call 911.” That website is http://www.missoula911.com/.
As I said in my President’s Update in late February, we have all worked hard to ensure that UM and Missoula are leaders in addressing sexual violence and strengthening our community. Please join us as we continue to learn, to improve, and to lead.

Thank you,

Royce C. Engstrom
President
University of Montana