

Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies Program

Resources for Responding to Gender Based Violence on Campus

8 Point Plan to Address Sexual Assault on Campus

In response to the crisis currently facing the University of Richmond, we as members of the community stand in solidarity through our shared commitment to the prevention of sexual assault and gender based violence and to the safety and well-being of all of our students. Our campus has a history of engagement with the discourse of ending sexual violence and creating safe environments on our campus. Yet recent events, which include the publication of Huffington Post articles written by CC Carreras and Whitney Ralston, and the subsequent suspension of the Kappa Alpha fraternity for circulating misogynistic emails that promote a culture of rape, show us that the campus structures currently in place contradict our core values. In order to address this crisis, we propose an 8-point plan for our campus community to engage immediately to ensure that our future as a liberal arts institution committed to diversity, to equality, to justice, and to an ethics of care for all members of our community lives up to the values we espouse as an institution. As faculty, we call for immediate action to be taken on the following points:

1. Identify and review all policy and procedures related to “sexual misconduct”* at the University of Richmond.

*We use “sexual misconduct” because that is the university system’s term. We believe more accurate terms are “sexual assault” and “gender-based violence.”

The University community at large must know and understand the current structures and processes in place regarding sexual misconduct. Currently, many people do not know or are confused about what the policies and procedures are. In particular, we offer the following questions related to the Hearing Process and the Conduct Officer: Where and in what kind of room are the hearings held? Where are people seated, especially the complainant and the respondent in relation to one another? Who comprises the hearing board? What level of training are hearing board members required to complete, and how in depth, extensive, and sustained is this training? Who oversees the hearing board? What level of training is the person overseeing the hearing process required to complete, and how in depth, extensive, and sustained is this training? Are students notified if the opposing party has obtained a lawyer, and if so when? If a party does not have money to afford a lawyer, is one provided if desired? What kinds of details are witnesses called to discuss? Are witnesses who know one another allowed to talk together about a case?

The UR sexual misconduct policy currently states:

“After conducting an investigation, the Title IX Coordinator will decide whether the incident should be referred to the University officials responsible for student conduct, referred to as the “Conduct Officers” (or to other University officials if the respondent is not student). The Title IX Coordinator gathers facts but does not make decisions about whether a student should be charged with a violation of the [Standards of Student Conduct](#).”

Following this, we ask: Who are the conduct officers and what is their training? Currently the conduct officer is from the college of the accused. For example, if the perpetrator is male, which is most often

the case in incidents of sexual assault, the conduct officer that decides whether or not the case goes forward is Richmond College. This is problematic.

2. Address real and perceived biases in the Title IX process.

This includes serious consideration of an independent Title IX office and staff that is removed from the coordinate colleges and with no ties to Athletics or Greek Life, the two organizations that are statistically more likely to be associated with sexual misconduct. Westhampton and Richmond college are best situated to serve as resources and advocates for students. The Title IX work of investigating cases and deciding if cases move forward, the conduct officer(s) involved when a case does move forward, and the people who comprise the hearing board, for example, should be trained staff and faculty with no connection to the colleges, Athletics, or Greek Life.

3. Identify and review the training required for persons doing Title IX work. Any and all individuals involved in Title IX work must be extensively and continuously trained in gender violence, in sexual assault trauma, and in recognizing and combatting misogyny and sexism. Individuals hired to do this work must have extensive background and ongoing training in sexual violence, counseling, and advocacy.

4. Allocate resources for a Center for Prevention of Sexual Violence and Crisis Response Center aligned with one proposed by students in the Spring of 2015, including resources for staff (plural) trained in #3 above. The Center must have the resources to incorporate start to finish advocacy and support for complainants throughout each stage of the process and beyond. The Center must have an equally extensive and robust focus on prevention. [Link to a stellar student proposal](#)

5. Conduct and publish the results of a thorough *outside or independent* review of Greek Life and Athletics. Without such an outside examination of the two organizations where sexual assault is most prevalent, prevention efforts will not be successful as the student culture will remain unchanged. For example, fraternities dominate and control the party scene on our campus and the social spaces where alcohol is involved and consumed. Due to the national structure to which fraternities and sororities report, sororities are not allowed to host parties where alcohol is served. This needs to be addressed. When a fraternity is banned, rather than learning from their mistakes, they tend to regroup unofficially and host parties off campus with even less oversight. Concurrently, we call for UR to reexamine its treatment of alcohol and of formal events on campus, such as pig roast, that hinge on the consumption of alcohol.

