

Sex on campus: Florida State University

by [Vance Rains](#) in the [January 25, 2012](#) issue

In recent weeks, I've met with three women who have each woken to discover that they had sex the previous night but have no memory of it. In each case, the women had been drinking. In each case, a date-rape drug may have been used. In one case, the sexual partner was a male "best friend," whom the woman had assumed she was safe with. In another case, the woman went home with an acquaintance. In the third case, the woman went home with a total stranger. Each woman felt a combination of anger, personal responsibility and shame.

These women, and so many others, describe a campus culture in which men expect to have sex on any given night, even if it requires pressure, manipulation or the use of illegal date-rape drugs. If refused sexual intercourse, other options are requested and expected.

When a woman is brave enough to come to me, she often describes her shame by speaking of a loss of "purity." That's not language I would have used, but it is common among Christian students. I'm not sure what a better word would be, so I have tried to redefine purity. In a culture in which as many as 85 percent of students are sexually active, I am now defining purity as not what you have done or what has been done to you, but your commitment to remain celibate from this point until marriage.

As a pastor and as a "Dad"-type figure on campus, I am brokenhearted about the situations of these young women. I have cried with too many women who believe that they are now "spoiled" for any future relationship, who think that no good man will ever want them, who feel that they don't have a choice about their sexual activity, and who feel they have to be sexually active to be wanted. I often find myself angry at the young men who have caused this, and even at the fathers who have not provided the love and affection that their daughters have needed.

I think the reason that brilliant, accomplished young women are degrading themselves sexually is that their identity is based on finding a man to love them, who will find them beautiful, who will make them feel worthy of being loved. With all of my heart, I believe that God made us for relationship; God said that it is not good for us to be alone. But our identity is in Christ. Worth is not based on accomplishment, external beauty or the validation of another person. But most college women do not know this and are desperately looking for male acceptance and affirmation. Even the Christian women I know seem almost desperate for a man to validate them. There seems to be a deep insecurity about beauty (contributing to eating disorders), desirability (leading to promiscuity) and worth (leading to all kinds of issues like anxiety, depression, substance abuse, cutting).

Amid a college culture that treats sex as casual recreation, a necessity for keeping a boyfriend, and even an entitlement after the boyfriend buys a couple of drinks, I still teach that sexual intercourse is a gift of God for a husband and wife in the covenant of marriage. The purpose of sex in the context of marriage is procreative, unitive and sacramental. I preach and teach on sex and intimacy at least once every school year. This is a countercultural message.

I have been thinking more lately about ways that we might partner with the university or campus organizations to promote a healthier sexuality in general and to address the pressure that is placed on women in particular. We'll see where that goes. It will be an uphill climb. It is very difficult to create widespread attitudinal change on a 40,000-student campus with constant turnover.