



TASK FORCE ON SEXUAL ASSAULT AND
INTERPERSONAL VIOLENCE

FINAL REPORT
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Introduction and Context

Sexual assault is the number one violent crime committed on college campuses (Sampson, 2002). Across the country, 1 in 5 college-aged women are victims of sexual assault or attempted sexual assault (Krebs, C., et al., 2007; Not Alone, 2014; Rape, Assault & Incest National Network [RAINN](a), n.d.). For college-aged men, 1 in 16 have been victims of an attempted or completed sexual assault (Krebs, C., et al., 2007). Additionally, sexual assault is the most underreported crime in the country (United States Department of Justice, 2008-2012; Rennison, 2012; RAINN (b), n.d.). When a student experiences sexual assault, the impact can be all-encompassing. The personal disruption to life, relationships with friends and family, health and wellness, and learning is often profound.

Amid increasing national attention on the issue, the Department of Education has further clarified Title IX regulations to ensure that sexual assault victims have the resources and support needed to successfully complete their education following a sexual assault. Additionally, the recent passage of the Campus SAVE Act, an amendment to the federal Clery Act, seeks to address all forms of interpersonal violence on campus by adding stalking and dating/domestic violence to the list of crimes campuses are required to address and report.

Creating cultural and climate change on campus is critical to combatting sexual assault and interpersonal violence (aaauw.org). This change occurs when the campus community is actively informed and engaged in the process and when the appropriate mechanisms are in place to identify, address, implement and assess comprehensive and targeted policies, programs, trainings and curricula. This aligns directly with George

Mason University's strategic goal of becoming a model well-being university, the first in the country. Central to this goal is ensuring the personal safety of the faculty, staff, and students on our campuses. Eradicating sexual assault and interpersonal violence is at the core of nurturing a sense of community and campus climate where all members can thrive.

Toward that end, in August of 2014, President Ángel Cabrera invited a group of faculty, staff, students, and community members to serve on Mason's Task Force on Sexual Assault and Interpersonal Violence. The Task Force was asked to:

- Explore the prevalence of sexual assault at Mason, including a review of Mason facts and data within a national context;
- Review current programs focusing on education, prevention, and intervention;
- Identify gaps in existing programming, services and support for student victims of interpersonal violence, especially sexual assault;
- Review national best practices and resources for supporting college sexual assault survivors, including reporting options, the student conduct process, university police processes, and training programs;
- Submit recommendations, immediate and long-term, to inform a comprehensive campus approach to sexual assault and interpersonal violence that address policy, protocol, curricula, education, programming, training, and assessment.

Given the charge by President Cabrera, the Task Force developed recommendations to address three priorities:

- Strengthening a campus culture that eradicates sexual and interpersonal violence;
- Increasing overall reports by victims and building supportive, integrated, proactive, and timely responses to reported incidents of sexual and interpersonal violence;
- Implementing a process for campus-wide assessment that will operationally define and measure indicators of achievement of goals and outcomes.

To achieve these outcomes, the Task Force formally convened seven times between September 2014 and February 2015, gathered information from local, state, and federal sources, and met with key constituencies. Two student-focused events occurred: A Patriots in Action roundtable sponsored by Student Government in November, and a Task Force-hosted Town Hall in February open to the entire community. In addition, the Task Force studied national and state practices and areas for improvement, reviewed incidence rates of sexual assault and interpersonal violence at Mason and nationally, and inventoried Mason's current policies, programs, trainings and in-class curricula. The Task Force's work culminated in this report, which offers a number of focused, executable and measurable recommendations, including next steps for implementing change by the start of the fall 2015 academic year. We believe this is the first step in creating a stronger and healthier campus culture and climate at Mason, one that actively disarms sexual assault and interpersonal violence and promotes a community of well-being, resilience, advocacy, and respect, a community where all members can thrive.

Mason Context

Below is an overview of policies, procedures, support services, and educational curricula that address sexual assault and interpersonal violence at Mason.

Current Context

Specific policies are in place to address issues of sexual assault and interpersonal violence on our campus. Among these are policies related to sexual assault and/or interpersonal violence, workplace bullying, Clery reporting, and Title IX. Further, Mason has both Clery Act and Title IX Compliance Coordinators on campus who work collaboratively with University Police, Human Resources, University Life, and Compliance, Diversity and Ethics. Additionally, the student conduct process allows for a full range of sanctions, including expulsion. Mason's policies and procedures are in compliance with federal mandates. Knowing that federal and state regulations regularly change and evolve, all relevant Mason departments conduct regular reviews to update, clarify and communicate changes and responsibilities to the Mason community.