6. Allocate resources for infusion of scholarship on gender-based violence into our academic programs across schools. Consider a tenure-track or tenured faculty line or lines that focus specifically on gender violence.

The violence that currently underscores student culture on campus must be combatted with the rigors of in-depth scholarly inquiry. This scholarly inquiry also needs to inform the compliance mechanisms. The University must create a system in which the conduct and honor system operates with regard to and knowledge of gender-based scholarship and activism around trauma and gender-based violence.

7. Create and implement a serious plan to educate all students, continuously, about sexual violence prevention, and healthy relationships. An online module and a session in orientation is not sufficient. Effective education and prevention efforts need to be addressed both within the curriculum and outside of the classroom. Students need sustained education that happens in different venues over the course of their time at the university. All student organizations that have alcohol at any events

should be required to have ongoing training. There needs also to be an equal focus on healthy, sex-positive relationships.

- 8. Assemble a committee of faculty and staff with robust knowledge of sexual violence and prevention, whose mission it will be to ensure that attention to these issues is both sustained and informed by best practices.**

In taking these crucial and urgent steps toward the prevention of sexual assault and gender based violence on our campus, and toward amending the injustices currently embedded in the structures that govern our institutional life, the University of Richmond can locate itself squarely within the values it espouses. We are braced for the effort that this will require, and we are prepared as a collective to begin work with our faculty, staff, students, and administration toward communal reparation.

For more information, see Appendix I for our process and data gathered, Appendix II for definitions of our key terms, and Appendix III for a bibliography.

Appendix I: WGSS Green Paper on Gender-Based Violence at UR

Section I: Introduction

As WGSS teachers, we are deeply and constantly aware of the ways in which gender-based violence affects our students' pursuit of an education, the ways in which it interferes with their ability to learn, the ways in which it inhibits our efforts to fulfill our central academic mission. As WGSS scholars, we also understand how gender-based violence permeates and shapes the culture in which we all endeavor to teach and learn. We prepared this Green Paper as a collective action of feminist practice. We chose the language of "Green Paper" (rather than White Paper) because traditionally green is the color of hope and because popularly green signals the freedom to move forward. This Green Paper includes all ideas brought to our table, without rank ordering or critique, regarding problems with our current system/situation and immediate and long term solutions; it is a compendium upon which we drew in producing our 8 Point Plan and therefore we include it as Appendix I.

Section II: Sources Canvassed

WGSS gathered information from our community by networking with all levels of University of Richmond faculty, students, and alumni.

- We studied all communications, from breaking news, to media coverage, to University communications in response, and student and alumni social media.
- We watched live-streaming of University forums.
- We attended University forums.
- We joined student and alumni social media groups, in particular Spiders Against Sexual Assault, and UR Alumni Facebook pages.
- We met with students proposing a Prevention Center.
- We met with students who are survivors, and/or who are traumatized by acute episodes before us.
- We received communications from individuals turning to WGSS to give voice.

Section III: Community-Identified Problems with the Current System/Situations

The following is a list of ideas the WGSS Board gathered during the past two weeks of our community's acute attention to gender-based violence and rape culture. We do not put this list forward to advocate for any particular perspective, rather simply to list as thoroughly as possible the range and diversity of perspectives expressed and

to engage a feminist practice of inclusion of voices. Even if one or more of the items below are based on incomplete or inaccurate information, the fact that such misperceptions exist must be addressed with care and respect, for their existence calls attention to real problems with our current systems, our means and quality of communication, and officially proposed solutions.

