

CORNELL UNIVERSITY COUNCIL ON SEXUAL VIOLENCE PREVENTION

September 2013

I. STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

Cornell University recognizes sexual violence as a serious campus and public health issue that affects every member of our community. Broadly understood, sexual violence encompasses multiple forms of sexual misconduct from verbal harassment to physical assaults (including rape by strangers and non-strangers). Sexual violence causes significant harm to those who are victimized, indirectly harms others, and contributes to a climate of hostility and fear that is antithetical to the learning mission of the university.

II. RATIONALE

Sexual violence is a cultural phenomenon shaped by factors at multiple levels. Therefore, effective prevention requires a comprehensive approach that addresses individuals, groups, the institution, local community, and broader society. Provision of educational strategies and support services that adequately address the unique needs of students, staff, and faculty must involve coordination among multiple university departments, student organizations, and faculty members. Given that effective prevention and response to sexual violence is a shared responsibility of the Cornell community, a central leadership structure is necessary.

In response to a series of sexual assaults by strangers and bias-related incidents in the fall of 2012, the university administration convened an Incident Management Team (IMT) and charged it with responsibility for coordinating the university's response to the crises and developing recommendations for long-term strategies. The formation of a campus-wide council on sexual violence is a response to a key recommendation of the IMT report issued in December 2012. It is also recommended in the American College Health Association document *Shifting the Paradigm: Primary Prevention of Sexual Violence*.

Moreover, it will support institutional compliance with requirements imposed by local, state, and federal laws and regulations including but not limited to:

- The Clery Act, as recently amended by §304 of the reauthorization of the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA).
- Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 (including the guidance included in the April 2011 "Dear Colleague" letter).
- §6431 of Article 129-A of NYS Education Law.

III. CHARGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

The Cornell University Council on Sexual Violence Prevention is hereby established in response to the need for a campus and community-wide approach to preventing and effectively responding to sexual violence. The Council will comprise staff and faculty members, students, and local service providers. The Vice President for Student and Academic Services and Vice President for Human Resources and Safety Services will serve as co-chairs of the Council. The Executive Committee on Campus Climate, Health, and Safety will provide administrative oversight.

Through its meetings, committees, and workgroups, the Council on Sexual Violence Prevention will study and evaluate the campus environment, prevention strategies, policies, procedures, and services

and explore opportunities for fostering cultural change, reducing risks, and increasing support for members of the community affected by sexual violence.

The framework for the Council's activities is as follows:

A. GOALS

The university aims to achieve a campus environment that is safe, respectful, and free of all forms of sexual violence and discrimination based on sex or gender. To that end, the Council will promote change in the cultural factors that contribute to sexual violence and increase the effectiveness of prevention and response strategies. The university seeks change as reflected in the following goals:

- Reduce sexual harassment of students, staff, and faculty.
- Reduce sexual assaults including all experiences of unwanted sexual touching.

B. GUIDING PRINCIPLES AND ASSUMPTIONS

- Sexual violence occurs in a range of contexts, including social encounters between students, workplace situations involving faculty or staff, and in interactions between faculty or staff and students. The university is obligated by Title IX requirements to promote an environment free of sexual violence of any kind for all members of the Cornell community.
- In the vast majority of sexual assaults, the perpetrator is male and the victim is female.
- While men's violence against women needs to be the central focus of prevention efforts, it is also vital to address sexual violence that occurs within same-sex relationships and violence that is perpetrated against transgender and gender-variant individuals.
- As an abuse of power grounded in culture, sexual violence intersects with other forms of bias (e.g., heterosexist bias, racial bias). It also is related to non-sexual acts of interpersonal violence (e.g., intimate partner violence).
- Most perpetrators of sexual violence are known by those they victimize.
- Research suggests that on college campuses, a large majority of sexual assaults of students are committed by a subset of men who assault multiple women.
- While education for the campus community is essential, it has limited direct impact on deterring serial offenders. Therefore, enforcement and strong sanctions are critical for preventing further assaults by these individuals.
- Since most sexual assaults are perpetrated by men, it is vital for men to be leaders in sexual violence prevention.
- Responding to sexual violence requires acknowledgement of the varied and diverse needs and experiences of those who have been victimized. Safety, confidentiality, advocacy and personal support are key components of a comprehensive and sensitive response.
- Unwanted sexual experiences may be emotionally traumatic, even if they do not meet the legal or judicial criteria for a violation.
- Many individuals who are victimized seek personal support but do not necessarily desire legal or judicial action or resolution. However, campus reporting resources need to be available and visible to those seeking report options.

