Speaker 1: It's being able to share this story. It's being able to share their pain and their trauma in a space that validates them; that doesn't question, 'Are you telling me the truth?'. It's being there for the person and being able to offer a safe space.

Liesel: Welcome to the Magic Mountie Podcast. This is a podcast that's dedicated to helping faculty and other college employees as they try and navigate the challenging fabric of serving students. Especially at Mount San Antonio College. But, everyone's welcome.

Liesel: Liesel here. We had plans to get our RP Group Conference episode ready for you this week, but have made a change. Because of everything that's going on nationally in the country right now we wanted to make sure we get some time-sensitive information out to you.

Liesel: The last few weeks have brought an incredible amount of discourse regarding sexual violence that, at a minimum, can be triggering for someone who is a victim, but can also be quite traumatic in themselves. It is our responsibility at our campus to be mindful of our student's whole lives, and as we've learned through this podcast, traumatic experiences impact academic success. So, whether or not it's just to be good citizens or if it's because it's part of our job to make sure that our students can be successful.

Liesel: This week we're bringing to you voices from across our campus who can give you some practical advice and some mandatory reporting guidelines as well as just some opportunity for reflection on what our role can be in helping our students who may find these conversations that are happening at the national level, at the local level, all over their social media, in their personal relationships, and sometimes in our classrooms, to be very difficult.

Liesel: We hope this episode can help support you in supporting those students.

Chisa Uyeki: So I'm Chisa Uyeki, and I'm faculty from the library. I've been thinking a lot about this, and I think it's important for our faculty who are not survivors to understand that for survivors this current political climate means that it's real work to just get up, get out of bed, come to campus. For our students to move through their day interacting with others and sit in your classes trying to do their work when they're really navigating what's essentially a minefield of triggers. Just doing that is hard enough, let alone trying to succeed in their classes, and I just want us to be understanding and compassion of that current reality.

Sokha Song: Hi, I'm Sokha Song, I'm the Director of EEO Programs. I'm also the Title IX Coordinator for the college.

Ryan Wilson: And I'm Ryan Wilson. I'm the manager for Title IX and EEO Investigations.

Liesel: So, just looking at social media, I'm seeing a lot of my friends, and people I know, who I had no idea were victims of sexual assault share that information, and it struck me that that may be happening with our students as well.

Liesel: Can you tell me from your position in your jobs, what you'd like faculty to know if someone reports to us?

Sokha Song: It's important for faculty to understand that if a student comes forward and wants to disclose what's occurring, they need to make sure the student's informed if they continue the conversation it has to be reported over to Human Resources or, if they wish to remain confidential and have someone else that they can speak to to be able to discuss their feelings and vent, we recommend going to the Health Center and speaking with a mental health counselor.

Liesel: And we will be speaking with the Health Center about how to do that. However, it is possible that they will disclose their history of sexual violence, sexual assault in some other context too. In a paper, or in class, or in a conversation in which it doesn't seem that this is an urgent, time-sensitive issue. How would we differentiate? What's a situation where someone might disclose sexual assault that we don't have to report?

Sokha Song: So our obligation is to ensure that their education is not negatively impacted while they are here. So, if you're dealing with a situation where they're impacted, we need to address it immediately. Sometimes students will share history on what's occurred with them in the past. If it has nothing to do with their education being impacted, those are fine for them to share with us. However, we want to ensure that we provide them with resources should they have any triggers or situations and they need to know where to go to get help, the resources should be available.

Liesel: And is it a good idea for us to go ahead and display those in the class, and put them in our syllabus and those kinds of things as well?

Sokha Song: Absolutely. It's very important that students, if they may not need something right now they may need it later, to know where to access all this information.

Liesel: And I find that students talk to each other too, so even informing a student who's not a victim, with a general announcement, might get that information to one of their friends or classmates.

Sokha Song: Correct.

Liesel: So, can you tell me a little bit about how this might be a different situation if we have dual enrollment programs and we have some special admit students who might be under 18.

Ryan Wilson: Sure. So it's important for all of our employees to understand that as employees of the college they are mandatory child abuse reporters. So if they're aware of situations involving students who are under age, they have a obligation to report that to Human Resources and over to law enforcement. So that would include the student's names, any potential perpetrators, when and where incidents may have occurred, and the nature of the incidents.