- We are under federal investigation at the Office of Civil Rights.
- We have had three acute episodes related to gender-based violence and rape culture that have disrupted our collective lives together at the University thus far this semester, undermining our pursuit of our central academic mission: two sexual assault cases, and one rhetorically predatory party invitation from a Fraternity. Faculty work with students is undermined by these episodes of gender-based violence. Students are traumatized, mistrustful on a host of levels, and less able to focus on our central academic mission.
- We appear on a [list of the most dangerous schools for women](#); this list uses data from 2011.
- Student experiences do not match the anti-sexual assault discourse we collectively espouse, as evidenced by the fact that students, past and present, have come forward with their stories of sexual assault and rape and the failures of our institutional processes; our students say that the university has failed to provide them with safe, feminist spaces in which they can work through the details of their assaults and that we continue to foster a rape culture on our campus despite our professed politics.
- There is no requirement or guarantee in our current system that those individuals who oversee handling of sexual assault reports and decide cases within Student Life Deans' offices have been educated in and trained extensively and continuously in gender violence, in sexual assault trauma, or in combatting and recognizing misogyny and sexism in the treatment of complainants and victims. Any employee involved in this work should have extensive and ongoing training.
- Our current intra-University process dictates that, regardless of who conducts the investigation of a sexual assault complaint, the person who decides whether to carry the case to a hearing is the dean of the college of the accused. The vast majority of those accused are men, so the decision is made by the Richmond College Dean's office. As the Dean of Richmond College is already structurally an advocate for Richmond College men (as is the Westhampton Dean for women) this current process creates perceptions of and raises questions about conflict of interest.
- Because the vast majority of those accused of sexual assault are men, the vast majority of hearings are conducted in Richmond College with the Richmond College Dean presiding. The physical setting, defined in UR culture as the "men's" college and the "men's" Dean's office, affects students' ability to believe in the impartiality of the hearing and appeals process.
- During the hearing the complainant may encounter the respondent's witnesses in a waiting area, which raises particularly troublesome issues with gender violence cases. Also, witnesses are left in the waiting area together before giving their testimony, which could compromise that testimony.
- The current process does not offer formal support in the form of an advocate for students to navigate the complexities of the process. The website providing students with information about what sort of advocacy they can arrange for themselves is hard to find: <http://studentdevelopment.richmond.edu/student-concerns/sexual-misconduct/index.html>.

- Because the current Intra-University process for handling complaints privatizes the deliberative process, evidence gathering, reasoning, and outcomes, the university community at large lacks clear understanding of many important aspects of it. Below is a list of questions indicating some of the areas in which clarity is lacking.
 - According to information the university has released, between 2013 and 2016, there were 222 reports of “sexual misconduct.” Only 18 resulted in sanctions. While we recognize that “sexual misconduct” is a very broad category, we have trouble believing that only 18 of 222 reports were substantial enough to warrant sanction. Why were so many dropped? Who decided to drop them?
 - The stated standard used to trigger an investigation is “the threshold of serious.” In less subjective terms, what is the threshold of evidence needed in order for an investigator to move a case forward to a conduct officer? What is the threshold of evidence needed in order for a conduct officer to move a case forward to a hearing? An appeal?
 - What kind of and how much evidence is needed to meet the threshold for moving a case forward?
 - How are witnesses called and treated? What are they told about their obligations to maintain confidentiality before and after the hearing?
 - What reasoning and precedents are used to make decisions about outcomes?
 - What is the range of possible—and the range of typical—punitive outcomes? Do they serve justice?
 - When are lawyers allowed into the process? When is notification given to one party that the other party will have a lawyer present? Are lawyers provided if those involved do not have money to afford a lawyer?
 - What exactly are students’ rights? The policy available online is simply not clear about the nature of the process and enforcement of outcomes, including how a no contact order works.
 - Can, or how can, students effectively hold a university official to account if they believe they have received unfair treatment?

Section IV: Solutions Offered by Community:

Below we offer a list of 30 suggestions for improvement made by members of the university community. We do not necessarily endorse each of these suggestions but simply present them all in order to make sure every voice is heard and considered.

- President Crutcher must lead us in sustained and on-going engagement about the crisis currently facing our campus by acknowledging the defects of the process for handling sexual assaults. We also need on-going updates on specific actions and motions toward reconciliation and justice.
- Appoint qualified external consultants to review the two acute cases before us of Cecilia Carerras and Whitney Ralston, with recommendations for a response.

