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OUTREACH AND COMMUNICATIONS SUBCOMMITTEE

FINAL REPORT

DECEMBER 2015

OVERVIEW

The Harvard University Sexual Assault Prevention Task Force has embarked upon an ambitious effort to better understand the campus climate surrounding sexual assault and harassment at Harvard. As part of this effort, the Outreach and Communications sub-committee was tasked with collecting and synthesizing qualitative information about how sexual assault manifests in various forms on each of our school's campuses and to develop ideas for prevention and awareness. Outreach meetings were one part of a number of efforts at Harvard to address the complicated and important issue of preventing sexual violence on campus.

Towards those ends, the committee launched a series of focus groups and workshop sessions that aimed to delve more deeply into 1) the root of sexual harassment and sexual assault; 2) where and how it is occurring on our campus; and 3) ideas to address and prevent it. We sought to inspire a broader dialogue on the issue of sexual misconduct and bring together an engaged group of students who will help continue these efforts going forward. We aimed to brainstorm ideas that are unique to our campus, working on the ground from the bottom-up to create a more informed, safe and welcoming, empowered Harvard community. This initiative is focused on understand how to change the conversation at Harvard – how have we been normalized to understand harassment, assault, and violence? How do we create environments where students are empowered to speak up, to help their friends and peers, and to change their attitudes and the broader culture? And most importantly, how do we establish the social norm that violence is not tolerated at Harvard?

OUTREACH PROCESS

The Outreach and Communications Sub-Committee members (Appendix) worked with students, faculty and staff at each of Harvard's undergraduate and graduate schools to conduct 52 public and private outreach workshops and dozens of individual discussions that included over 530 students and student leaders. A College-focused committee held 17 meetings including 148 students, plus numerous additional individual and small group meetings during Fall 2014. Follow-on meetings were held in Spring 2015 particularly related to the College and included several meetings with Office of Sexual Assault and Prevention Resources (OSAPR), Deans of Student Life, Undergraduate Council (UC) leaders, and individual students. Graduate schools also held numerous follow-up discussions to further explore issues and inform prevention approaches. Students involved represented a broad range of backgrounds and experiences on our campuses. For example, separate focus groups were held specifically with students self-identified by gender identity, sexual orientation, race, or extracurricular interests; students also attended general open meetings. Each of the meetings followed a structure of discussing key problem areas followed by brainstorming of prevention ideas. The aim was to develop a better understanding of sexual harassment and sexual assault as revealed in various educational, social, and cultural settings across the University. These sessions also aimed to spark ideas for changing norms, behaviors, and structures that contribute to unhealthy gender and sexual environments on our campuses.

In January 2015, Harvard schools provided the Outreach Subcommittee with an internal summary of their discussions that outlined key issues discussed, as well as ideas for prevention efforts. Participating students were assured that these sessions were confidential and that information would be handled with utmost discretion.

The subcommittee reviewed these submissions, condensed ideas, included follow-on meeting ideas, and outlined the following six themes as well as several ideas for consideration. Included

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below is a short description of the theme, student rationale for its relevance to the issues raised, and suggested ideas for moving forward.

Note that some of the ideas and actions suggested below have already been implemented over the course of the Task Force work in 2014-15.

KEY DISCUSSION THEMES and PREVENTION IDEAS

1) Administrative Leadership Commitment involves a proactive articulation of sexual assault and sexual harassment prevention as a high priority across the University and on each campus, and the allocation of resources to foster ongoing dialogue and prevention initiatives.

Rationale: Students seek affirmation from leaders that addressing Sexual Assault and Sexual Harassment (SA/SH) is a top priority. Having leaders validate the topic for open discussion helps overcome social stigmas and other barriers present in peer-only conversations. Graduate and professional school students also acknowledge the power dynamic differences among master, doctoral students and faculty/visiting faculty, which make it difficult to speak up about sexual misconduct without a broader commitment to stop SA/SH and clear expectations from top leaders. Without active leadership voices addressing this issue, students interpret that the current norms, which include unwelcome sexual conduct in many forms, are acceptable or simply a low priority to address. Students requested that Deans meet with students, include the topic in communications, and demonstrate progress through actions and improved outcomes. Students seek substantive and symbolic gestures to demonstrate leaders' commitment to change, as well as to encourage students to prioritize addressing this issue among themselves as a community-wide effort.

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Ideas:

a) President acknowledges the severity of the problems and importance of swiftly and deeply addressing issues.

b) Dean of College and other College leaders commit to addressing issues immediately as well as to allocate resources to understand and monitor issues going forward.

2) <u>Education and Training</u> involves quality, engaging content that students, faculty, and staff can comprehend, concretize, and retain. The education should clarify definitions, illuminate healthy/unhealthy sexual relationships, and engage students in discussion over difficult "grey" areas, hopefully changing beliefs of what is acceptable in the process. It also involves instruction for staff, tutors, teaching fellows and faculty on how to support students in need, to adhere to policies, and to diminish reporting barriers.

