

Chancellor's Task Force on Sexual and Relationship Violence Status Report for 2017-18

Overview

The Chancellor's Task Force on Sexual Assault and Relationship Violence was formed in the spring of 2015 and charged by Chancellor Syverud with advancing institutional improvements in sexual violence prevention, education, and advocacy services. The task force aligns with best practice recommended by the Education Advisory Board for campuses seeking to proactively curb sexual and relationship violence.

During the 2017-18 academic year, the 30-member Task Force was chaired by Rebecca Reed Kantowitz, associate dean of Hendricks Chapel, and Diane Lyden Murphy, dean of the Falk College. The group met six times, with additional meetings convened by its subcommittees. Members served on one of four subcommittees: Assessment, Communications, Planning, or Policy. Throughout the year, the task force pursued an overarching goal of advancing key recommendations that had been put forward in the group's fall 2015 task force report to the Chancellor. Within that broader goal, the group this past year focused on priority areas relating to best practices, data collection, policies and procedures, and programming.

Following are status updates and recommendations relating to those priority areas.

Key Activities and Updates

Best Practices

At its September meeting, the task force heard a presentation from Lauren J. Germain, director of evaluation, assessment, and research at SUNY Upstate Medical University, who presented her research and statistics on campus sexual violence reporting. The task force followed up with a discussion on how best to support victims/survivors and facilitate training. Best practices include training that:

- Provides dosages over time
- Is relatable to students and targeted to other specific groups
- Includes students and peer education
- Is nonjudgmental
- Educates active bystanders and students in whom other students confide

Katelyn Cowen of the Office of Health Promotion also summarized for the task force projects her office was working on, including a long-term Title IX education program for Athletics; orientation and first-year experience innovations; training for Fraternity and Sorority Affairs event managers; wellness ambassadors; residence hall training; and Be Orange bystander training.

Cowen also cited a long-term goal of providing more education for faculty and staff, a point that the task force agreed with and indicated would be a likely recommendation moving forward. Task force members believe faculty need more education to prevent sexual and relationship

harassment and violence, and also in understanding and using the language of diversity and inclusion while dealing with students. One challenge is that some faculty are not interested in such training and cannot be compelled to participate. The task force noted the need to create means of incentivizing or even compelling faculty to participate in training. One such idea would be to make training a condition for receiving grants, research funds, and raises.

Data Collection

Confidential access to data on the number of students seeking services is crucial to the task force's work, and important progress in this area was made this year. Several key University administrators shared relevant data, including Cory Wallack, director of the Counseling Center, Sarah Solomon, director of the Office of Student Assistance, Pam Peter, director of the Office of Student Rights and Responsibilities, Sheila Johnson, associate vice president and chief Equal Opportunity & Title IX officer, and Katelyn Cowen, director of the Office of Health Promotion.

Below are summaries of key data shared with the task force:

- During 2016-17, the Counseling Center's Sexual and Relationship Violence Response (SRVR) Team supported 127 students impacted by sexual and relationship violence. The support included more than 380 appointments, 70 sexual assault recovery group appointments, and nearly 50 off-campus advocacy appointments.
- The Office of Student Assistance provided advocacy, case management, and support services to more than 150 survivors, respondents, and witnesses. Through that office, students received advocacy, referrals, interventions, and follow-up services.
- In 2016-17, Title IX received 22 formal complaints and 54 informal complaints. Of the cases that proceeded to the Office of Student Rights and Responsibilities for adjudication regarding alleged sexual assault, relationship violence, sexual harassment and stalking violations, six resulted in expulsion, five in suspension, and three in probation. Additionally, the Office of Student Rights and Responsibilities provided interim relief in the form of no-contact orders for 57 students.

Education and prevention are critical to combatting sexual and relationship violence and creating a community of bystanders who safely intervene when situations raise concern or challenge our community values. Several groups facilitated training to help prevent and recognize interpersonal violence and to connect those in need with appropriate resources. Collectively, more than 9,700 campus community members have participated in in-person trainings and programs that incorporated sexual and relationship violence topics. When adding online training, that number increased to more than 17,100.

The task force affirmed the work of all University offices involved in providing campus community services for those affected by sexual and/or relationship violence. The group agreed that the campus community as a whole should be made aware of this good work through more robust communications efforts.

Policies and Procedures

Another key area of importance over the past year was the University's assessment of sexual and relationship violence prevention, education, and advocacy efforts. The task force's assessment committee, lead by associate vice provost, Jeff Stanton, monitored progress in this area. The committee also worked with the Office of Institutional Research and Assessment (OIRA) to prioritize sexual violence assessment-related data collection and survey information to help facilitate communication among relevant offices about assessment initiatives and make appropriate recommendations.