- Appoint qualified external consultants to review all processes, practices, and policies related to gender-based violence on campus. The university having committed to hiring external consultants, must further commit to transparency regarding the firm hired, its ties to the university, its level of expertise in gender violence policy, the processes it will use for its review, and its findings throughout and not just at the end.
- Support [Center for Prevention of Sexual Violence and Crisis Response Center](https://www.change.org/p/university-of-richmond-establish-a-sexual-assault-response-and-prevention-center-on-campus?recruiter=21798193&utm_source=share_petition&utm_medium=facebook&utm_campaign=share_page&utm_term=des-lg-no_src-custom_msg&fb_ref=Default).https://www.change.org/p/university-of-richmond-establish-a-sexual-assault-response-and-prevention-center-on-campus?recruiter=21798193&utm_source=share_petition&utm_medium=facebook&utm_campaign=share_page&utm_term=des-lg-no_src-custom_msg&fb_ref=Default
- Become members of [Faculty Against Rape \(FAR\)](http://www.facultyagainstrape.net/).<http://www.facultyagainstrape.net/>
- Promote the work of our WILL* program more vigorously so that this work is incorporated fully into the consciousness and culture of UR.
- Consult complainants and survivors. Simplify, clarify, and educate all those who may be involved on procedures based on consultation.
- Conduct regular assessment of campus culture to identify and address aspects that condone—overtly or subtly—gender-based violence or that discourage reporting of misconduct. Make sure this assessment is conducted in full awareness that some victims may be male or transgender.
- Make evidence based interventions; make sure decisions are not based on cultural assumptions that need to be examined. Feminist critique of cultural assumptions is crucial.
- Assess Interventions on an ongoing basis.
- Focus Administrative responses on restoring complainants' ability to learn and sustain their well-being.
- Consider shifting conduct proceedings to be aimed against dishonorable conduct. With “sexual misconduct,” we aim to adjudicate intentions and consent. We mimic the criminal justice definitions. But we don't worry about intentions or consent when we prosecute academic misconduct, such as plagiarism. There are certain things that you just don't do as a scholar, so having a more robust code of honor might help us focus on dishonorable behavior rather than criminal intentions. It would also reduce our own sense that we are conducting quasi-criminal trials.
- Network with our RVA Safe Harbor <http://safeharborshelter.com>.
- Solicit and listen to students' suggestions for change and support their activism to eliminate gender-based violence.
- Consider the elimination of intra-university adjudication of gender violence cases, deferring all to criminal proceedings with Henrico or Richmond City police.
- Restructure the intra-university adjudication of gender violence cases based on external reviews.

- Develop for our current and new structures of adjudication in sexual misconduct cases a detailed flow chart and check-list to help students know their rights and understand each stage of the process and also help administrators. Our current flow chart is very confusing; see: <http://studentdevelopment.richmond.edu/student-concerns/sexual-misconduct/flowchart.pdf>.
- Consider appointing trained advocates, akin to a guardian ad litem, to support complainants in their navigations of process.
- Consider having a third-party advisor or advocate present during all meetings throughout the process.
- Consider having University police serve in advisory role during the adjudication process at the discretion of the complainant.
- Consider launching a university-wide campaign with the aid of WGSS faculty to raise awareness and change the culture on campus.
- Commission an external review key sites of perpetuation of gender-based violence and rape culture, such as Greek Life and Athletics, and focus on eliminating gender-based violence and rape culture in these sites, or eliminating these sites altogether.
- Attend to social media, like Yik Yak, that can re-victimize and ostracize the complainant and often circulate violent communications along lines of gender, sexuality, and race.
- Emphasize and enhance the centrality of Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies to UR's academic mission, at large and especially in relation to gender violence; gender violence is not just an issue for Student Life.
- Dedicate faculty resources to infuse the study of gender violence into courses across schools. (See RhCS/WGSS proposed faculty line from DAC review 2015-2016.)
- Explore ways to create more progressive identities and functions for the Richmond College and Westhampton College coordinate system.
- Eliminate the coordinate system and other aspects of campus culture that separate the sexes and promote binary gender identities.
- Mitigate academic ramifications for survivors, such as allowing any withdrawals incurred on account of sexual assault to be removed, making students assaulted less "marked" permanently in their educational record.
- Make sure all students—undergraduate, graduate, professional, domestic and international, straight, LGBT, gender-non-conforming, etc.—are heard and heeded by both administration, staff, and faculty and by each other in the process of examining the current system and making changes.
- Do an environmental scan of peer institutions/leaders in eliminating gender-based violence to see what resources/programs they have created, and to see which we might adopt. The following list provides a start for such a project.
 - One in Four (National organization)

