

Final Report: *Executive Summary*

Campus Climate/
Addressing Violence Against Women on Campus
Task Force

Respectfully Submitted to
John R. Saddlemire, Vice President for Student Affairs

University of Connecticut

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In December 2007, Dr. John Saddlemire, Vice President for Student Affairs, extended invitations to University community members to review and investigate factors within the campus community that contribute to sexism and violence against women. The convened Task Force included representatives from a wide variety of campus constituents.

The specific charge of the Task Force, co-chaired by Preston Britner (Faculty, Human Development and Family Studies) and Denielle Burl (Division of Student Affairs) was:

1. To identify specific issues that currently significantly contribute to violence against women on campus;
2. To identify the role of various campus departments in addressing these issues;
3. To make recommendations that include information about who will be responsible, what resources will be needed and a realistic timeline for specific remedies.

The Full Report contains the efforts of the Task Force members' best efforts to confront, identify, grapple with, and then address these issues both within this campus and the larger community.

As a Task Force, we found that the University has achieved much in the way of basic infrastructure, reporting, and student conduct procedures and victim supports. However, we also believe that the University can and should do much more in the way of prevention in order to make the campus a safe, welcoming, and supportive environment for all the women and men who, as students, faculty, and staff, comprise our campus community.

In our review of current practices and issues at the University, academic literatures, and practices and models from our peer institutions, we were guided by a focus on moving beyond basic compliance with investigations and hearings. That is, we talked a great deal about promoting a healthy and supportive campus environment, and of raising the institutional consciousness about sexism and a climate that can, problematically, be conducive to violence against women.

**Violence against women on campus is
pervasive, problematic, and preventable**

Smith, White, and Holland (2003) reported that approximately 80% of a sample of 1569 women had experienced at least one incident of physical and sexual aggression by the end of their 4th year of college, and 64% had experienced at least one incident of each. A similar study conducted at UConn, described in full in the Final Report, reflects parallel experiences here.

Experiences of sexual victimization have been linked, across many studies, to negative outcomes in the areas of health, mental health, interpersonal problems, and college performance and drop-out (e.g., Gidycz, Orchowski, King, & Rich, 2008).

The Task Force reviewed a number of factors that relate to and contribute to violence against women, including but not limited to issues related to men's gender role conflicts and gender role conflict in general, the role of media, messaging around campus, and alcohol. By targeting one or more of these elements, the proposed recommendations seek not only to address violence against women but to prevent it.

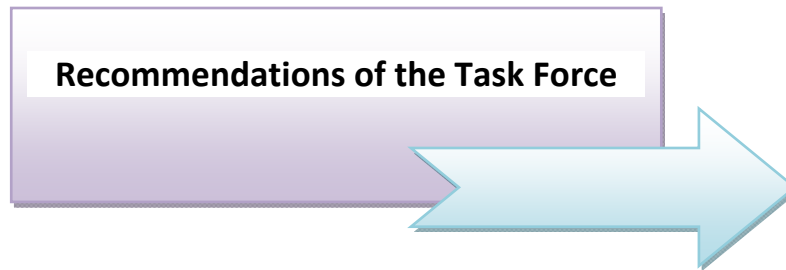
Committee Operation and Methodology

The Task Force met collectively for a year, beginning on February 1, 2008, with the primary objective of exploring institutional factors that relate to sexism and violence against women. Meetings were scheduled several times a month during the Spring and Summer of 2008, which the Task Force used to dissect related issues, including but not limited to such issues as alcohol, media, relevant laws, University programming. The purpose of these meetings was not to arrive at a definitive course of action but to begin to attempt to unravel together some of the complicated pieces involved with this issue. It was expected that Task Force members would draw upon these conversations later, when examining their own areas and providing recommendations.

1. How do issues related to sexism and violence “show up” in your area?
2. What is your area's policy in addressing sexist behavior?
3. Given some of the discussion for the previous questions, what concrete steps could your department (or the larger University) take to address sexism and violence against women?

