

## *SPCSA Round Table Memo 20X*

**To:** Dartmouth College's sexual violence prevention and response staff, the administration of Dartmouth College

**From:** the Student and Presidential Committee on Sexual Assault

**Date:** September 22, 2020

Throughout 20X, the Student and Presidential Committee on Sexual Assault (SPCSA) provided students with an opportunity to engage with our termly "Round Table on Sexual Assault," an event SPCSA hosts each term in order to formally serve as a liaison between students and administrators. This is typically an in-person 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. However, due to the nature of this remote term, we decided that a Google Form would be the most effective, efficient, and safe way for Dartmouth students to share their comments and thoughts. 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.

In contrast to previous terms, in which we identified several key themes, **all responses to this Google Form were centered around one single topic:** the way the College responded to the Maha Alshawi's experience and the institutional failings that the College's response illuminated. Students voiced concerns in two broad areas.

The first can be summarized as concern about what students perceived as the College protecting and defending professors over students. Many students believe that the College actively privileged the perspective of the professors involved in Maha Alshawi's experience and more broadly works to protect professors over students. This perceived protection of professors may stem from the lack of public consequence for those professors and the fact that many believe the College's statements invalidated her experience. The student body is concerned that this facilitates a hostile learning environment because it reinforces and exacerbates a power dynamic between professors and students that can be conducive to abuse of power. Students voiced that this protection of faculty detracts from students' ability to learn, to hold faculty and the institution accountable for harm, and subsequently, to feel safe in our community.

The second area of concern can be described as the existence of a hostile environment at Dartmouth for survivors and BIPOC, women, trans, and LGBTQ+ students. Students viewed the response to Alshawi as indicative of the College's failure to create mechanisms that adequately support survivors of all identities and backgrounds. They described the College's response as "outrageous," "manipulative," and "inadequate." All comments point to "the College" or

“Dartmouth” as a whole contributing to these problems, and call for institution wide action and change.

Based on these comments, and the various conversations the SPCSA has had with students and staff throughout the summer, we recommend that the College consider broad strategies for creating new avenues by which survivors can seek support and accountability. We, as the SPCSA, have been in conversation with Dean Lively regarding such issues and look forward to continuing those conversations going forward. Seeing as these concerns span the College as a whole, we ask that all staff and senior leadership also continue to engage and work towards addressing these concerns on a structural level.

Sincerely,

The Student and Presidential Committee on Sexual Assault