- Language about sexual violence is complex and evolving. Though we refer to “victims” or “survivors” to facilitate communication, these terms may not reflect an individual’s experience.
- “Prevention” programs focus on changing the behavior of potential perpetrators (primarily men), whereas “risk-reduction” programs for women and others attempt to deter sexual violence by providing information and skills that can reduce an individual’s vulnerability (e.g., self-defense training).

C. STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

As shown in the figure below, the university’s strategic framework for prevention of sexual violence includes three main areas (environment, education, and services) that incorporate the following ongoing actions:

Environment

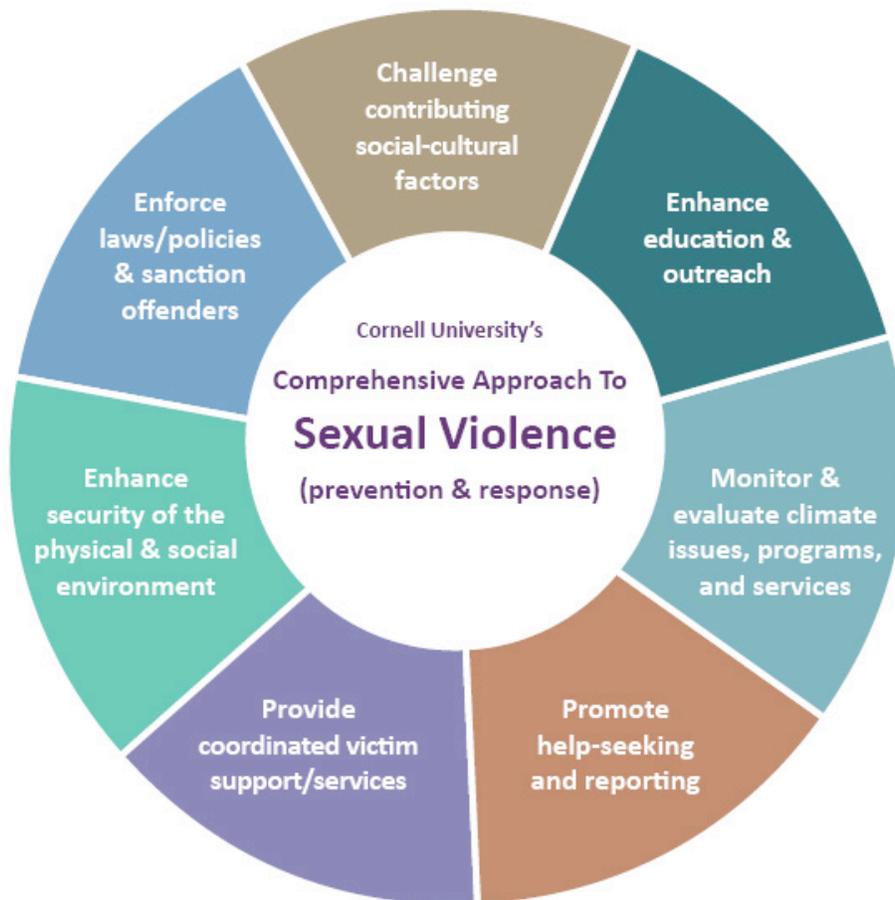
- Evaluate climate and services
- Challenge social and cultural factors
- Enforce policies/laws and sanction offenders
- Enhance the security of environment

Education

- Enhance education and outreach
- Promote help-seeking and reporting

Services

- Provide coordinated services and victim support



D. COUNCIL STRUCTURES

The Council will facilitate development of strategies to advance the university's strategic framework for the prevention of sexual violence. The Council will meet one to two times per semester and will convene, as needed, the following committee and workgroups:

1. Strategic Planning Committee

Provide administrative coordination for the Council workgroups in order to foster integrated program development and policy initiatives; establish agendas for Council meetings; support institutional compliance with §6431 of Article 129-A of NYS Education Law by assisting the Public Safety Advisory Committee (PSAC)*.

