1. **How do you define sexual violence? How do you think sexual violence is defined by Penn State administrators and/or in institutional discourse? Is this definition inadequate and, if so, how would you leverage your role to change it?**

Defining sexual violence or harassment is an extremely sensitive task – one has to be crystal clear on the terminology and constructs behind it due to the gravity of the action. Consent is a primary parameter that draws the line between violence/coercion and a mutual agreement. Both parties must give full consent, when in sound mind.

The biggest hurdle is understanding consent when one or more parties are under the influence, which is extremely common at a university level. When substance is involved, Penn State mentions its best to not indulge in any sexual activity when under the influence, even with consent. Although correct, this rarely happens. Its difficult to be aware of ones degree of intoxication, and so there is a lot of room for misunderstandings.

The sole blame for such acts is definitely the aggressor, however misinterpretation of signals and consent leads to unfortunate circumstances. As a community, ensuring stricter punishment could reduce the number of cases – the screening and trial of cases should be unbiased and focused only on the welfare and benefit of the students. Although Penn State does a good job at defining concepts revolving around sexual violences (like consent, intoxication, etc.) and making resources accessible, they lack in reducing and preventing it. With my role as an At-Large Representative, I’d like to pass legislation revolving around dorm safety and general awareness as a grass-root measure.

2. **What do you think Penn State (specifically administrators or governing bodies) or our local/state/federal government can do to decrease the incidence of sexual and relationship violence?**

Most cases I’ve read of occur in campus residence halls. Regulating guest entries could be a viable solution for the same. Other colleges have dorm receptionists note down the name of the residents’ guests and/or have ID scanners in the elevators. Overall campus safety could be monitored through similar protocol. Additionally, the university should be more transparent regarding the status of reported cases. Students should be informed of the repercussions and measures taken of those guilty of committing such acts.

In terms of Greek Life, additional seminars and orientations should be mandated to reiterate university rules regarding sexual violence. Fraternity members should also reiterate sexual violence guidelines to guests upon entering.

In terms of relationship violence, the university should emphasize the services and resources available to students. Although Penn State mentions them during new student orientation, they are often overlooked and students may face difficulty in finding resources when needed. Orientations regarding sexual violence and substance abuse should happen every year instead of only for new students.

3. **Do you plan to advocate for the aforementioned changes? If so, how?**

Passing adequate legislation is the key to ensuring positive change in our community. I’d like to do so by working closely with the Student Life committee, Counseling and Psychological Services, and other offices to understand the nature of past situations, how the university has dealt with them, and means to improve the existing process. Additionally, ensuring safe environments for victims is necessary.

As mentioned before, I’d like to pass legislation to maintain and improve safety in on-campus residence halls – installing ID scanners in elevators and surveillance cameras at entry points, recording guests after hours, adding receptionists to dorm buildings, etc. In terms of helping victims, I’d like to pass legislation to create care packages with hygiene and sanitation products and provide them with replenished bedding and towels and regular health checkups.

Ongoing initiatives target urgent issues in our community, however I would like to propose long term, tangible solutions. Setting up support groups and flexible therapy appointments would make for immediate attention and care.

4. **What steps have you taken to bring anti-sexual-violence and/or social justice work into your education, workplace, and/or an organization that you have been involved with and/or personally become a better advocate?**

I got sworn into the 16th Assembly of UPUA rather late (February 2022), hence I have not been able to pass legislation revolving around the points I’ve mentioned above. However, I have been working with the Student Life committee regarding the same.

Back in school, I had initiated positive changes in my community. Having completed my education in India, I was exposed to the extremes of this spectrum from a third-world perspective. I worked closely with underprivileged women to increase awareness about domestic and workplace violence. Due to illiteracy, a majority of women had no clue of the gravity of this issue and the extent to which they had experienced it. We set up support groups, wellness drives, and therapy sessions for their benefit. Understanding the intensity of this issue in their lives was heartbreaking. That experience has given me a lot exposure and insight to how to sensitively handle the issue and talk with the victims and connect them with efficient resources. Hearing their stories made me realize the emotional and mental after-effects of such crimes and how it must be navigated sensitively and immediately.

5. **If elected, what organizations will you maintain relationships with? Will you start or maintain a relationship with anti-sexual violence organizations? If so, how?**

I would like to maintain relations with the Office of Sexual Misconduct, Prevention, and Response, the Counseling and Psychological Services, the University Health Services, the Gender Equity Center, and CenterSafe. Additionally, I’d like to work closely with the Facilities and Student Life Committees of UPUA to work for the betterment and safety of students struggling with such a hardship. I would do so by setting up meetings to gather data while writing legislation, discuss protocol to find ways to refine the procedure, and meet with victims to understand prospective issues with the existing system.