Rationale: Students need the foundational knowledge that will help them understand SA/SH, understand unhealthy/healthy relationships and open a dialogue about difficult and sensitive issues among peers. Students voiced a need for more training each year, specifically as undergraduates. They suggested more opportunities for facilitated dialogue throughout the year to recognize, prevent, and report unacceptable behavior. The education material should be engaging and relevant to each school's needs. To be effective, it should also consider the particular needs and understanding of students from different parts of the world, gender identity, ethical or racial background, and sexual orientation. Students felt that faculty and staff should also be trained on updated policies, processes, definitions and interventions to support students as well as understand their own boundaries.

Ideas:

a) Institute mandatory education for each student class at the outset of each academic year for both graduates and undergraduates, including on-line programs to complete before entering with clear articulation of terms, definitions, and policies. Make clear alcohol's role as risk factor and build discussion of alcohol into educational programs. Integrate education into student leadership/club training, including the role of power dynamics for older students and upperclassmen. Teach students _how_ to have these difficult conversations around SA/SH and healthy relationships and how to be an active bystander. Education sessions should be offered through a variety of places including extracurricular clubs, houses, graduate student sections, dorms, etc. with flexible options to accommodate student schedules.

b) Build trust and understanding in BGLTQ communities and under-represented minority groups. We are currently not reaching these individuals and communities effectively, and we need to understand their needs better, in order to provide appropriate support resources.

c) Provide education for all faculty, staff, teaching fellows and tutors; (mandatory for all new staff, refresher strongly encouraged for existing) including the role of power dynamics. Create space to reinforce norms and expectations around sexual conduct as well as to know how to refer/support students in need. Consider when the topic of sexual violence might arise during coursework (particularly in medicine/public health/law/public policy/business) and offer opportunities to discuss topics separately.

d) Create new ways to actively engage students in understanding of sexual relationships, perhaps through a new Gen. Ed. course offering, a podcast, call-in talk show (e.g. Dr. Ruth), Crimson/newspaper column, or speaker series.

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3) <u>Social Spaces (Environmental/Structural)</u> involves the context of specific events relating to physical space, organizations, or groups of people. It also involves power dynamics, the role of alcohol and other drugs, the nature of individual relationships, and the overall impact on the community.

Rationale: Students noted the role that context plays in influencing individual behavior. Understanding where students are most at risk in terms of specific places, events, and situations within the Harvard context is critical for targeted prevention efforts. In the graduate schools, students noted that environments where professional boundaries can be crossed pose increased risks of unwelcome sexual conduct, citing academic conferences, recruiting events, section trips, and social outings. For the College, a prominent theme was the domination of the social scene by Final Clubs together with the lack of inclusive social spaces where all students can have access. Students also noted that male-dominated spaces both inside and outside the classroom in many schools makes it difficult for all genders to report unwanted behavior as well as to thrive more generally.

Ideas:
a) Determine spaces, places, events that do not support gender equity among students and do not foster respect among all genders; change structures, practices and behaviors that are inimical to healthy sexual climate and positive educational experience.

b) Offer alternative approaches for social interactions and spaces; establish clear boundaries between personal and professional (i.e., conferences, recruiting).

c) Consider how to mitigate role of alcohol as a risk factor through education, training, and changing norms and behavior around alcohol incapacitation and sex.

College-specific ideas: Final Clubs are unrecognized single gender organizations with social spaces that perpetuate gender inequity and an unhealthy social climate, including sexual harassment and assault, making this status quo unacceptable. Students also seek more alternatives for inclusive social spaces.

d) Either don't allow simultaneous membership in Final Clubs and College enrollment; or allow Clubs to transition to all-gender inclusion with equal gender membership and leadership. With the latter:

    i. Provisionally register all-gender clubs for monitoring.

    ii. Require they have ongoing (annual, mandatory) sexual assault education and assigned sober bystanders at social events.

e) Offer alternative approaches for social interactions and invest in new College spaces.

    i. Invest resources and new programming in Queens Head and Annenberg downstairs space as an interim place for freshmen. Tap Undergraduate Council leadership and hire new staff to support strong fall kick-off for freshmen.

    ii. Create new inclusive social spaces for upperclassmen in houses, suitable for mid-size events with gender inclusive leadership.

    iii. Explore the option of assigning freshmen to a house from the moment they arrive on campus as a way to strengthen the house communities.

    iv. Provide financial resources for house programming to support events that are not alcohol centered, and further the intellectual, social and personal development of students.

    v. Develop relationships with local establishments to host Harvard focused social nights and events.

4) Shifting Norms through Awareness, Roles, and Expectations involves modifying the informal understandings that govern individuals' behavior or implicit expectations about how they should behave or what is acceptable in certain social, professional, or other contexts at Harvard.