Programs and services are also available for victims of sexual assault. Mason has a dedicated Sexual Assault Prevention Services office, Wellness, Alcohol, and Violence Education Services (WAVES), which is one of the only dedicated sexual assault prevention services offices in the Commonwealth. Further, Mason is the only Virginia public higher education institution with a 24-hour hotline for victims of sexual assault. WAVES provides programming and support for victims, as well as educational and prevention programming consistently throughout the year. Our recommendations focus on expanding those programs to ensure broader exposure and creating new programs to reach

additional constituency groups. Free and confidential counseling services to address the psychological impacts of sexual assault and interpersonal violence are also offered through Mason's Counseling and Psychological Services. And finally, Mason's Student Health Services provides free and confidential medical exams, screening for sexually transmitted infections, and other medical interventions and services.

Education and training are core to creating change on campus. Greater awareness and understanding of campus sexual assault and corresponding roles and responsibilities in prevention and response are critical. Both aid in the creation of a community poised to support victims and intervene on their behalf. Among the educational activities available at Mason through the WAVES office and other campus partners are the following long-standing programs: Take Back the Night (25th year), Clothesline Project (18th year), Sexual Assault Awareness Month (20th year), Willard memorial annual 5k run (16th year); Anyone Can (bystander intervention training, 8th year), Night Walk (25th year). These programs have broad impact. For example, in fall 2014, WAVES reached more than 11,000 students through its programs, services, trainings and events.

There are a number of academic courses at Mason that incorporate information on sexual assault and interpersonal violence, including those with a strong focus on gendered violence, sexual assault, victimization, recovery, climate and culture. Recognizing the importance of infusing this material into the academic curriculum, additional opportunities should be explored to expand curricular offerings that focus on sexual assault and interpersonal violence.

Finally, we have various collaborative partnerships with community members and organizations, including the Fairfax County Domestic Violence office, the Fairfax SANE Nurse program, and Fairfax County Sex Crimes Council. Within the Mason community, our faculty and staff use a team approach to facilitate intake, investigation, support and services. Mason's campus teams include: the Campus Coordinating Council; the Sexual Assault Response and Resources Team; Title IX Working Group; Clery Committee; Threat Assessment Team; and the Student Sexual Assault and Interpersonal Violence Hearing Board. Mason also has a corp of peer health educators and student-athlete mentors who work to provide peer-to-peer outreach and education to fellow students.

Incidents of Student Sexual Assault and Interpersonal Violence at Mason

Reports of sexual assault and interpersonal violence are formally collected by three offices at Mason: Wellness, Alcohol, Violence and Education Services (WAVES); the Office of Student Conduct; and the University Police (each has slightly different categories of incidents as informed by federal and state mandates). The WAVES office has the greatest number of student reports. This is not surprising given their prevention and outreach programming and the confidential services that they provide for student victims regardless of the time at which the event occurred. Students can make reports and seek services for incidents of interpersonal violence that occurred on- or off-campus, or in the immediate or distant past. In the calendar year 2012, there were a total of 62 unique cases involving sexual assault (40), dating violence (11), or stalking (11).

The number of reports to WAVES decreased slightly in calendar year 2013 to 57, with similar proportions of students reporting sexual assault (37), dating violence (13), or stalking (7). In calendar year 2014 there was a rise in the number of sexual assault and interpersonal violence cases to 77, with dating violence (23) and stalking (13)

accounting for the increase.

Student Conduct (SC) holds administrative hearings in which students may make a formal complaint against another student. The number of students who participate in this process is much smaller than the number of reports made to WAVES. In 2012, SC heard one case (sexual assault), in 2013 SC heard six cases (all sexual assault), and in 2014 SC heard a total of five cases (three sexual assault, one sexual assault and interpersonal violence, and one dating violence).

The number of reports made to Mason's University Police fall in between the number of cases seen by WAVES and the number of cases heard by the SC. In 2012, there were eight cases of sexual assault reported to the police. In 2013, the University Police saw the number of sexual assault and interpersonal violence cases increase to 33, spanning sexual assault (9), dating violence (12), and stalking (12). One explanation for this increase is that this is the first year that University Police were mandated to report cases of dating violence and stalking. The total number of cases was similar in 2014, with University Police investigating 11 cases of sexual assault, three cases of domestic violence, four cases of dating violence, and 18 cases of stalking.

