

**Report of the Task Force on  
Sexual Misconduct Education and Prevention**

Submitted to Dean Mary Miller

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## **Introduction**

Our charge from the Dean of Yale College was to seek ways to strengthen and supplement the College's current mechanisms for addressing sexual misconduct<sup>1</sup> on campus. As the University's disciplinary mechanisms are already in the midst of review, our task force was asked to focus on non-disciplinary measures. Recognizing the damage that sexual misconduct can inflict, as well as the opportunities offered by the current heightened awareness of these issues on campus, Dean Miller urged our task force to be both swift and ambitious in our work.

Tasked as we are with offering new ideas, we are especially cognizant of—and grateful for—the impressive work already underway. The caring, determination, and creativity of many groups and individuals (among them, the SHARE Center, the Women's Center, the Freshman Counselors and Peer Liaisons, the Residential College Deans and Masters, and Walden) does much already to reduce both the incidence and impact of sexual misconduct on campus. We take the successes of these existing programs as evidence that productive intervention is possible, despite broad cultural forces that make sexual violence and harassment so prevalent on American college campuses. We are equally grateful to the writers of several recent reports (the Women's Center Report, the SHAPE Report, the Women Faculty Forum report, and that of the Provost's Committee on Sexual Misconduct), which have been instrumental in bringing about this present moment of productive reflection. Our task force has drawn on the extensive information and ambitious proposals in those documents.

Our unanimous assessment is that the Yale community should take this opportunity to develop a more extensive, sustained, and coordinated approach for addressing the problem of sexual misconduct on campus. We call for more robust community education, to be conducted primarily by well-trained, well-supported peer educators; we

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<sup>1</sup> Sexual misconduct is a term currently being adopted by Yale to classify a range of unacceptable behavior. As defined by the Undergraduate Regulations, "[s]exual misconduct encompasses a range of behavior including sexual harassment, sexual assault, and any conduct of a sexual nature that is nonconsensual, or has the effect of threatening or intimidating the person against whom such conduct is directed."

also see the need for a standing committee to provide ongoing evaluation and coordination of these efforts. Sexual violence and harassment on our campus reveal patterns of thought and behavior that extend far beyond Yale. To address the problem effectively, all of us must work together to foster an empowered campus community, one in which students, administrators, and faculty are able to identify and intervene in the dynamics that make sexual misconduct possible. The Yale administration has a particular role to play in expanding and inventing institutional structures to enhance expertise and promote discussion and reflection at all levels. Students must take the lead as peer educators, but dedicated administrators and faculty will continue to play crucial roles and may step into new ones in the effort to make expertise more widespread. Yale's campus is already organized into strong, overlapping communities of mutual care—these communities can be given even better tools to translate that care into effective protection, intervention, and response.

To enable this work of campus transformation, Yale administrators need to reimagine campus sexual safety education structures in broader terms. At its simplest, sexual misconduct training focuses on meeting the needs of those directly harmed in specific incidents, teaching participants how to respond appropriately and supportively, identifying formal resources for emotional and medical help, and suggesting options for lodging formal complaints. To this information, in recent years, Yale has added core definitions of sexual consent and risk-management strategies, as well as encouraging an ongoing conversation about good citizenship on campus. These are crucial elements, but this task force argues for more ambitious goals, moving from a "training" paradigm into a higher educational model that stresses critical thinking, conceptual frameworks, and practical methodologies alongside the informational content. Such a shift is already underway in some sites, such as freshman orientation and the recent student-run workshops. We recommend that these more challenging pedagogies be supported and extended to other programming, including that directed at faculty and administrators. As a community, we have the opportunity to become more adept at recognizing, discussing, and analyzing the dynamics of sexual misconduct; we can then work collectively on a

diverse range of functional strategies for avoiding and actively changing patterns of violence and harassment.

As the complexity of our educational efforts increases, so too must the breadth. Any rigorous engagement with undergraduate sexual misconduct must engage with the general student sexual culture in which it occurs, empowering students to navigate the challenges of that culture successfully. The powerful legal and moral concept of consent is grounded in the more complex concept of sexual autonomy. To promote that autonomy, our educational efforts need to encourage self-awareness, mutual respect, and skills for clear and honest communication among the student population. In the absence of such sensitivity and skills, the standard of affirmative consent can seem to be only an idealistic abstraction.

