

Council on Sexual Violence Prevention

Feb. 21, 2014
1:00pm-2:30pm

Minutes

Susan Murphy, Vice President for Student and Academic Services, and Mary Opperman, Vice President for Human Resources and Safety Services welcomed everyone to the council meeting. The minutes from the December 2, 2013, meetings are posted on the SHARE web site. Vice President Murphy reviewed the agenda.

- **Announcements:**

- President Obama has appointed a Task Force to examine campus sexual assaults:
 - Vice President Murphy reported that Cornell has reached out to President Obama's staff offering a focused opportunity with a higher education institution. She also provided the links for the White House Listening Sessions (that can be accessed online) to the Council members. She encouraged all to join one of the listening sessions in the next few weeks.
- NYS Title IX Coordinators meeting
 - Lynette Chappell-Williams reported that officers throughout New York State are meeting on April 2, 2014, to talk over the issues and identify what things higher education institutions are challenged by with the Title IX compliance requirements.

- Mary Beth Grant, University Judicial Administrator, gave an update about Policy 6.4, how it applies to students, and the similarities and differences with the Campus Code of Conduct.

Discussion:

- The Challenges : written report with 6.4 vs meeting the victims during a hearing in the past with the Code.
 - Why aren't interviews with complainants videotaped? Mary Beth responded that video/audio takes away from the conversations. She added that video can add a level of emotion and be perceived as adversarial. It could create a reluctance to be more forthcoming by complainants and respondents if they knew they were being recorded.
- How does the 60 days to complete the 6.4 process feel to the complainant? Is it weighing on them?
 - In order to do the thorough investigation, it takes time. Mary Beth confirmed that the 60 days is the longest it can take (as mandated by "Dear Colleague" 2011 letter); sometimes it is shorter.
- Mary Beth then reported on her recent discussions with other institutions about reporting out sexual assault and sexual harassment statistics. She talked about the challenges that all

institutions are dealing with. One topic that was discussed at length was how much information institutions are going to give about sexual harassment and assault reports to the public. She said that the group was trying to identify the best practices, goals to achieve and the boundaries. There are three competing values: transparency, privacy, and clarity.

- There are different ways to “report out”:
 - Case by case reporting – provide a detailed report
 - Aggregate reporting – numbers of people, types of complaints
 - Reporting of all numbers -but not tied back to specific incidents

For purposes of council discussion Mary Beth asked the group what are some of the issues that could affect transparency? The discussion that followed addressed

- The benefits to reporting
 - Reporting out could improve understanding of the process for both sides.
 - We need to think about what the end user is actually looking for in the data.
 - There is a value to transparency in helping people that are now living with circumstances; to see what others have gone through.
 - Things do happen, we do have a process to handle it. Often there are consequences and we are working to make sure we are improving our systems and networks in place. We come together as a community- campus safety/climate issue.
- Challenges to reporting:
 - Many women’s lives are severely disrupted after reporting, so how do we get the message out to change the culture about sexual assaults? We need people to see that there were consequences to these assaults. Do we have a good enough system to support the victims if they report and pursue charges?
 - You lose control in a more transparent situation. We have a long ways to go to be transparent and not have it be painful for the survivors.
 - A focus on reporting can be misleading. We don’t want to lose our focus: reporting is a complicated matter for survivors and just one aspect of a comprehensive approach to prevention.
 - Would we focus on just students or the entire campus?

**Next Council meeting: Friday April 18, 2014.*

Advanced reading materials:

NY Times: Facing Complaints, Columbia's President Calls for Transparency in Assault Inquiries

- <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/01/30/nyregion/facing-complaints-columbias-president-calls-for-transparency-in-assault-inquiries.html>

Memorandum -- Establishing a White House Task Force to Protect Students from Sexual Assault

- <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2014/01/22/memorandum-establishing-white-house-task-force-protect-students-sexual-a>

Policy 6.4: Prohibited Discrimination, Protected-Status Harassment, Sexual Harassment, and Sexual Assault and Violence

- <http://www.dfa.cornell.edu/treasurer/policyoffice/policies/volumes/humanresources/prohibited.cfm>