Mason's data generally aligns with national data related to reporting trends. As was stated in our opening paragraph, sexual assault is significantly under-reported to law enforcement. Most victims choose not to report because they fear they will not be believed, they will be mistreated, their privacy will be violated, or they will not receive the resources they need. It is not unusual to see a gap between the number of informal reports made for help/support-seeking purposes versus the number of formal reports made for purposes of pursuing legal/investigative processes or campus administrative proceedings. This is true regardless of the data source. Among other shifts, our recommendations are aimed at closing this gap.

Recommendations

The following recommendations have been developed based on a review of: emerging national trends, evidence-based practices, resources for supporting college sexual assault survivors (including reporting options), student conduct processes, university police processes, and training programs. Recommendations have also been informed by consultations with peers, community partners, local and national experts, legislators, and professional associations within the Commonwealth of VA. (See Appendix "A" for a full list of all professional meetings, trainings, webinars, and resources consulted.) Taken together, these recommendations will ensure that Mason's approach to sexual assault and interpersonal violence is comprehensive.

While all of these recommendations are a priority, there are eight recommendations that would serve our community most effectively if implemented by the start of the 2015-2016 academic year.

Recommendations to be implemented by August 2015:

1. Create a Sexual Assault and Interpersonal Violence Leadership Committee to oversee the implementation and annual assessment of Task Force recommendations and determine staffing and resources needed for success. The Leadership Committee will create a timeline for benchmarks for success and oversee Mason's indicators of progress and achievement towards identified goals. (Budget required)
2. Secure tangible and ongoing commitments from university leadership, including President's Council, in support of these efforts. For our August 2015 goal, the

President's Council should be prominently featured on the new integrated Mason webpage on sexual assault and interpersonal violence and as part of a Mason Public Service Announcement (PSA) addressing this issue. Moreover, each member of President's Council will commit to ensuring that at least 25% of their faculty and staff become trained as allies when that certification program becomes widely available.

3. Establish a full-time position for a Title IX Coordinator. Given institutional needs and national context, identify desired expertise and responsibilities and conduct a search for leading expert.

4. Identify and adhere to written criteria when timely warnings to the campus community will be initiated following every reported incident (with appropriate exceptions) of campus sexual assault.

5. Clearly define and identify Campus Security Authorities and Responsible Employees.

6. Develop a one-page information sheet for faculty, administrators, staff and relevant campus offices related to their status as either "Responsible Employees" and/or "Campus Security Authorities." This should include information on confidentiality, reporting requirements, and maintaining the integrity of the relationships with victims while reporting.

7. Integrate all online and written information on all policies, procedures and resources, both on- and off-campus, available to the Mason community. (Budget required)

- a. Create an integrated Mason website

with information on all policies, procedures and resources related to sexual assault and interpersonal violence. Ensure that all information be no more than two-clicks away from the main site.

- b. Create a single brochure to be distributed throughout each campus with relevant information and resources related to reporting, services and support.

8. Implement a campus climate survey related to sexual assault and interpersonal violence to be administered beginning in the 2016 academic year and annually, thereafter. (Budget required)

- a. Use to determine, in part, efficacy of programs, policies, training, and in-class curricula.
- b. Use to determine efficacy across student sub-populations, including different on-campus residential neighborhoods.

Longer Term Recommendations:

Task Force recommendations related to long-term goals are divided into the following categories: 1) policies, protocols, and procedures; 2) education and training; 3) programs and services; 4) curriculum; 5) outreach and communication; and 6) assessment.

Policies, Protocols, and Procedures

1. Use the “You Have Options” Law Enforcement Program as a model to implement a context-specific version at Mason, one that ensures a victim-centered and offender-focused law enforcement response (reportingoptions.org).
2. Review Policy 1202: Sexual Harassment and Misconduct Policy and related policies.

- a. Ensure that faculty and staff understand their reporting responsibilities and accountability.

- b. Ensure that students understand faculty and staff reporting responsibilities.

3. Review Policy 2208: Workplace Violence.

- a. Ensure that faculty and staff understand resources available in the event of an incident of sexual assault and interpersonal violence.

4. Review all student conduct processes to ensure that sanctions are aligned with national recommendations and protocols can be effectively implemented.