2. Research and Evaluation Workgroup

Promote development of research activities to assess attitudes, perceptions and behaviors related to sexual violence on campus; guide evaluation of prevention strategies and services.

3. Education and Outreach Workgroup

Identify and support best practices and evidence-based strategies regarding prevention of sexual violence as well as the intersection of related issues such as discrimination, bias, masculinity and homophobia; review existing faculty and staff-focused initiatives (e.g., Respect@Cornell, Notice and Respond) and student-focused strategies (e.g., Consent Ed and Wingman 101); explore approaches that address factors including bystander behavior, disregard for consent, victim blaming, and rape-supportive language, beliefs, attitudes, and perceptions, and the influence of alcohol and other drugs; promote development of primary prevention and awareness training programs for all new staff, faculty and students in accordance with the Clery Act as amended by VAWA; explore opportunities for curriculum infusion of concepts related to sexual violence; facilitate development of a comprehensive communications strategy that supports the overall efforts of the Council.

The Council will work closely and in collaboration with the Title IX coordinators, Cornell University Police Department, University Communications, and Office of the University Counsel so that the communication and educational strategies align with our legal obligations.

In addition to the Council's Strategic Planning Committee and workgroups, staff from Student and Academic Services, Human Resources and Safety Services, and other campus partners will form a SHARE (Sexual Harassment & Assault Response and Education) team, a collaborative administrative structure for coordination of support services and related educational programs.

E. MEMBERSHIP

The Council will comprise staff and faculty members, students, and representatives from the local community. Membership of the Council will include the members of PSAC. Efforts will be made to create as diverse a membership as possible.

Council representation may include:

- Students leaders from organizations such as:
 - Student Assembly
 - Graduate and Professional Student Assembly
 - Women's Resource Center
 - Graduate and Professional Women's Network
 - Lesbian, Gay, and Transgender Resource Center
 - Residential Programs
 - Orientation Steering Committee
 - Student-Athlete Advisory Committee
 - Fraternity and Sorority Tri-Councils
 - Center for Intercultural Dialogue
- Staff members from departments or groups such as:
 - Employee Assembly
 - Student and Academic Services
 - Human Resources and Safety Services
 - Human Resources Council
 - University Communications
 - Office of the Judicial Administrator

- Office of Institutional Research and Planning
 - Cornell University Police
 - Title IX Coordinator
 - Office of Graduate Student Life
 - University Diversity Council
 - Office of Postdoctoral Studies
 - University Diversity Community
- Faculty members from departments or groups such as:
 - Faculty Diversity Institute
 - Ethnic Studies
 - Feminist, Gender, and Sexuality Studies
 - Athletic Team Faculty Advisors
 - West Campus Faculty Fellows
 - Members from community agencies such as:
 - The Advocacy Center.
 - Cayuga Medical Center
 - Ithaca Police Department

***Public Safety Advisory Committee**

Pursuant to §6431 of Article 129-A of NYS Education Law, the Public Safety Advisory Committee (PSAC) will review and make recommendations for the improvement of current campus security policies, plans and procedures for:

- educating the campus community, including security personnel and those persons who advise or supervise students, about sexual assault, domestic and intimate partner violence, and stalking offenses pursuant to §6432 of Article 129-A of NYS Education Law;
- educating the campus community about personal safety and crime prevention;
- reporting sexual assaults and dealing with victims during investigations;
- referring complaints to appropriate authorities;
- counseling victims;
- and responding to inquiries from concerned persons.

PSAC's review and recommendations shall, in part, be informed by communication with and participation in the Council.

The PSAC will meet at least one time per year. PSAC will submit an annual written report on its findings and recommendations to the President.

In accordance with §6431 of Article 129-A of NYS Education Law, the Advisory Committee will have a minimum of six members, with at least one half being female. In addition:

- One-third will be appointed from a list of students provided by the Student Assembly that contains at least twice the number to be appointed.
- One-third will be appointed from a list of faculty members provided by the Faculty Senate that contains at least twice the number to be appointed.
- One-third will be selected by the President.