October 8, 2015

Dear Colby Community:

This spring the College administered a survey on sexual assault and related campus climate issues through the Higher Education Data Sharing (HEDS) consortium. It was sent to all Colby students over age 18 who were enrolled and in residence (on campus and off) during the spring 2015 semester. We received responses from 465 of the 1,833 students surveyed. This week I received the final results of the survey and a report summarizing key findings from Provost Kletzer and Dean Terhune. I write today to share our results.

The survey results are deeply troubling. Among respondents, 12 percent of women and 4 percent of men reported having been sexually assaulted, using a definition that included unwanted touching of a sexual nature as well as penetration.

My view on this matter is very straightforward: A single member of our community enduring an unwanted sexual encounter, sexual misconduct, or sexual violence is one too many. We will not tolerate sexual assault on our campus, and we will hold accountable individuals found to have violated our codes of conduct.

There are many other important findings in the report and survey results, which are online here, and I encourage you to read them. Some demand much deeper exploration, such as why a relatively small percentage of students who reported being assaulted chose to report the assault through formal College channels. We must ensure that our processes for addressing serious breaches of conduct are as open, accessible, and trustworthy as possible. Other findings are more encouraging, suggesting, for example, that the campus climate is supportive and positive for the vast majority of respondents.

The bottom line for me is that, while we have invested significantly over the past year in new education, prevention, and enforcement programs related to sexual misconduct and assault, our work is just beginning. We have to commit ourselves to cultural transformation that will ensure all members of our community can carry out their work and everyday lives free of harassment, assault, or other threats to their safety and well-being. I hope that bringing these disturbing findings to light will evoke a conversation and contribute to a comprehensive set of changes that allow us to live up to our higher values and eliminate sexual violence and other forms of exploitation on our campus.

My personal commitment to these ideals is unwavering. I intend to be transparent with our data and to routinely survey our community to understand where we are making progress and where we need to focus additional efforts. I will also allocate the institutional resources needed to bring about real change. But I also need your help in generating the ideas and in moving our culture toward eradicating all forms of sexual misconduct and violence.

We will begin that process with an open community dialogue on Tuesday, Oct. 20, at 7 p.m. in the Parker-Reed Room of the Schair-Swenson-Watson Alumni Center. Together we can lead the way toward a future that is free of violence and exploitation in our community.

As always, I welcome your thoughts.

Sincerely,

David A. Greene
President