Liesel: We have a strong network here on campus of people who work on this.

Sokha Song: So, regarding Title IX we've actually formed a group and we call it the Smart Group, and that team consists of Student Life, Human Resources, Campus Safety, Academic Senate, and the Health Center.

Sokha Song: We meet monthly to discuss ongoing issues or concerns with sexual assault Title IX on the campus. We want to make sure we're on the same page when we're dealing with situations. Sometimes there may be some confusion on what's happened where, and what's the best practice and protocols to make sure that we're efficient and quick.

Liesel: It's been a complicated year, between Me Too, now the Kavanaugh hearings, are we seeing an increase in reporting activity overall?

Sokha Song: Yes, I can say that since I've been here since January of last year. We've definitely had an increase, although not all reports come to a conclusion of something occurring, it is good to know that our reporting structure is working, as evidenced with our increase in the reports. So we want to be able to make sure that there is a place for students to go to if they need assistance.

Liesel: Thank you. And I have definitely seen more visibility of the reporting channels and I'm sure that we've made some big strides in the last year just based on what I've seen and heard, so thank you all for your work.

Livier Martinez: My name is Livier Martinez. I'm a licensed clinical social worker and I am housed in Student Health Services, the main office, 67B. I serve as a mental health clinician at Mount San Antonio College.

Liesel: So we're talking to you this week because there may be concerns by faculty about how to handle what's happening in our country right now. This is the time of the Kavanaugh hearings and, without getting into any of the politics, what can faculty do to try and help support students who may be dealing with some effects of this triggering climate right now?

Livier Martinez: Thank you for reaching out and that's a really good question. And I think the first thing that comes to mind, honestly, is believe them. That's literally like the first thing that comes to mind. If a student comes to you and shares a history of past or current sexual assault, the first thing is that you believe them. You validate the student. Definitely know that there are resources at their disposal, coming from Student Health Services. We do offer a personal counseling/mental health counseling for students, and even if it's something that occurred some time ago, and they're bringing, say, these recent events have triggered, and they are now ready to talk about it or they're just sharing, they can still seek help through Student Health Services.

Livier Martinez: And I actually have had a handful, not a lot, but a handful of students that have been triggered from what has happened. And they did reach out. They did come. They said, 'You know, it's triggered and I thought I was over this, but this has been a little bit more difficult this week and here I am.' And for me that was, okay, good. It validated them. It was, okay, I'm glad you reached out, I'm glad you're here, and let's get you back on track.

Liesel: Statistically, I've heard a lot of different numbers this week. Do you have any idea what percentage of the people that we're working with daily may be experiencing these issues?

Livier Martinez: Well, I don't know that I could speak directly to Mount SAC population. I'm going to speak more in general of college population just because that kind of, you know, we do have some statistics on that. And the college population for sexual assault is actually higher than the general population. For the general population it's like one in six females are at risk for sexual assault, where college women it's one in four. So, that's a staggering number, or statistic, I should say. But I couldn't tell you specifically in terms of Mount SAC. Just from my professional experience working here for over 11 years, I've definitely seen students who shared histories of being victims of either child sexual abuse, sexual assault in the past, or something that has just, you know, that they've experienced in the past year.

Liesel: And how would a faculty member refer a student?

Livier Martinez: There's various ways. You can tell the student just to come into one of our locations, 67B or 9E, and tell them to come in. The student has to come in physically in person for the first appointment initially, because they have to get some kind of paperwork and, as you can imagine, we have to do some screenings to assess how soon the student needs to be seen. If the student does not want to report, and that's perfectly okay for a student to not want to report, then that needs to be kind of clarified at the beginning. If they say, you know, a therapist is not available but a nurse is available, would you like to speak with a nurse? Then I would say if they're not ready to report then I would say, no, I'm okay, I'd like the next available appointment with a therapist.

Livier Martinez: If a student comes in and sees a nurse and shares sexual assault, the nurse is not confidential. Our medical staff is not confidential. They are mandated reporters. So that's very, very important to understand that if you say, just go to the health services and tell them, if they end up speaking to a nurse, the nurse is legally obligated to make a report. Mental Health Clinicians, and there's currently right now three of us, we are not mandated to make reports to anyone.

Liesel: So what will a student experience, you know, I guess, what have you seen positively come from students who do come in and speak with one of you?