Rationale: Students acknowledge that the Harvard community is comprised of individuals from many cultures, backgrounds, and orientations. It is essential to understand social norms and set new ones in the context of each community while also crafting broad messages that reach a wide range of people. Current norms on sexual conduct are not always consistent with the sexual assault policy and vary based upon social setting. Because this topic is not openly discussed, challenging current norms is difficult and results in social stigmas. Students across many of the schools noted that no accepted norms for bystander behavior exist to intervene in problematic situations. Students cited examples of campaigns that shift behaviors such as seat belt usage, smoking bans, or designated drivers, which could be learning examples. They feel that having student-led initiatives would be most impactful, but lacked the funds and incentives to develop.   Students would also need to engage and activate their networks for wide-spread participation and successful outcomes.

Ideas:
   a) Provide resources for students to create social media/multi-media initiatives promoting behavior change and the norm that actions leading to sexual assault are unacceptable. Develop tailored strategies for materials and communications to reach all individuals on campus, including those from groups in power positions and those who represent various sexual orientations, gender identities, racial, ethnic, and geographic backgrounds, and other sub-communities. Target behavior change of individual perpetrators through stigmatizing harmful behaviors and encouraging a negative response among peers for such behavior.

b) Introduce expectations to freshmen through a code of conduct/character/integrity, akin to the academic integrity honor code, which students sign each year. Post expectations of conduct in labs, departments, employer recruiting materials, academic conference materials, and pertinent websites in both graduate and undergraduate settings.

c) Create bystander norms and programs at each school. Require student organizations and dorm party hosts to assign a sober bystander role. This person would be responsible for monitoring risky situations and intervening to avert dangerous situations or to call for help.

d) Spearhead social movement/public health campaign to shift norms and behavior, similar to MADD, designated driver campaigns. Include other campuses and share costs to create a nationwide effort.

5) Resource Knowledge and Availability/Safety/Overcoming Barriers to Use includes adequacy of support, response, safety and prevention resources across campus as well as awareness on how to find and utilize such information. These resources must also consider how to overcome barriers to use so that students avail themselves of them. Students must also comprehend terms, definitions, and policies and their practical application to the Harvard context.

Rationale: Students require a range of alternative resources to consider when dealing with situations of SA/SH. These resources must be clear, easy to find, and communicated in advance of incidents. Students experience barriers to use these resources due to stigmas, fear, uncertainty, and escalation consequences. Graduate students are reticent to report given reputational consequences when asking for referrals or recommendations, so confidentiality is of utmost concern. While students are becoming more aware of resources through the SHARE website, there is still a wide knowledge gap of where to find help and the degree to which

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students can preserve confidentiality and control of information. Further, students lack confidence that administrators will take action in response to SA/SH.

Ideas:

a) Provide mobile app for student to provide instant and easy access to resources and help (such as through the HBS Thrive/College Omni App). Provide anonymous texting as a first step to engage with resources.

b) Provide more extensive van and walk home services with broad awareness campaigns to ensure widespread knowledge of services.

c) Ensure all students are aware that by sharing a situation with OSAPR (confidential) or Title IX officer (to access support resources), they are not required to file any reports though may choose to at any time. Create ways students can access information and support without necessarily escalating incidents.

d) Create engaging video to clarify terms, definitions, processes that reach all students.

e) Create transparency around what actually happens in aggregate report form so students have a sense that the administration will take action.

6) <u>Ongoing Prevention Efforts and Accountability</u> involves developing a systematic way for each school and for the university overall to track and evaluate prevention efforts on an ongoing basis.

Rationale: Students have welcomed the task force's efforts to spotlight issues at hand with each school facilitating outreach sessions and conducting the climate survey. This information provides a good starting point for immediate action plans as well as to support longer-term

efforts to sustain change over time. However, there is concern that efforts will not continue unless a structured approach exists for ensuring ongoing initiatives are in place across schools. Sharing ideas and having an accountability mechanism will further necessary progress over time. Students suggested measuring and monitoring reporting statistics to increase transparency, trust, and understanding.

Ideas:

a) Create ongoing body to share best practices across the university to discuss activities and opportunities around culture change, proactive prevention, and continued dialogue.

b) Request a report on prevention efforts from each school to encourage implementation of ideas and foster accountability among all.

c) Conduct Climate Survey and review results in future years to determine appropriate actions.

d) At the College, create a body (or perhaps multiple bodies to focus on separate issues such as awareness, education, social spaces, etc) that will work with the Dean, the Undergraduate Council, and other leaders to institute the changes that have been suggested, evaluate how they are working for undergraduates, and suggest new ideas as the culture and climate adapt over the years.

APPENDIX

Outreach and Communications Sub-Committee participants:

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Dr. Paul Barreira, *Director of Harvard University Health Services and Henry K Oliver Professor of Hygiene, Harvard Medical School; Associate Professor of Psychiatry; Member of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences*

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