Responding to the third request, members provided an extensive list of recommendations aimed at addressing sexism and violence against women within the UConn community. These recommendations were pooled and brought to the last meeting where they were discussed in detail. The recommendations listed at the end of this Report are comprised of those that were agreed upon by members after extended discussion. All decisions were unanimous among the members who were present at the last meeting.

The co-chairs culled all documentation into the Full Report, which captures most of the issues and concerns communicated through this process of dozens of meetings (including full Task Force and sub-committee discussions) from February through November of 2008. A draft was given to the Task Force for review in early December, and revisions were made by the co-chairs. After a year of thoughtful analysis, the Final Report was delivered to Dr. Saddle mire on December 18, 2008.



The Task Force makes the following 28 recommendations, grouped according to:

1) training/education; 2) research/further study; 3) accountability; 4) communications; and, 5) resource allocation.

We highlight that many of these recommendations do not require a great expenditure of resources. Many presented below simply compel a more creative and, perhaps, effective use of current University resources. There are a number of recommendations that can be implemented across several departments at the same time, the cost of which can be shared by all. Finally, although some of the recommendations cited may require new resources, the work of this Task Force identifies what has long been recognized in the larger community, which is that the key to reducing violence against women in the United States is rooted in prevention.

(1) TRAINING/EDUCATION

1. The University should begin to implement the diversity and sexual harassment training as required by the State of Connecticut Public Act No. 99-180. *[Note: Compliance with existing laws may apply to supervisors only.]*
2. All employees (including student employees) in the Division of Student Affairs should receive assault and harassment education and training. *[This should begin as soon possible.]*
3. All employees (including administrators, faculty, staff, and student employees) of the University should receive training that addresses sexism, assault and harassment education/prevention, and issues of privilege. *[This would be training that exceeds legal requirements and begins to address climate issues. We recognize that time and resources will be needed to move to such a standard. However, resources and models are available from entities like the California Coalition Against Sexual Assault (2001).]*
4. All students receive information related to the University's definition of *consent*, as is provided at Orientation to some students. *[Noticeably transfer students, international students, and 1st year students who do not attend orientation miss this educational opportunity. There needs to be more assurance that all of our students are exposed to training or classes.]*
5. Student Activities should implement assault and harassment awareness training as part of SOLID (student organization) training, as well as part of fraternity and sorority member education efforts.

[The University should promote and implement specific instances of open dialogue around these issues within fraternity groups and between fraternities and other organizations, such as the University of Connecticut's Violence Against Women Prevention Program group.]

[The University should implement training on sexual harassment and sexual assault for all student groups, and training should be tailored to the group (e.g., student-athletes, fraternities and sororities, media). For example, the Office of Fraternity & Sorority Life might implement Greeks Against Sexual Assault (GASA) in their fraternity program.]

6. The University should encourage discussion and education about issues of sexism, gender roles, sexual harassment, or assault prevention in trainings for students and student groups, but also as elements that may be infused into academic courses, as appropriate to the purpose of the course.

[For example, a module on appropriate workplace climate might be part of courses like Senior Year Experience, Community Assistant Education, and Student Leadership; or, a discussion of sexism in media might take place in a journalism or sociology class.]

7. The University implement a campaign challenging a rape supportive culture through passive messaging (e.g., posters). *[See Potter, Moynihan, Stapelton, & Banyard, 2008, for an evaluation of such an effort, implemented at the University of New Hampshire.]*

(2) RESEARCH/FURTHER STUDY

8. The University should commission an environmental scan of the climate and conditions that contribute to sexism and violence against women in all units of the University. *[This would build on the efforts of the Task Force within some units and expand it to the entire University.]*
9. The University should discuss ways in which students might engage in efforts to support other students who are victims of sexism or violence.
10. A comprehensive campus-wide assessment of sexism, sexual harassment, and sexual violence among staff should be conducted campus-wide.