Livier Martinez: You know what, I've been in this field for close to twenty years, so it's one of those things that I have had contact with students and clients in the past twenty years who've never shared their story with anybody and I happen to be the first person, or they have had treatment in the past and something has come up and it's triggered and they just need to speak to somebody again to kind of remind themselves and, you know, seeking support on the path that they were on and they're like, yeah, you know I've been doing really well but recently this came up or I'm now in a new relationship and this came up where I saw something on TV or I read it, you know, there's different ways of how some past sexual abuse can be triggered.

Brigette Lugo: Hi. My name is Brigette Lugo and I'm Managing Editor for our on-campus publication, SAC.Media. I'm also the editor of our LaConnects cultural section, called Somos, which means 'we are'. I wrote a story, like a personal profile about what happened to me and I'm glad that women now are doing the same. You can find my story at substance.media - Substance is the name of our all-digital magazine that we have a partnership with Medium. substance.media, and you can search either my name, Brigette, B - R - I - G - E - T - T - E, my last name Lugo, L - U - G - O, or you can literally just Google 'Substance', and I don't know if I can curse on here, but it's called Psycho, space, B - I - T - C - H, that's the name of the story. And then you can follow me as a writer as well. That's how Medium works. It's a great, great platform to share your story.

Brigette Lugo: You know, I have triggers, that's very real. I do suffer from a certain amount of PTSD, especially with everything that's happening right now, with more and more survivors coming out with this appointment to the Supreme Court. With Judge Kavanaugh and Dr. Ford coming out as a survivor herself. A lot more women have come out as well and that's kind of pushed me to absorbing a lot and a lot of us, I could tell, a lot of us have been having kind of a hard time.

Brigette Lugo: You know, there's always going to be that professional professor and student relationship, but it doesn't really, I don't feel like it crosses any lines to be able to say it's a welcoming environment, this is a safe space. Yes, all of you will be welcome, you know, if you have your opinion. Like, let's say it's a debate class or a speech class, or hey, even in our newsroom, a journalism class.

Brigette Lugo: I think that there has to be a lot of open-mindedness, but also faculty should be conscious of the fact that, just like themselves, I'm sure have been through things in their life, the students do too. Yes, we're there to learn. Yes, we're there to get a degree. But everybody has their own story and we don't have signs on our head, we don't have, we're not in a Lifetime movie where every day we're coming in like, losing sleep, and you know, dirty clothes or things like that. I think you just have to treat everyone with a sense of humanity and extending the invitation to be like, hey, this is a place where you can learn, but also a place where you don't have to be fearful.

Brigette Lugo: It's very difficult for a lot of ... I'm only going to specify women right now. I know that a lot of marginalized communities are always suffering. I'm part of three different marginalized communities myself, but, in this climate with what's happening politically or socially, it's just a very trying time. And I completely understand. I've been at the bottom. Like, the bottom. You know, when you think you're defeated.

Brigette Lugo: But guess what, everyday you're on the street and I think women are being more heightened to each others strengths and power and we're able to do things locally. Reach out to your female friends. Maybe start a little group. Chat. Send each other positive memes or just funny stuff, even little things like that. The bigger picture, you could always volunteer. But also just checking in with your fellow ladies. That's what's given me a lot of strength, so yeah.

Brigette Lugo: And give yourself time. With everything that's going on, I'm very in tune with the news, because I have to be, but I also have to take a step back and just binge watch "Sabrina the Teenage Witch". That's what I've been doing right now. The old school one. But yeah, take time for you, and we're gonna get through this. No matter what happens, women always persevere.

Liesel: A special thank you to everyone who spoke with me on such short notice to get this episode ready for release this week, and also a reminder, as always, that there's lots of materials available in our show notes that are referenced in this episode, especially details on Mount SAC policies and how to refer students. We'll be back next week with an exciting visit to the RP Student Success Conference.

Liesel: Hey, thanks so much for joining us for the Magic Mountie Podcast. We love your likes, we love your shares, and we love your comments, so please engage with our community. Download from wherever you love to get your podcasts - iTunes, Google, Rate My Professor - we're there. And we want you to be back with us next week. Remember, any opinions that are expressed in this podcast do not necessarily represent Mount San Antonio College or any of its agents. We'll see you next time.