- Green Dot Program (University of Kentucky, also used at UVA).
- Harvard Study of Sexual Assault
http://sexualassaulttaskforce.harvard.edu/files/taskforce/files/final_report_of_the_task_force_on_the_prevention_of_sexual_assault_16_03_07.pdf
- Ohio Department of Higher Education Guidelines, and other peer and aspirant programs who serve as models:
 - Use data to guide action. Specifically, campuses are asked to administer an annual campus climate survey to inform prevention and response strategies and to track trends over time.
 - Empower staff, faculty, campus law enforcement and students to prevent and respond to sexual violence through evidence-based training. Using feedback from the campus climate survey and/or other data sources to help select the most appropriate program, campuses should implement a comprehensive training program for their institution. Programs focused on bystander intervention are particularly encouraged.
 - Communicate a culture of shared respect and responsibility. Campuses should utilize a widespread awareness and communication campaign in synergy with trainings and other initiatives to help shift culture.
 - Develop a comprehensive response protocol. Campuses are encouraged to engage a variety of stakeholders in developing and adopting a comprehensive protocol to address sexual violence on campus. This comprehensive protocol will be both survivor-centered and respect the rights of the accused.
 - Adopt a survivor-centered response. By developing a response centered on survivors' needs, such as providing confidential advisors, campuses can strengthen student trust in campus systems and processes.

Appendix II: Working Definitions for Gender-Based Violence and Related Concepts

Gender-based violence refers to any harm perpetrated against a person's will on the basis of gender. Examples include Sexual Assault, Rape, Intimate Partner/Relationship Violence, Stalking, and Sexual Harassment.

Gender Violence is entangled in *Power-Based Violence* as a type of violence committed by an offender who uses the assertion of power, control, and/or intimidation in order to harm another. These acts may be committed by strangers, friends, acquaintances, intimates, or other persons. Power-based violence has traditionally been known as violence against women, but as we strive to understand these crimes we must acknowledge that the terminology "violence against women" diminishes male survivors' experiences as well as survivors who identify beyond the gender binary. While these crimes are overwhelmingly committed by men against women, the overriding similarities in these crimes are not the gender of the perpetrator or the victim, but the desire to assert power and control over another person. Often this assertion of power and control manifests itself in feminizing the victim regardless of the gender or sex of the victim. Because our culture devalues the feminine, this "violence against the feminine" is often about either demonstrating the weakness and helplessness of the victim and/or the strength and superiority of the perpetrator.

In *Transforming a Rape Culture*, Buchwald, Flecher, and Roth define a *rape culture* as "a complex of beliefs that encourage male sexual aggression and supports violence against women [and girls], a society where violence is seen as sexy and sexuality as violent, and a continuum of threatened violence that ranges from sexual remarks to sexual touching to rape itself. A rape culture condones physical and emotional terrorism against women [and girls] and presents it as the norm" (Buchwald, Fletcher, and Roth 2005, XI). WGSS voices at UR expand this definition to be inclusive of gender and sexuality identities and embodiments beyond cisgender, heterosexual women.

WGSS specifies a focus on gender-based violence as one of its core learning goals of our developing curriculum. These goals are:

- To understand that gender inequality remains a major cause of gender-based violence.
- To understand how sexual violence is a social justice issue.
- To examine the construction and operation of power relations, social inequalities and resistances to them in both national and transnational contexts.
- To introduce students to the roots of gender-based violence, the social and cultural context in which it occurs, the mental and physical health impacts, and justice and frameworks.
- To explore approaches to eliminating gender-based violence.
- To help students develop the skills to think critically about the local and global impact of gender-based violence, how it intersects with other forms of oppression, and to develop an understanding of these issues that will be useful intellectually, personally, and professionally.
- To understand what constitutes a rape culture, and how to transform it into a culture of respect and gender equity.

Appendix III: Working Bibliography on Gender-Based Violence

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