

Planning Group on Sexual Respect and Conduct

April 18, 2019

Introduction: The primary purpose of Title IX on our campus is to establish equity in education and prohibit discrimination on the basis of sex. From 2011-2016, the interpretation of this law was expanded to apply to all forms of sexual harassment and sexual assault which are considered forms of discrimination and which create obstacles to equity in education. Holy Cross has allocated significant resources in an effort to comply with these federal and state mandates, but the prevention of sexual harassment, sexual assault, violence against individuals because of their sexual identity and expression, or stalking is not just a case of legal compliance but also a crucial issue of social justice. Despite the efforts already expended in creating an Office of Title IX Initiatives, we continue to hear from many students, faculty, and staff, including survivors, who express significant dissatisfaction with the process and from many who do not trust the process sufficiently to report their concerns.

- 1. Education and prevention:** We suggest the creation of an office devoted specifically and solely to sexual assault education, the Sexual Assault Prevention and Awareness Center, to coordinate and expand the strategy of community awareness and prevention education and to provide additional resources for our support services. This center would combine advocacy with prevention and education efforts campus-wide.

In addition to offering a survivor-centered, multifaceted approach to advocacy services for survivors and their friends, peers, significant others, and allies, the office would have the goal of raising awareness and educating the Holy Cross community about sexual assault, intimate partner violence, sexual harassment, and stalking, as well as providing a wide range of educational programs on consent, bystander intervention, sexual health, and healthy relationships, among many other issues.

A key function of this center would be the coordination of offices which provide education and support with campus organizations, faculty, staff, and student groups to develop targeted strategies to prevent and eradicate all forms of sexual violence in the Holy Cross community.

- 2. Survivor support:** in order to ensure that there are sufficient support services available to survivors, we recommend creating the position of a sexual violence counselor, that is, a full-time, trained therapist (Masters-level or above) with a trauma informed approach to therapy who is centered on the interests and needs of the survivor and who would serve as a confidential resource for victims. (Members of the committee noted that the College needs to provide parallel support services for respondents. See #4 below.)

Among the responsibilities of the sexual violence counselor would be to:

- Coordinate resources across campus and develop relationships with off-campus resources in order to refer the student off campus, when necessary;
- Co-facilitate a support group for survivors of sexual assault with the Counseling Center;

- Work with a reporting party to provide support in making a report to Title IX; but would not be obligated to report, except as required under the Clery Act; nor would the SVC be involved in compliance or case investigation, management, or other functions of the Title IX office.
- Could act as an advisor in a Title IX case, if requested, and accompany the reporting party to all investigations, except where prohibited by our policy or by law.
- Work in collaboration with other members of our community to promote education and prevention work.

3. Improving the campus climate: We also recognize that the broader goal of “improving our campus climate with respect to sexual respect and sexual misconduct” necessitates resources beyond what a single individual can provide. We believe there is value in having a trained support staff person whose responsibilities include the expertise to lead specific efforts to engage more male students in workshops and retreats for men around consent and healthy relationships.

Among the broader responsibilities of the Sexual Assault Prevention and Awareness Center would be to:

- Develop and administer a Masculinity Peer Education program whose curriculum includes building empathy and understanding; acknowledging harm and promote healing; unlearning of toxic norms of masculinity; examining gender norms in the context of the campus community.
- Plan an annual keynote event as part of a calendar of scheduled events, including programs devoted specifically to education in healthy relationships,
- Promote coordination with other offices and staff involved in delivering these programs.
- Assist in developing and an integrated curriculum in the residence halls and helping to train Resident Assistants.
- Assist in training and coordinating student peer educators to assist in implementing campus-wide education and prevention initiatives.
- Provide additional programs for faculty and staff beyond mandatory online training and focused on broadening support and advocacy for survivors, rather than simply the procedures of reporting sexual assault;
- Work closely with the Athletics Department to develop an effective program for athletes around prevention of sexual violence and promoting leadership in reshaping the campus climate.

4. Assessment, Research and Planning (to be completed in next 6 - 9 months):

- Analyze campus climate survey results;
- Collect existing data that may already be available in different offices on campus;
- Collect information on all training, education, and other programming that currently happens on campus;

- Define the mission, values and goals for the Center based on an assessment of this information;
- Determine the structure of the Center and its staffing based on models from other institutions;
- Create a coordinating taskforce within the Center whose members are identified by their position and their job intersection with sexual violence prevention and education;
- Evaluate respondent support services and identify where equivalent support services are made available to respondents, such as helping them to understand how resources are available to them, providing guidance as they navigate the conduct process, and how to access on-campus and off-campus resources;
- Design a student internship position within the Academic Internship Program to work on research, assist in revising and updating the web page and contributing to the redesign of other educational materials in this area.

5. Immediate implementation (next 2 - 3 months):

- The College should make arrangements as soon as possible to provide additional survivor-centered support as part of the 24/7 sexual violence/crisis advocacy resource that is tied into campus and community resources (whether through Pathways for Change as an external resource, or through campus resources); this would be a temporary accommodation until a full-time position can be filled. This is particularly important as larger numbers of students are housed on campus during the summer months and in anticipation of the early arrival on campus of a number of athletes and incoming first-year students.
- Provide a significantly shorter version of Title IX policies in clear, accessible language which removes legalese wherever possible (the full 39-page document would continue to be available on the website); redesign the website to be more user friendly and replace all references to “complaining parties” with “reporting parties.”
- Work with other offices to evaluation Orientation programs with regard to education on sexual assault and broader issues related to diversity and inclusion; to redistribute funding for extended orientation programs; reviewing and assessing Gateways, Odyssey and Passport; to consider a ‘fourth hour’ of Montserrat and/or an academic schedule which allows a free hour for regular campus-wide programming.

6. Coordinating implementation: Establish a smaller taskforce to continue the work of the planning group, to assist in implementation steps for 2019-20, to work on the design of the Center for the Sexual Assault Prevention and Education, and to assist in the hiring of a sexual assault counselor. This taskforce should include the offices whose responsibilities include education and programming concerned sexual assault prevention and education. A student intern and/or student volunteers should be recruited as soon as possible to assist in evaluating website, educational materials and planning for the 2019-20 schedule of programming.

The taskforce would also establish revised goals and strategies, if warranted, and provide updates to the campus community on progress at the start of each semester.