


MEMORANDUM

TO: John Finnegan, Dean, School of Public Health

FROM: Eric W. Kaler, President 

DATE: November 8, 2017

RE: President's Initiative to Prevent Sexual Misconduct

Thank you for your excellent work in leading the President's Initiative to Prevent Sexual Assault. You and your team, comprised of the working group leaders and members of the coordinating committee, have developed a multi-dimensional response to a multi-dimensional problem and I am grateful for everyone's hard work in delivering the report in a timely manner.

I agree with the recommendations and ask that you pursue implementation, taking into account my comments listed below. Senior Vice President for Finance and Operations Brian Burnett and I have met to discuss funding the initiative. We will institutionally fund various of the elements requested over the two-year period at a level of \$540,000. Future recurring costs such as staffing in the Office of Student Affairs, will need to be funded as part of the standard budget compact process. Please work with SVP Burnett and Lyle Peterson from my office to finalize the funding sources.

Regarding the specific recommendations, please consider the following during the implementation phase:

Public Health Awareness Campaign

It is important to segment audiences for the awareness campaign. In Year 1, the primary audience is "students." But, as we have discussed, undergraduate students have different needs from graduate students who have different needs from international students who have different needs from our LGBTQIA students, and so on. Please reflect this in the public health awareness campaign plan.

Student Education and Engagement

It is preferable that Recommendation #2, requiring all new students to complete online sexual assault prevention training and Recommendation #3, develop and implement a comprehensive plan for ongoing training for students, be implemented concurrently. In addition, I understood Bystander Intervention to be a major aspect of our response to sexual misconduct on campus. I want that primary focus to be reflected in the programming that is developed.

Faculty and Staff Training

While it is important to move forward with the online training, we also have to ensure that it is as excellent as possible. Developing a training that will be well-received by both faculty and staff is a challenge. We have to make ongoing faculty consultation a priority. Please work with Executive Vice President and Provost Karen Hanson on this. I understand that Vice Provost Rebecca Ropers-Huilman is joining your team, which will ensure greater collaboration with faculty.

Evaluation

The Provost and I are committed to participating in the next iteration of the comprehensive AAU Campus Climate Survey of Sexual Assault and Sexual Misconduct, therefore, creating our own survey is not an efficient use of resources. Evaluation efforts should focus on cataloguing and reporting the considerable existing system-wide data, and analyzing our efforts to determine what works and what doesn't.

System-wide Implications

The Chancellors are working hard on this issue according to the specific needs of their campuses. I appreciate the collaborative nature of the Initiative and expect that to continue, especially as the extremely important required faculty and staff training is implemented system-wide.

Chancellor Behr, University of Minnesota Morris, has suggested that the Twin Cities campus host a one-day, system-wide sexual misconduct prevention day to help foster a culture of participation and engagement in this work across the system, and I wholeheartedly endorse that idea.

Although not directly stated in the report, I agree, based on available resources and the number of staff already engaged across campus, that we don't want to create a new bureaucracy responsible for this work. But we must have a strong organizational framework to sustain this effort over a long period of time. I took note during Alan Berkowitz's presentation that SUNY-Albany cites statistics over an eight-year period when describing the measurable change achieved on that campus.

What is the organizational framework envisioned for the Initiative that will sustain our work over a long period of time? Part of the project over the initial two-year period needs to be finding an administrative home that will be responsible for this ongoing work.

Eradicating sexual misconduct on our campus is the responsibility of each one of us. Accountability must be built into every aspect of this work and I expect the coordinating committee and working groups to be incorporating accountability mechanisms throughout the Initiative.

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Based on the feedback of faculty and student leaders, I request you organize a 30-day comment period for the report. And I ask that you let me know of any changes to the recommendations based on the information gathered during the 30 days. Proactive, personal contact with faculty, MSA and COGS leadership is also recommended.

Thank you again for taking on this crucial leadership role in addition to your duties as dean. I look forward to continued updates as the recommendations are implemented.

cc: Karen Hanson, executive vice president and provost
Brian Burnett, senior vice president for finance and operations
Jon Steadland, chief of staff, Office of the President