**2019 HEDS Sexual Assault Campus Climate Survey:**

**Summary of Survey Results for Hobart and William Smith Colleges**

This report summarizes the HEDS Sexual Assault Campus Climate Survey conducted in the spring of 2019 at Hobart and William Smith Colleges (the Colleges). The report is intended to describe the survey methodology and summarize initial findings. Please note that this report includes results regarding the prevalence of sexual assault and related misconduct, patterns of victimization, and the contexts within which such incidents occur. Additional information about the College’s policy and procedures, reporting options, and resources are available online at the Office of Title IX Programs and Compliance (Title IX Office) website. This summary is organized into the following sections:

I. Background and Administration

II. Summary of Initial Results

III. Suggestions

**I. Background and Administration**

As part of ongoing efforts to prevent and appropriately respond to instances of sexual misconduct, the Colleges collaborated with the Higher Education Data Sharing Consortium (HEDS) to administer the 2019 population survey. HEDS is an organization of colleges and universities committed to sharing data, knowledge, and expertise to advance undergraduate liberal arts education, inclusive excellence, and student success at member institutions. New York State Education Law Article 129-B requires the Colleges to conduct a survey of campus sexual violence every two years. In 2017 and 2015, the Colleges participated in the HEDS survey, and the results from these years can be found at [www.hws.edu/studentlife/titleix\_survey.aspx](http://www.hws.edu/studentlife/titleix_survey.aspx). All current HWS students were invited to participate in the 2019 HEDS Survey (n= 1862). The response rate at the Colleges was 17% (n= 317). Seventy-one students opened the survey but did not complete it. Two hundred and four participants identified as women, one hundred and three identified as men, and ten did not indicate either of those categories. As a result, the findings are not generalizable to the overall population of students at the Colleges. However, the data may suggest a trend for recommendations in this summary.

The Sexual Assault Campus Climate survey was administered from February 3 and March 17, 2019, through HEDs using a third-party platform. All current students received, via the HEDs Qualtrics system on February 3, 2019, an email invitation with an individual link to the survey. The Title IX Office sent emails and all subsequent communication using the Qualtrics list. The Title IX Office sent additional reminder emails on February 24, March 5, and March 15. The survey closed on March 17, 2019. In addition to these direct emails to students, the 2019 HEDs survey was also advertised via printed flyers distributed around campus, posts on the Title IX Office Instagram account, digital posters on the Scandling Center monitors, and ‘The Buzz” email sent weekly by the Student Activities Office to campus. Students who took the survey before February 25, 2019, could opt into a drawing to win one of four prizes: preferential housing lottery number, campus parking pass reimbursement, a pair of Apple AirPods, and a collection of HWS College Store items. Students opted in by emailing the Deputy Title IX Coordinator with their unique code that appeared at the end of the survey. Sixty-six students opted into the drawing. Survey data was stored, maintained, scored, and analyzed by HEDs. HEDs compiled the aggregate campus climate survey data, and respondent identification was removed.

**II. Summary of Initial Results**

1. Perception of HWS campus climate

A large majority of respondents feel valued in the classroom and learning environment and agree that faculty, staff, and administrators respect what students think and are genuinely concerned about their welfare (80-85%). Notably, respondents are less sure that students are genuinely concerned about each other’s welfare or that students contribute to a positive and supportive campus climate (63-67%). Only a slight majority of respondents agreed that there is a sound support system at HWS for students going through difficult times, which seems counter to the high-touch ethos of the Colleges (54%). Most respondents said that they remember all, almost all, or most of the education from HWS about what sexual assault is, how to recognize and report it, who is a confidential resource on campus, and actions one can take to help prevent sexual assault (77%).

1. Prevalence of Incidents

Since starting at HWS, most respondents have rarely or never experienced unwanted nonverbal behaviors (82%) or unwanted brief physical contact (74%). Though most respondents have rarely or never experienced unwanted verbal behaviors (68%), there is a slight increase in those who have compared to the other two types of unwanted behaviors listed. Additionally, 15% of respondents reported they had experienced a sexual assault since starting at HWS. Forty-six respondents had experienced sexual assault on campus, off campus at an event associated with HWS, or at a social event near campus. Most of these reported assaults occurred in an on-campus dormitory or housing (63%). 91% of respondents who had experienced sexual assault experienced touching of a sexual nature, and 49% had experienced vaginal sex.

