

Chancellor's Task Force on Sexual and Relationship Violence Status Report for Spring 2016

Overview

The Chancellor's Task Force on Sexual Assault and Relationship Violence was formed in the spring of 2015 to address improvements in sexual violence prevention, education and advocacy services. The 30-member Task Force is chaired by Senior Vice President and Dean of Student Affairs Rebecca Reed Kantrowitz and School of Education Dean Joanna Masingila, and it is modeled after the Educational Advisory Board publication "Building an Effective University Infrastructure: Addressing Sexual Violence on Campus."

During the spring of 2016, the Task Force held five meetings, building on its work from the fall of 2015 and moving forward on several of the preliminary recommendations that emerged during that phase.

Raising awareness among all campus constituencies about sexual and relationship violence and appropriate responses to it continued to be a key priority throughout the spring semester. One significant step toward that end was the launch of the Sexual and Relationship Violence Task Force website (<http://www.syr.edu/hcd/srv-task-force/>). The site provides comprehensive information regarding resources for those affected by sexual or relationship violence as well as institutional protocols for handling such incidents.

While we have made some progress on calling attention to this critical issue, we also realize that sexual and relationship violence is a deeply complex problem that calls for sustained, multifaceted measures to eradicate this scourge from our campuses and our communities. Toward that end, the Task Force affirmed the importance of maintaining a broadly inclusive membership as we continue working to identify gaps, assess needs and appropriate resources, and see projects through to completion moving forward.

Other activities included a full review of the University Conduct Board as it relates to conduct case resolution time; support for students, including the accused; survivor housing; and creating a handbook for faculty dealing with students involved in sexual assault.

The task force also heard a presentation on the protocols in place through the counseling center for a student who has reported a sexual assault, including confidential and privileged counseling with a staff therapist; explanation of policies, procedures, legal recourse, and financial and insurance concerns; accompaniment and attendance at a hospital emergency room; partnership with a nurse examiner to provide medical care and a forensic exam; and ongoing counseling and advocacy. It was reported that the Health Center also provides confidential medical care and prophylactic treatment as well as referral to the Counseling Center if desired, although the Counseling Center is most commonly used as the point of entry.

In May, the task force heard a presentation by Lauren Germain, director of evaluation, assessment, and research at SUNY Upstate Medical University, who presented her research on agency among survivors of campus sexual assault—information that formed the basis for her 2016 book *Campus Sexual Assault: College Women Respond*.

Following are status updates from spring 2016 on key recommendations that were put forward in the fall 2015 task force report.

Status Updates on Key First-Phase Recommendations

Refine data collection. Once the task force determines the data currently collected, it must research and refine the type and range of data collected, identify gaps, and formulate recommendations for filling them. The task force also will review and address issues emerging from the campus climate survey.

Spring 2016 Status Update: The Syracuse University Climate Assessment Survey, conducted between Feb. 9 and March 28, was designed to assess attitudes and experiences among students, faculty, and staff about the living, learning, and working climate on campus. The survey grew out of the Chancellor’s Work Group on Sexual Violence Prevention, Education, and Advocacy as well as this committee in collaboration with nationally recognized survey consultant Susan Rankin.

The survey had a 22.6 percent response rate, and the results will be used to formulate changes to ensure that the campus community reflects openness, fairness, and equality for all. All results from the survey will be made public this fall.

Expand training. Increase the number of trainers working through the Office of Health Promotion, and provide the additional resources and staff support needed to conduct and coordinate expanded training.

Spring 2016 Status Update: The Equal Opportunity, Inclusion and Resolution Services office continues to do sexual assault training and has completed training with student athletes, Greek communities, and the Drama Department. During the spring semester, efforts focused in training faculty.

In addition, the task force took measures to implement a requirement for “Think About It” training for graduate students, adult learners, and part-time students. The training will be conducted by the same provider used for similar training already required for undergraduate students. Students are required to complete the online training in the fall in order to register for spring 2017 classes. The committee also plans to secure some funding

recently made available by the state for training to help prevent sexual assault and stalking on college campuses as part of the “Enough is Enough” campaign. This funding would go toward supporting the University’s already established bystander training program, “Mentors in Violence Prevention.”

Assure adequate staffing. Education and prevention can only succeed if adequate staff are in place to assure an effective and stable response. Adequate staffing must be in place for the various offices that support the Sexual and Relationship Violence Response Team. This might include adding staff to fill key roles as well as converting interim positions to permanent status.

Spring 2016 Status Update: New staff have been hired for both the Office of Student Assistance and the Office of Health Promotion. Student Assistance added two new staff members and Health Promotion, three. In addition, a therapist has been added to the Sexual and Relationship Violence Response Team in the Counseling Center, and the Title IX office has hired a new Equal Opportunity and Title IX investigator.

Maintain consistent messaging, and enhance channels for communications and outreach. Ensure all messaging clearly reflects the University’s stated values; and work with marketing and communications leadership on branding and other communications/outreach efforts, including possibly developing a plan for using social media.

Spring 2016 Status Update: The task force has been working with Sarah Scalese, associate vice president for University communications, on a communications plan that would simultaneously raise awareness and assure consistency in messaging that fully aligns with and reflects University values.

The task force’s communications committee also launched the Sexual and Relationship Violence Task Force website to keep the campus community informed of its work and to provide information on resources and prevention efforts. The site can be accessed directly at <http://www.syr.edu/hcd/srv-task-force/> or via the Quick Links section on the Equal Opportunity, Inclusion and Resolution Services website at <http://www.syr.edu/hcd/equal-opportunity.html>.

Support ongoing programming. Provide support for campus-wide spring programming dedicated to raising awareness and support for sexual and relationship violence prevention, including Take Back the Night, Vera House White Ribbon Campaign, Break the Silence, and others.

Spring 2016 Status Update: The task force actively supported several special awareness-building programs, including the annual Take Back the Night observance on March 30, which featured a keynote address by Don McPherson, Syracuse University alumnus and a national advocate for sexual assault prevention. We also actively supported It's On Us National Week of Action, from April 4 to April 8. Awareness-building activities were scheduled daily and included, among other things, a screening and panel discussion of the documentary "The Hunting Ground," with a related presentation by Caroline Bettinger-Lopez, White House advisor on violence against women, and a candlelight vigil. Other activities included an open mic night titled "Breaking the Silence" and sponsored by the student group A Men's Issue, and an art installation on the Shaw Quad with works highlighting the connections between alcohol use and sexual assault.

The task force also supported the SU White Ribbon Campaign, which raises funds for Vera House, a shelter and service agency for those experiencing domestic abuse. Students, faculty, and staff were encouraged to purchase and wear the white ribbons or wristbands that signify our stand against domestic or sexual violence.

The committee also laid out preliminary plans for its work going forward. Those plans include:

- Work to formulate and secure Provost and University Senate approval for a sexual assault information statement to be included in course syllabi
- Continue to work on a coordinated sexual assault education component for all Freshman Forums
- Work with leadership of the Office of Fraternity and Sorority Affairs and Athletic Director John Wildhack to meet future needs of their respective constituencies
- Recruit and develop an on-boarding process for new members of the task force

Respectfully Submitted,

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