In crafting the specific recommendations that follow, we prioritized two additional goals. First, we sought to support and expand sexual misconduct education and prevention efforts as situated within the routine workings of the College; it is critical that this work not depend upon the energy and commitment of specific individuals alone, or occur only in response to crises. Second, wherever possible we have attempted to integrate the work into broader efforts to foster a healthy, supportive, engaged campus community. Specialized efforts such as those provided by the Women's Center or SHARE are critical, but the conceptual and practical tools for preventing sexual misconduct must be shared across the campus community as part of a general discussion of sexual choices and consent.

**Our recommendations (unranked):**

**1. Expand the pool of well-supported, well-educated student educators**

Student educators placed in formal, highly-visible positions could: organize ongoing, engaged programming; become accessible sources of information and referrals for students in need; enrich campus conversation by providing relevant knowledge and concepts in various formal and informal settings; help shape the campus response to high-profile acts of sexual misconduct. Student educators would *not* be expected to provide counseling services or address emergencies on their own—their training would include protocols for turning to professional resources as appropriate. Student educators exist already within some of the groups named below, but new and expanded preparation is required. Other roles need to be substantially transformed or newly created. These peer educators will be helpful in both mandatory and optional training sessions for the broader community. The suggestions we make here are focused on the undergraduate population, but the model also be productive within the graduate and professional schools.

**1a. Peer Health Educators (PHEs)**

We recommend a substantial expansion of this program, undertaken in conjunction with Health Services, which currently oversees the PHEs. To enhance their visibility, PHEs could be officially tied to the residential college structure. (For example, there might be a designated representative for each class in every residential college, with a competitive application process.) A significant increase in education and support would be necessary for these students to reach the necessarily levels of expertise. The newly-configured PHEs would serve as flexible resources for a variety of health issues, not just sexual misconduct. The "PHE" title might be replaced with something catchier. Note: the current supervisors of the PHEs are enthusiastic about these possibilities, but would need support from the College.

**1b. Peer Liaisons (PLs)**

Some of the PLs receive education on sexual misconduct and facilitate discussions already; others do not. We recommend making this a routine part of

ongoing PL education and support. One ongoing challenge in all of Yale's efforts has been the need to address sexual misconduct in ways relevant to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer students. The LGBTQ PLs are especially well-placed to foster discussion within and beyond their own community.

1c. *Women's Center PLs and/or Residential College Liaisons (RCLs)*

We recommend new programs in these areas. Both would give visibility to individuals already well-versed in these issues, enabling them to work more effectively with either freshman (PLs) or upperclass students (RCLs). (As always, more training would need to take place.) These programs would also help build valuable collaborations between the Women's Center and the residential college Deans and Masters.

1d. *Freshman Counselors*

The training already provided to the freshman counselors is very good, but could be much strengthened. The introduction provided by the SHARE Center should be supplemented with more extensive, complex, and interactive discussions. Information should also be added on sexual harassment and stalking. This educational work could begin in the spring, and continue through the year in various formats. Freshman counselors also need encouragement and strategies for continuing to address these issues with their students beyond freshman orientation.

2. **Raise the level of student knowledge through mandatory educational programs**

We envision periodic discussion-based programs, designed and led by peers (with faculty and administrative support) whenever possible. These programs must be engaging and useful, so as not to engender resentment or be perceived as punitive. Content will vary according to context, but all programs should include material on sexual harassment, sexual assault, the role of alcohol in sexual misconduct, and patterns within campus culture that enable sexual misconduct; a special effort must be made to be inclusive of LGBTQ experience. Students must be helped to develop

specific, positive strategies for both intervention and response.

Sites for such education could include:

2a. *All registered student organizations*

This might occur within the context of general diversity education, addressing issues beyond sexual misconduct. The Intercultural Affairs Council has expressed interest in developing this training, and the Yale College Council is provisionally open to introducing it.

2b. *Freshman Orientation*

Freshman Orientation already includes sexual misconduct prevention discussions, but that training should be strengthened by more inclusion of experienced students and more skill-set development. The Freshman Orientation Committee is already at work on strengthening this particular training—this task force encourages support of that work.

2c. *The Leadership Academy and Captains' Trainings*

The Leadership Academy is a program within Athletics that already addresses questions of teambuilding and leadership. It offers a good chance to incorporating issues of sexual misconduct into existing relevant discussions. The work done with Captains offers a similar opportunity.

2d. *Inhabitants of "party suites"*

"Party suites" are especially large dorm rooms that host many parties within the residential colleges, often with some degree of support from the Masters and Deans. The inhabitants of these coveted rooms are often become de facto social leaders. They are well-placed to influence patterns of dangerous behavior.

2e. *Non-registered student organizations*

Educational programs could not be mandatory for such organizations, but efforts should be made to draw them into other programming or to help them develop their own. Creative incentives would be appropriate.