Tracking national trends, most incidents of sexual assault noted in the survey involved alcohol consumption by the person(s) alleged to have committed the assault (72%) as well as the person who was assaulted (65%). Nearly half (48%) of respondents who had experienced a sexual assault believe they could not provide consent at the time of the assault due to incapacitation. 15% were unsure if they were incapacitated at that time.

84% of the sexual assaults occurred in the respondents’ first or second year at HWS. 85% were committed by another student(s) at the Colleges, and the relationship between the parties was most often that of nonromantic friend/acquaintance or casual date/hookup (46%; 33%). Most respondents disclosed that their assailant was male (89%), with 11% disclosing female assailants. The data may align with national data that males commit most known crimes of sexual violence; we should note, however, that the erroneous and pervasive cultural norm that a woman cannot rape 'a man' may impact the reporting of or self-identification of these instances among male victims. We also must be attentive to the experiences of LGBTQ+ identified persons and the majority's erasure of abuse and violence in their communities.

According to the survey, the most common disclosure route is to a close friend (87%). Disclosures to roommate, romantic partner, campus counselor, and parent/guardian follow distantly behind. 86% of those who had experienced sexual assault did not pursue the HWS procedure for making a formal report. The small number who did were largely satisfied or neutral regarding the HWS process and the HWS response to the report (17% dissatisfied).

1. Bystander Preparedness and Action

Of respondents who did experience a sexual assault, 33% stated that bystander(s) were present when they were sexually assaulted. Bystanders only intervened in 20% of those instances in which they were present. Of respondents who experienced what they *suspect* was a completed or attempted sexual assault or a confirmed attempted sexual assault, 38% noted that bystanders were present during the incident. In most of these incidents, the bystander(s) did not intervene (54%). Of the small number of bystanders who were present and did intervene, they most often stepped in and separated the parties or asked the intended victim if they needed help.

Only 5% of those respondents who did not experience sexual assault themselves answered that they had observed a situation they believed to be sexual assault since starting at HWS. Of this small number of respondents, 73% noted that they did intervene when they observed a situation believed to be sexual assault, with 20% citing that they considered but did not feel comfortable intervening. Again, the most prevalent modes of intervention were asking the person who appeared to be at risk if they needed help and stepping in to separate the people involved.

Of those who either did not witness a situation they believe could be sexual assault or are unsure if they witnessed it, 18% have observed situations that *could have led* to a sexual assault since starting at HWS. 67% of those respondents intervened in that potential sexual assault, with 10% considering an intervention but not feeling safe and 10% considering an intervention but not feeling comfortable. Notably, there was a more considerable diversity of intervention modes used in these situations, with responses more evenly distributed over the options given:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| 54% stepped in and separated the people involved | |
| 50% asked the person who appeared to be at risk if they needed help | |
| 42% asked others to step in with me and diffuse situation | |
| 35% created a distraction to cause one or more of the people involved to disengage | |
| 27% confronted the person who appeared to be causing situation | |
| 8% other |  |
| 4% told someone in a position of authority about situation | |

