

Conference molds leaders in fight against sexual assault

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Keynote speaker Wagatwe Wanjuki explains to the audience how their activism is necessary to change the culture of sexual assault on campus. (Photo by Cheryl Gerber)

More than 100 students, staff, faculty and local citizens attended the second annual Louisiana Sexual Assault Student Activist Conference Saturday on the uptown campus of Tulane University.

Through panel discussions, workshops and engaging speakers, students gained collaborative tools to combat sexual violence in their communities.

The 2017 keynote speaker was Wagatwe Wanjuki, an activist and writer known for her work organizing the movement for an improved sexual assault policy at Tufts University, where she was a student. Today she continues her work as a national campus anti-violence advocate.

“Students are incredibly powerful,” Wanjuki said. “Student activists are really important in creating the connection between survivors and their community.”

Wanjuki explained to the audience that their work was crucial to create cultural change on campus.

“If the community comes together as a whole and says, ‘We will not stand for this type of behavior’... you will see sexual assault rates go down.”

The 2017 event, organized by Tulane students Hannah Novak and Helen Robins, was designed to empower and educate student activists to improve response to and prevention of sexual assault on their college campuses.

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