5. Re-examine which campus offices should be responsible for sexual assault and interpersonal violence investigations.

6. Revise sexual assault investigation policy to provide more detailed instructions on notification procedures and after action guidelines to include the Sexual Assault Response Protocol. Create post-hearing protocol and assessment for both complainant and respondent.

Education and Training

1. Review all training programs and materials and update, revise, and clarify to ensure currency and relevancy.
2. Review and assess University Police sexual assault and interpersonal violence protocols for interviewing.
3. Develop, implement, and assess efficacy of trauma-informed interview training for University Police.
4. Establish opportunities for cross-training with relevant external community partners (e.g., Fairfax, Arlington, and Prince William Counties’ Police Departments, etc.).

5. Review and expand the Mason Emerge ally program, modeled after the Safe Zone training.

- a. Provide opportunities for faculty, staff, and/or students to be designated as a safe person to whom students can make a report and receive assistance in connecting with relevant services.
- b. Provide opportunities, incentives, and recognition for administrative offices and academic units who receive this designation.

6. Provide regularly scheduled mandatory training to target populations related to reporting responsibilities. Training should focus on informed consent, supportive interventions (including bystander intervention), and strategies to promote an environment that encourages disclosure. Target populations include:

- a. Campus Security Authorities, Responsible Employees, faculty and staff who serve on the Sexual Misconduct Hearing Board, faculty advisors, academic advisors, Housing and Residence Life staff, athletic coaches, and other athletic department staff.
- b. Student constituencies, including fraternities and sororities, registered student organizations, ROTC, club sports, student athletes, and all student employees, including all graduate assistants.
- c. Specific educational programs will also be developed to reach Mason's LGBTQ, international, and undocumented students, who may be at risk for greater victimization and/or be less likely to report or seek support.

Programs and Services

1. With campus and community partners, develop educational sanctions for

individuals found responsible in the sexual misconduct and interpersonal violence student conduct process and who retain their status as Mason students.

2. Ensure that bystander intervention trainings are offered for specific populations, including:

- a. All fraternity and sorority members
- b. All student athletes
- c. ROTC

3. Expand *Patriots in Action* Student Government program as a student body initiative for sexual assault and interpersonal violence awareness and prevention.

Curriculum and Research

1. Integrate bystander intervention and healthy relationship materials in all transition programming for students joining the Mason community (e.g., UNIV 100 courses; orientations for first-year, transfer, and graduate students; etc.). Additional opportunities for touch points should be identified to provide a vehicle by which this information can be reinforced across students' careers at Mason.

2. Ensure that academic leaders of schools and colleges offer curricular and/or specific co-curricular programs to support students' well-being, including prevention of sexual assault and interpersonal violence and promotion of healthy relationships.

- a. Support, funding, and/or partnership models should be provided to academic units to develop curricular and co-curricular programming.

3. Provide seed funding for collaborative, multidisciplinary research proposals for faculty-student teams to investigate sexual assault and interpersonal violence within the Mason community.

4. Create statement on availability of resources and options for victims of sexual

assault and interpersonal violence for use by faculty (e.g., on syllabi or other course materials, etc.).

Outreach and Communication

1. Initiate and assess highly visible, broad impact, campus-wide outreach campaigns that are targeted to specific audiences, including faculty (full- and part-time), students, staff, and families.
 - a. Campus-wide campaigns will be focused on three areas: Sexual Assault Prevention (including informed consent, bystander intervention, and reducing the stigma of seeking help); Dating, Domestic Violence and Stalking (including risk reduction, warning signs of abusive behavior); and Title IX (including rights, responsibilities and promising practices).
 - b. Campaigns will include programming, The Pledge, posters, services, and PSAs that highlight the involvement of student and university leadership.
 - c. Strategies will include regularly scheduled email campaigns, social media campaigns (FB and Twitter), use of the Mason Portal, and ALL-UNIV announcements.
 - d. Assess the most effective exposure points (where this information comes from and its depth of efficacy) via an inventory of faculty, staff, student and family groups.
2. Add landing/entry page to Patriot computing that, at log-in, requires acknowledgement of the code of student conduct (to include respect of fellow students related to sexual misconduct and interpersonal violence). Links to both the integrated website and The Pledge should be accessible.

3. Improve visibility of Mason resources available to survivors of sexual assault and interpersonal violence, particularly the location of the WAVES office.