[Significant portions of the recent work on the HESA campus climate survey of students cited in Section III would serve as an excellent starting point for a similar staff/faculty survey. It is recommended that this assessment be charged at the highest level of leadership on campus. It should also be noted that several members of the faculty could bring particular topical, methodological, and statistical expertise to such work.]

11. All student organizations should review sexist practices within their organizations and address specific ways to address those practices.

(3) ACCOUNTABILITY

12. The University should charge a group to carry on the major work and recommendations of this Task Force. *[See Allen, Watt, and Hess (2008) for a helpful discussion on efforts to promote systems change with respect to violence coordinating councils, and the role of collaboration among community stakeholders.]*
13. The new entity should implement mechanisms to ensure the efforts of the current Task Force members carry forward institutionally when people leave the University.
14. The new entity should oversee the design and implementation of regular assessments of negative experiences and campus climate factors, in order to track prevention efforts on the campus and their effect. This or another group on campus (with appropriate methodological and statistical capabilities) should be responsible for multivariate analyses of such data.
15. The new entity should engage in collaboration with Annual Report on the Status of Women Committee.
16. The University should encourage mechanisms for reporting instances of sexism and misogyny and support relevant existing efforts.
17. The University should address sexist and violent behavior within athletic recruiting by attending to DOJ report guidelines and local implementation.
18. The University should institute a review of current mechanisms of accountability (e.g., job reviews, Deans' diversity plans) with respect to sexism. *[Faculty and staff should be accountable and serve as good role models and not exhibit sexist behaviors.]*

(4) COMMUNICATIONS

19. The University should review its communications around sexism/violence against women. *[For example, how are the issues represented on University websites, if at all?]*
20. Each student media organization should form an oversight board with broad representation, including professionals in the media field and students of diverse backgrounds, who can meet regularly to suggest content, review the product and offer comments. *[Most of the organizations have boards now, but they are operationally rather than content focused. In some cases, the boards review potential programming but do not critique existing programming or content.]*
21. Each student media outlet should have an advisor who can be consulted when there are issues, problems, complaints, etc. Advisors should be seasoned professionals and available “on deadline” when they are needed most.
22. An all-media complaints board should be established to deal with issues that cannot be resolved. The board should have representation from each media outlet, the faculty and from the profession and should be convened only when necessary.

(5) RESOURCE ALLOCATION

23. The University should charge the Community Response Team from the Highest Level of Administration (i.e., President/Provost).

[Currently, the CRT is comprised of members from the Division of Student Affairs (Police, SHS, DOS, Community Standards, Fraternity and Sorority Life, Residential Life) the Office of the Vice Provost for International and Multicultural Affairs (Women's Center, Other Cultural Centers) and Athletics (Assistant Athletic Director). The team does not fall under the "ownership" of any particular division on campus. Charging the team from the Provost or Presidential level would first send a clear message about the importance of this issue for the entire campus and second would provide clearer channels of accountability.]

24. The University should endorse Standardized Training for all CRT participants.

[As the Community Response Team expands its membership to increase accessibility for a diverse student body, it is critical that all members receive basic standardized training that provides detailed information about referral resources and procedures, crisis response and working with survivors. While the individual participants on the team may have expertise, experience and knowledge in the specific arena of sexual violence, students may access the departments they represent at any number of points. Therefore, it is critical to engage in department-wide training. The content of the training might be developed as part of a benchmarking and standardization process, but should be developed in consultation with representatives from the Women's Center and local rape crisis and domestic violence service providers.]

25. The University should fund adequately the work of the CRT, as well as the design, production, and dissemination of materials that spreading information about and access to the CRT.

26. Financial resources must be dedicated to annual data collection efforts related to training, prevention efforts, incidence rates, and assessments of negative experiences and campus climate factors.

27. The University should allocate resources to primary sexual assault prevention initiatives that engage men in multi-pronged and longitudinal interventions.

28. The University should commit institutional support to faculty to develop and implement gender-based curricula. *[This might follow a model similar to the GEOC course competitions and grants, with the intent of infusing studies of gender into multiple courses across the university curriculum.]*