

To: The Sarah Lawrence Community  
From: The SLC Sexual Assault Task Force  
Date: December 7, 2015  
Subject: Sarah Lawrence Sexual Assault Survey Results

In February 2015, Sarah Lawrence sent out its first web-based climate survey on sexual assault to all undergraduate and graduate students. This survey was developed by the Research Advisory Council of the Higher Education Data Sharing (HEDS) consortium, a coalition of 130 Liberal Arts colleges and universities of which SLC is a member. Much of the survey content and format is based on recent recommendations and guidance issued by the federal government and was fully reviewed and vetted by the Institutional Review Board of Wabash College, the home institution of the HEDS Consortium. The survey instrument inquired about students' experiences with sexual assault on campus, as well as their general feelings about the campus climate. A total of 24,000 students at 43 HEDS schools participated in the survey. Approximately 500 students completed the survey and the respondents were generally representative of the student body in terms of gender identity and year of attendance. The Sexual Assault Task Force received the data in whole in late September.

We are committed to increasing the health and safety of our students and our campus as a whole. Over the last few years, we have implemented a number of programs to raise awareness of sexual violence, including information on how to understand consent and be an active bystander, how to report a sexual assault, and the College's internal procedures for handling reports of violence. We are using the data from the campus climate survey to better understand how to address and prevent violence in our community and foster a safe and supportive educational environment for all.

Within the 2015 data set, 5.6% of students who completed the survey indicated that they had been sexually assaulted during their time at Sarah Lawrence. This compares to 7.6% at our peer institutions. While the stated incidences of sexual assault here are lower than our peer institutions, any instance of violence on our campus is unacceptable.

Every student who experienced assault chose to tell someone about their experience, whether it was a friend, family member, romantic partner, roommate, or someone else. We are heartened that the survey indicates that students who have experienced assault reached out to talk to someone. It is important to note, however, that only 11% of the students who experienced sexual assault submitted a formal report about the assault to campus officials. Since 92% of students indicated that they knew and remembered the reporting process the task force will focus on this disconnect. We want all students to know that confidential support is available through the Health & Wellness Center. If you have experienced sexual violence, the decision to make a report with the College and/or contact the police is yours. Staff at the Health Center will support you in the choices you make. If you choose to make initiate the Formal Complaint Process, the Title IX Coordinator and other College administrators are trained to help you navigate the process.

With regard to the safety and the general campus climate, 68.1% of students indicated that they feel safe on campus, compared to 84.7% at peer institutions. Improving the general feeling of

safety is a major priority. When asked if they received education on how to recognize sexual assault, 63% of seniors answered yes, compared to 97% of first-years. Similarly, while only 80% of seniors said that they knew how to report a sexual assault, 95% of first-years indicated that they did.

Our goal is to foster a culture of safety and accountability on campus. As a result, we are giving all members of our community the tools to prevent violence and access support. Perhaps most importantly, the survey asked students if they had learned actions they could take to prevent sexual assault, such as bystander intervention. We are happy to discover that there has been a significant improvement in this area with 44% of seniors indicated they had received information about bystander intervention and 91% of first-years indicating they received this information.

As mentioned earlier, we have implemented several programs to educate the community on consent and sexual violence and data shows we are making progress. We are proud of the work we have done and we know there is plenty more to do. Some of the areas we will be working on include developing an appropriate way to follow up on alerts and monitoring how well our education efforts are working. The College will conduct another comprehensive survey every two years in order to track the progress of our campus. Moving forward, the task force will become the Student Life Subcommittee on Sexual Violence Awareness and Education in order to continue the mission and work of this task force, meeting regularly and soliciting your input.

We welcome any feedback about this report. Making our campus safer is a community effort, so we welcome your participation and ideas. If you have any comments and questions about the survey or about sexual violence prevention measures taken on campus, please join us at regular weekly meetings of the Subcommittee on Sexual Violence Prevention and Education.

Signed,

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