Assessment: Improving Campus Climate and Strengthening Collective Efficacy

1. Implement continuous assessment of all offices and departments providing services, programs and support to students related to sexual assault and interpersonal violence.
 - a. Include self-assessments by individual office and department personnel.
 - b. Include feedback from individuals participating in the process (e.g., students who are accused, students who bring complaints forward, faculty, etc.) as well as those receiving support services.
2. Implement continuous assessment of policies and procedures, as indicated by evidence-based climate survey, federal or state mandate, or other perceived need.
3. Implement assessment process for campus-wide communications and campaigns.

Conclusion

One characteristic of a public University's mission is to provide a dynamic learning experience for all its students. Particularly for traditional-age students, the environment is meant to be experienced as vibrant and dynamic, and one that includes ample opportunities for exploration of self, identity, and independence. Sexual assault and incidents of interpersonal violence deeply interrupt that experience. In the current national climate of higher education innovation, disruption, and reform, eradicating sexual violence is perhaps one of the most important contributions we can make to overall student success and well-being. We are grateful for the opportunity to have served on the Task Force and we look forward to working toward a Mason campus that is free of sexual assault and interpersonal violence.

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Appendix A: Meetings/Events Held and Resources Consulted

Meetings and Events Held

Sexual Assault and Interpersonal Violence Task Force Meetings:

- September 30th, 10:30-noon, Merten Hall 5119
- October 16th, 3:00-4:30pm, Merten Hall 5119
- November 10th, 2:00-3:30pm, Merten Hall 5201
- December 15th, 11:30am-1:00pm, Merten Hall 5201
- January 13th, 10-11:30am, Merten Hall 5201
- February 11th, 2-3:30pm, Merten Hall 5201
- February 18th, 3:30-5pm, Merten Hall 5201

Sexual Assault and Interpersonal Violence Town Hall Meeting:

- Thursday, February 12th, 2:30-3:30pm, Student Union Building One, Room 3B

Student Government Patriots in Action Events:

- Pledge to End Sexual Assault at Mason & An Awareness Week for Sexual Assault and Gender Violence
- November 17th-21st, in accordance with the Its On Us national campaign and Take Action Week

Other Related Meetings and Events at Mason:

- President's Council Presentation, November 14th
- Board of Visitors Presentation, December 10th
- Fear2Freedom & Freedom and Learning Forum, October 7th
- Turn Off the Violence Week, October 6th-10th

State of Virginia Meetings, Committees & Events:

- Governor Terry McAuliffe's Task Force on Combating Campus Sexual Violence – Prevention Subcommittee, meetings ongoing
- Attorney General's Campus Sexual Violence Summit, Virginia Commonwealth University, October 30th-31st

Resources Consulted

At Mason:

- Conducted inventory of policies and procedures, programs, curricula, education and training at Mason
- Examined University Police Annual Reports and sexual violence reporting
- Reviewed
 - o Compliance, Diversity & Ethics; Title IX; and Sexual Misconduct parameters
 - o Dean of Students: Code of Student Conduct and Resolution of Alleged Sexual Misconduct
 - o Medical Amnesty Policy
 - o University Sexual Harassment Policy

Within the Commonwealth of Virginia:

- Review of 2015 Virginia General Assembly session proposed bills relating to sexual assault and interpersonal violence.

National Resources Consulted:

- American Association of University Women: Various documents on campus safety, sexual assault and interpersonal violence
- American Association of University Professors: Campus Sexual Assault, Suggested Policies and Procedures
- American College Health Association: Shifting the Paradigm, Primary Prevention of Sexual Violence
- Office of Civil Rights Documents, including the 2013 Dear Colleague Letter
- The Chronicle of Higher Education: Brief on Campus Safety
- Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education (NASPA): Office of Civil Rights Guidance
- Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education (NASPA): Understanding Obligations for Student-to-Student Sexual Harassment
- McCaskill Survey and Campus Accountability and Safety Act
- National Association of College and University Attorneys (NACUA): Student Conduct, Title IX and Clery Act procedures and requirements
- National Collegiate Athletics Association (NCAA): Addressing Sexual Assault and Interpersonal Violence
- National Sexual Violence Resource Center (NSVRC): Campus Resource List
- Not Alone: The White House Task Force Report and associated documents/information
- Rape, Assault & Incest National Network (RAINN): Campus Safety
- Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) and Clery Act information, including the 2013 amendments



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