3. **Provide more education and guidance for administrators and faculty**

As especially influential members of the Yale community, administrators and faculty can be critical sources of information and support. They too could use more tools for recognizing, preventing, and responding to sexual misconduct at all levels.

3a. *Develop more educational opportunities for Residential College Deans and Masters, Cultural Center Directors, and interested faculty members*

These educational sessions could take many shapes. Some might be optional, offering specific advanced frameworks and strategies for dealing with particular challenges; others might be embedded in routine meetings. Ideally, these community leaders would also participate in whatever training is developed for the new university-wide committee on sexual misconduct, and in special sessions relevant to the training and supervising of peer educators.

3b. *Develop best-practices guidelines for administrators to have on file*

While responses must be tailored to meet the particular demands of any given situation, general guidelines would offer a useful starting point. Public harassment, high-profile violence, and stalking are particular concerns, as is sexual violence within the LGBT community. Guidelines should offer suggestions for reaching out to the individuals involved, as well as to the larger community.

3c. *Develop a calendar of danger periods, plus routines for programming, reminders, and discussion*

We should take advantage of the annual nature of things like rushes, holidays, and dances in order to time formal and informal conversations with the communities involved, particularly with their leadership.

3d. *Strengthen sexual harassment prevention training*

Steps should be taken to ensure that all faculty, administrators, and staff across the university have received sexual harassment prevention training. When possible, training should be conducted through department-based programming, to increase participation and foster broad discussion. The current training can be significantly strengthened by making it more interactive and focusing on academic life rather than the business workplace. Graduate student teachers



should be included in this training. In addition, a more extensive educational program should be created for faculty, administrators, and staff who want to develop expertise in these issues. We recommend formation of a campus-wide network of individuals who have participated in the most substantive training; a list of these people can be posted as resources for the entire community.

**4. Expand professional education resources**

The current SHARE Center personnel are dedicated to prevention and education work, but their clinical responsibilities demand much of their attention. They respond generously to requests for trainings and workshops, but their ability to do sustained outreach is limited. We recommend the addition of one or two non-clinical prevention and education staff members, who would expand sexual misconduct education on campus; such outreach would be especially significant for populations who are not actively seeking out such learning. They could also share the work of training our proposed array of peer educators, thus lessening the burden on other administrators. A specialist in working with men on sexual misconduct would be particularly useful.

**5. Develop clinical services for students accused of sexual misconduct, and a protocol by which students are invited to make use of them**

The SHARE Center offers a version of this service now, but it is only available by self-referral. We recommend that Yale develop a program by which students accused of sexual misconduct are (with the freely-given permission of the complainant) invited to meet with a specialist to explore potential issues of sexual aggression. This program can be distinct from any disciplinary procedure (that is, disciplinary action is neither required nor precluded by this process). The fact of the counseling would be entirely confidential, as would any information that arose within it. Most likely, participation would be entirely voluntary, although the University could explore requiring this counseling as a disciplinary measure. Such a program would pose a variety of legal and logistical issues; it would also require that someone in Mental Health acquire the requisite expertise. This task force believes that such a service

deserves serious consideration. Given the unwillingness of the majority of victims to bring charges against their perceived assailants, we must presume that the majority of perpetrators will remain on campus without disciplinary action. Therefore, it is important to develop other means to intervene. (Note: Harvard instituted a program like this last year, and feels it has been very successful thus far.)

**6. Form a standing committee to evaluate Yale's sexual misconduct education, intervention, and response strategies**

The reports of the last few years reveal the utility of periodic reviews of policies, procedures, and programming related to sexual conduct and misconduct on campus; each of these ad hoc committees has identified new strategies by which Yale might better address sexual misconduct. We recommend the creation of a standing committee, a consistent body to be charged with the work of conducting broad evaluation and making specific recommendations. By building familiarity and expertise over time and offering sustained attention to these important issues, a standing committee would be even more effective than ones formed in response to specific crisis points. We believe that this new standing committee would ideally operate at the level of the University; it could be convened under the auspices of the College as long as it maintained a strong commitment to engaging with broader constituencies and efforts. This review committee should be distinct from the new university-wide committee being formed to adjudicate specific cases of sexual misconduct; there should be some overlap in membership, but we caution against expecting one body to take on both sets of tasks. Initially, the review committee would assess the impact of the changes Yale is currently making to both disciplinary and non-disciplinary strategies. Going forward, it would attend to evolving best practices and changing campus needs, helping the Yale community craft ongoing, proactive strategies for addressing sexual misconduct on our campus.