

Introduction and Rationale

On Wednesday, October 23, 2019, the Student and Presidential Committee on Sexual Assault hosted a “Round Table on Sexual Assault,” a forum for all students to express their questions, comments, and concerns regarding policy, prevention efforts, response processes and protocols, or anything relating to sexual violence at Dartmouth. Sophia Brelvi (Deputy Title IX Coordinator for Training) and Eric Ramsey (Associate Dean of Student Life) were present at the event to answer questions. In addition, we created a Google Form for any students who could not attend the event to share their comments and thoughts. SPCSA hosts this event each term in order to formally serve as a liaison between students and administrators. We believe that with access to this direct student feedback, administrative leaders can better understand how to tailor policies and initiatives to students and continue to cultivate the student-administration relationship. Below is a summary of feedback from the event and the Google Form.

Please direct any questions about this feedback or the event in general to SPCSA leadership via our email: student.and.presidential.committee.on.sexual.assault@dartmouth.edu.

Key Themes

Theme 1: *With the official launching of the Sexual Violence Prevention Project (SVPP), we are at an important transition point for sexual violence prevention on campus. There was a range of knowledge and opinions of SVPP that varied depending on class year and involvement in the project.*

Theme 1a: *First-Year Perspectives*

- First-year students who attended the round table in person gave positive feedback about the first-year sessions stating that their knowledge of resources increased. However, other first-years expressed concerns about the transparency of the content of SVPP before being required to attend mandatory programming.
 - Specifically, we received feedback that orientation programs should allow students to leave (and not come back) should they need to, particularly given that some students come to Dartmouth having already experienced harm.
 - Additionally, students requested that there be more clarity surrounding the process for obtaining waivers for SVPP sessions. Some students experienced long wait times when requesting more information about the content of the sessions as well as during the process of requesting to be exempt from the sessions.

Recommendation 1a: *SVPP should make facilitation and program content more transparent prior to the events for first-year students so that they can be prepared and*

know whether or not they should seek a waiver. Additionally, facilitators and those running programs should allow students to leave programming (especially during Orientation Week) if they find it to be retraumatizing.

Relevant to: *The Student Wellness Center*

Theme 1b: *Upperclassmen Ideas & Feedback*

- Regarding facilitations, some students mentioned that it may be beneficial to organize students into small but random groups that they could remain in for all four sessions. This could help students feel more comfortable talking about sexual violence since they would establish group expectations and relationships in the context of discussing this issue.
 - This could also help to avoid the distraction that occurs when students attend a facilitation with friends or floormates.
- Upperclassmen students mentioned that they wished that there was more publicity on SVPP's end regarding what progress SVPP is making and what the next steps are, both for freshmen and as a whole.
 - Students supplemented this concern by saying that they did not know freshmen facilitations had begun, and many were still unclear on what happened with MAV and what would be replacing it.
 - After a student involved in SVPP brought up the idea of a newsletter, students agreed that could be a good way for students to receive more information.
- There were several questions regarding how SVPP compared to MAV. Students wanted to know why and how prevention content is changing and how mandatory facilitations for Greek houses work with the new SVPP curriculum.

Recommendation 1b: *SVPP should continue to publicize the project to all students. We recognize that students play a role in their own self-education, however, focusing on dissemination of information to student leaders could help make sure information about the project is being properly spread among upperclassmen. Perhaps the newsletter could be sent directly to student leaders.*

Relevant to: *The Student Wellness Center*

Theme 2: *Students expressed varying levels of concern about the ways in which people are held accountable for perpetrating harmful behaviors on campus.*

- There are narratives that circulate about the College's investigation and the Title IX reporting processes that create the perception that the College does not hold people accountable.

- Students stated that this seems to result in some students turning to social structures such as Greek houses to hold people accountable.
- Sports teams have varying levels of discussions surrounding violence and/or risky behavior as well as accountability for perpetrating harm. Students mentioned that some coaches set a tone that creates a team standard of not tolerating violence while other coaches can be perceived as posing a significant barrier to holding team members accountable for harmful behavior because they can be unsupportive of those who have experienced harm.
- Many Greek houses have internal committees that are supposed to hold members accountable for behavior (including but not limited to sexual violence). However, each house has different policies and students expressed concern about how equipped students are to respond to disclosures of incidents of sexual violence.
 - It was mentioned that banning internal committees is not a simple solution as some survivors turn to these committees instead of going through College processes.

Recommendation: *Staff should work with students to develop guidelines or baseline policies regarding internal committees that address behavioral issues particularly within Greek houses. To address sexual violence in the athletics community, Title IX should continue to work with coaches on how to respond to disclosures of sexual violence. Furthermore, those within Athletics Administration should set clear expectations for how coaches respond to and handle issues of sexual violence on their team.*

Relevant to: *The Office of Greek Life, Title IX, Department of Athletics*

Theme 3: *Attendees noted that non-students (such as faculty, staff and coaches) within our community play a role in the overall atmosphere on campus and have significant influence within the campus community.*

- Students emphasized that professors are respected by students and can be some of the only non-college aged adults that students interact with. Professors therefore have significant influence on students— especially first-years —as well as on campus culture.
 - It was emphasized that there is a lot of variability in how professors talk about sexual violence as well as gender issues.
 - People noted that some professors perpetuate gender and/or power dynamics in classrooms that can contribute to a culture of harm on campus.
- However, students also see professors as a way to reach students. Several people commented that Writing 5 and similar classes could be a great way to reach first-year students to talk about campus culture, resources and wellness in general.
- As addressed in **Theme 2**, coaches also play a role in tone-setting when it comes to campus culture and the culture surrounding sexual violence.

Recommendation: *Senior leadership should work with faculty leadership to discuss dedicating some class time to overall student wellbeing, including discussion around sexual violence. Furthermore, professors teaching first-year required classes such as Writing 5 should be mandated to include such information. On a different note, based on the student opinions expressed at the Round Table, classes would be an effective space to reach as many students as possible, and thus, SVPP should continue to consider whether classes could be utilized as an opportunity for completing program requirements.*

Relevant to: *Senior Leadership, Dean of the Faculty, Associate Deans, the Student Wellness Center*

A note from SPCSA: A lot of the conversation around sexual violence on campus seems to focus on accountability and the consequences of perpetuating harm, whether as a result of formal processes or informal social processes. Although we do not wish to diminish the importance of accountability, we do want the conversation to shift from focusing on specific incidences of harm to overall cultures of harm. We feel that as a community we need to move away from managing the risk that some people pose to others and focus more on thinking critically about the norms that facilitate the occurrence of this harm in the first place.