During the spring semester, the committee developed a student climate survey on sexual and relationship violence. The questions were developed by Katelyn Cowen and Sheila Johnson based on questions used in the spring 2016 campus-wide climate assessment survey. Professor Andrew London provided extensive input into the design of the survey and the sampling methods. This survey of active students fulfills our biennial compliance requirement for New York State's *Enough is Enough* law.

The spring survey was sent to a random sample of Syracuse University undergraduate and graduate students in April 2018 with the assistance of Seth Ovidia, assistant director of the Office of Research and Assessment. The survey generated 431 complete responses (students who went through the entire survey and hit the "Submit" button at the end) and another 51 surveys that were partially completed (at least 10 questions answered), for a total of 482 responses, or return rate of 24.1 percent.

OIRA is analyzing the data during summer 2018. A campus-wide climate assessment survey is also planned for fall 2018 targeting all faculty and staff.

The task force continued to monitor Office of Civil Rights (OCR) developments and other sexual assault-related cases. Task force member Abby Perer, associate general counsel, provided regular updates and reported that Syracuse University is in compliance with *Enough is Enough* regulations.

Task force members raised concerns about challenges with the media and assuring that news stories are accurate and not sensationalized. The task force plans to follow up with Dara Royer, senior vice president and chief communications officer, to further address the issue.

Programming

The task force participated in a Be Orange workshop, led by Michelle Goode, health promotion specialist from the Office of Health Promotion, and Jason Nova, program coordinator from the Office of Fraternity and Sorority Affairs. The interactive two-hour training was designed to engage participants in dialogue about the complexities of sexual violence prevention and explore what it means to be an empowered bystander. The workshop was adapted from a program, *Bringing in the Bystander*, initiated by the University of New Hampshire in 2013.

The task force learned more about the University's engagement with Don McPherson to consult on assessing and advancing sexual assault and relationship violence prevention programming on campus. Programs will focus particularly on engaging men on campus and promoting healthy relationships. A Syracuse alumnus and former All-American quarterback, McPherson is a national leader and advocate for the prevention of sexual and domestic violence. He has

conducted numerous workshops and lectures in communities and college campuses and he is a member of the NCAA Commission to Combat Campus Sexual Violence.

McPherson also attended the task force's April meeting, where he gave a presentation titled, "Activism to Education: A Plan for Higher Education." He discussed approaches to changing campus culture by teaching students to not only recognize sexual violence but to become change agents by altering their own behaviors, developing a healthy self-image, and pursuing healthy relationships.

McPherson noted that men, in particular, often have distorted beliefs about what it means to be a man. He also noted that because higher education does not typically engage in frank dialogue about sex and sexuality, students sometimes turn to less healthy sources, such as pornography.

Finally, the task force continued its support for and engagement with awareness-raising campus activities, including the national *It's On Us* Week of Action in October and *Take Back the Night* on March 28.

Looking Ahead

The task force formulated the following goals/priorities for the 2018-2019 academic year:

Recommendations

- Communications:
 - Develop a comprehensive communications strategy for the task force utilizing input from the Senior Vice President of Marketing and Communications and the Dean of the Newhouse School of Public Communications.
 - Develop and distribute a monthly communication to students regarding sexual and relationship violence resource information, task force updates, and event information. Model after Campus Framework updates to the community.
 - At least once a year, share aggregate data from the Counseling Center, Title IX, Health Promotion, Student Rights and Responsibilities, and Student Assistance that reflects prevention and response efforts. Include this data in the annual task force report and in SU Today.
 - Create a stand-alone committee to coordinate the annual Vera House White Ribbon Campaign.
 - Relocate the task force website to the Chancellor's home page.
- Training and Education:
 - Require first-year fora across all schools and colleges to address issues regarding sexual assault and relationship violence. (WorkGroup recommendation #2)
 - Work with the Provost to distribute a memorandum before the start of each semester describing services and resources related to sexual assault and relationship violence; provide a Title IX statement for use on every course syllabus. (WorkGroup recommendation #7)
 - Require faculty to participate in sexual and relationship violence education.

- Building off Don McPherson's work, further develop a men's initiative focusing on healthy relationships, sex, sexuality, sexual violence, and mental health.
- Create a network across campus that has a deeper understanding of, passion for, and commitment to issues of sexual and relationship violence. Identify representatives in the schools, colleges, and administrative units to serve as ambassadors re: these issues. These representatives would receive initial and ongoing training to ensure that they were well informed and would serve as a conduit for training others in their respective departments and offices.
- Facilitate more conversation and action within the Greek community (to include all six councils) on issues of sexual and relationship violence.
- Policy:
 - Provide feedback via the task force policy committee to consultants who are currently reviewing sexual and relationship violence policies and processes.
- Assessment:
 - Review results of the spring '18 semester climate assessment; launch comparable assessment for all faculty and staff.

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