**III. Recommendations**

* **Collaborate with faculty to find subject-relevant avenues to incorporate sexual violence prevention and resource information into the classroom, a space where students feel respected and valued**. In offering various co-curricular opportunities for ongoing education (e.g., national speakers, passive programming on social media, healthy relationship workshops), the Title IX Office seeks to expand the conversation around violence prevention beyond the first-year students’ first-semester training requirements. For sustainable culture change, however, it would be worthwhile to leverage the expertise of our faculty in the classroom with nuanced and difficult conversations around power, control, and sociocultural norms.
* **Seek to streamline messaging to students of steps involved in an investigation of an alleged violation of the Sexual Misconduct Policy.** Though students are absorbing information about what constitutes sexual misconduct and how to access support if needed, there is a lack of clarity around the process of investigating an alleged violation of the Sexual Misconduct Policy, as managed by the Title IX Office, which could lead to student reservations with bringing forward a complaint. The investigation process could be more transparent when discussed theoretically than when examined with a party to a complaint regarding that complaint. We know students tend to ignore information they do not believe ‘applies’ to them, so despite explaining the process at various trainings, a student likely would only recall that information or feel they understood the procedures once they were to participate. It is worth exploring alternative modalities to explain the process, such as interactive infographics or video/audio testimonial explanations.
* **Offer targeted education for secondary survivors.** 87% of those survey respondents who had experienced sexual assault disclosed it to a close friend. We have an opportunity in training to focus on what a peer receiving a disclosure might say to their friend in this challenging moment, what types of post-traumatic changes and reactions are expected from someone who has experienced sexual violence, and how to best care for oneself as a secondary survivor and support person.
* **Assess barriers to formal reporting of alleged violations of the Sexual Misconduct Policy**. 86% of those who had experienced sexual assault did not pursue the HWS procedure for making a formal report. It would be useful to define within the question what constitutes “HWS procedures for making a formal report:” disclosure directly to the Title IX Office, to another campus entity such as Campus Safety or Residential Education, or a formal complaint and investigation through the Title IX Office under the Sexual Misconduct Policy? Once parameters are set, it could be instructive to add a question to determine why students did not pursue the procedure.
* **Increase intervention skills and readiness.** The 2019 survey showed relatively low intervention rates and some uncertainty as to whether students are genuinely concerned about each other's welfare or whether students contribute to a positive and supportive campus climate. Most respondents to the survey would have attended a bystander intervention workshop in their first year at the Colleges. Beginning in the Fall of 2017, all new students participated in an in-person bystander intervention workshop during the first week of class, consisting of a short video developed by Cornell University's Skorton Center for Health Initiatives. The bystander intervention was followed by a discussion led by HWS staff facilitators on topics from recognizing a potentially harmful situation to assessing personal barriers to getting involved to feasible strategies for intervention. Previously, new students attended a ‘Bringing in the Bystander’ workshop, covering many of the same topics. The only consistent bystander intervention training offered occurs during the first year’s overwhelming "red zone" period. It would be fruitful to develop bystander intervention refresher programs or series that cater to students who have established themselves more firmly in the Colleges’ culture. There may be a partnership opportunity with the Centennial Center by using the social change model to discuss leadership in intervention and culture change.
* **Increase survey response rate**. Though able to discuss trends emerging from the 2019 survey data, our 17% response rate does not allow for any statistically significant findings. Robust participation is required for a complete picture and subsequent improvements. Implementing a transparent and efficient system to disseminate the gathered data to key stakeholders, e.g., student governments and Greek life leadership, would be worthwhile after each survey administration. Past messaging encouraged students to participate in the survey as it informs prevention and education programs; however, solidifying this nebulous plea into specific delivery and discussion methods may lead to increased participation.
* **Expand the survey to include faculty and staff.** Though surveying faculty, staff, and administrators are optional underNew York State Education Law Article 129-B, it would be useful to expand to include these groups given the small, familial environment of the Colleges, where faculty, staff, and student culture(s) easily overlap with each other. It is recommended that the entire campus community be engaged to garner comprehensive guidance for changes to policy and practice around sexual violence prevention and implement these sustainably.
* **Rework questions to assess a more substantial amount of time.** Currently, the survey questions ask students if they have experienced any prohibited behaviors “since starting at HWS.” It is challenging to track data when the bi-annual administration of the survey does not assess the concrete span of the academic or calendar year prior but rather the more subjective “since starting at HWS.”
* **Develop key metrics to track longitudinally**. If the survey instrument can be limited to a more substantial amount of time, as discussed above, key metrics to consider following to measure the efficiency of prevention and resource education could include:
  + 1. Perception of students’ concerns about each other’s welfare or their contributions to a positive and supportive campus environment
    2. Rate of intervention in situations that could have led to sexual assault
    3. Number of attempted sexual assaults (might track inversely with #2)
    4. Number of sexual assaults
    5. Location of sexual assaults