October 8, 2015

Dear President Greene:

We write with results from the sexual assault survey distributed to on-campus students in the spring and our thoughts about where to go from here. As we have regularly discussed, addressing sexual misconduct and violence is one of our highest priorities. We hope the survey results and our response will contribute to ongoing campus discussions on what we can do to eradicate sexual misconduct from our campus.

The survey results showed some areas of strength for Colby, but we can never conflate that with success. As long as any member of our community is disrespected in this most personal way, we have serious work to do. We know we are in full agreement when we say that everyone on this campus must be able to live their lives and pursue their studies free of physical and emotional harm and that unwelcome, coerced, or forced sexual contact and behaviors that sexually objectify, demean, or denigrate have no place in our community. This is an opportunity to remind our community that sexual misconduct in any form is antithetical to Colby’s values and mission, and it will not be tolerated.

We believe that the entire community must be involved in efforts to make our community one that is grounded in a positive culture of sexual respect. The sexual misconduct that exists on our campus is ours to address and we are committed to ensuring that the work be done to reduce the incidence and damage done by sexual misconduct.

The results we discuss here come from the April 2015 administration at Colby of the HEDS (Higher Education Data Sharing) Consortium’s Sexual Assault Campus Climate survey. As you know, our participation in this survey was part of our ongoing effort to improve support, policies, and procedures in the area of sexual misconduct and sexual assault prevention and support. The survey contained questions about educational efforts and student perceptions and opinions about the general climate on campus around unwanted sexual contact and student experiences with sexual misconduct and sexual assault. It was administered to all Colby students over the age of 18 who were enrolled and in residence (on campus and off) during the Spring 2015 semester. The survey was sent to 1,833 students and 465 responded, producing a response rate of 25.4%. Among Colby women, the response rate was 30.7% and among Colby men it was 18.6%.

The survey results warrant the attention and concern of everyone in our community. The full report of results from the survey is available here.

Incidence of unwanted sexual contact and sexual assault

With a 25.4% response rate, results are informative about those students who chose to respond to the survey and less informative about the incidence of sexual assault and unwanted sexual contact across the entire student campus population. With that said, we are in full agreement that one incident is too many, and the results clearly indicate more than that.

Before discussing the results for the incidence of unwanted sexual contact and sexual assault, we repeat the definitions used in the survey.
Sexual assault

Sexual assault is defined in the survey as: a) touching of a sexual nature (unwanted kissing, touching of private parts, grabbing, fondling, rubbing up against another in a sexual way, even if over clothes); b) oral, vaginal or anal sex; c) anal or vaginal penetration.

Among respondents, 12.3% of women and 3.8% of men reported that they had been sexually assaulted while on campus or at an off-campus event. Among respondents, 11% of women and 4% of men reported that someone had attempted but had not succeeded in sexually assaulting them.

Students reporting an incident of sexual assault were asked the form of that assault and multiple categories were reportable. The vast majority (91.2%) of assaults include touching of a sexual nature (kissing, touching of private parts); 53% of incidents involved vaginal sex, 23.5% of incidents involved oral sex.

Respondents were asked how many people sexually assaulted them – 77% reported one person and 23% reported that the assault was committed by more than one person.

Assault victims who responded that one person committed the assault were asked about the use of force or a threat of the use of force. 41.2% of these respondents replied “yes” to the use of physical force, and 23.5% replied “yes” to the question of a threat of physical force or the use of coercion or intimidation.

Respondents who reported experiencing sexual assault were asked questions about reporting. Only 12.5% of women who reported being sexually assaulted used the College’s formal procedure for making a report about the sexual assault. The reasons why students do not use the formal procedures and whether students were satisfied or not with the procedures are difficult to ascertain from the survey, given the very small number of responses to specific reporting questions. We clearly must do more to understand the barriers to reporting and whether our process is best serving our students as they navigate a very difficult situation.

Unwanted sexual contact

Unwanted verbal sexual behaviors constitute harassment and have no place at Colby. The high incidence of unwanted brief physical contact reported below provides direction to us that our prevention and intervention efforts should better focus on these behaviors and the environments where they are likely most prevalent (parties and other large gatherings).

Unwanted sexual contact is defined in the survey as a) unwanted verbal behaviors (sexual comments, unwelcome sexual advances, propositions, or suggestions, sexually offensive jokes); b) unwanted nonverbal behaviors (sending sexual emails, texts, or pictures; posting sexual comments about another on blogs or social media; sharing sexually offensive pictures or objects; leering or making lewd gestures towards another); c) unwanted brief physical contact groping, rubbing sexually against another, or engaging in any other brief inappropriate or unwelcome touching of another person’s body.

Among women respondents, 38.7% have experienced unwanted verbal behaviors. Amongst men, this number is 13.6%. Unwanted nonverbal behaviors are much less prevalent, with 7.3% of women respondents experiencing this type of behavior; for men, 4.3%. Among women respondents, 29.1% reported experiencing unwanted brief physical contact. Amongst men, this number was 14.2%.
**Student attitudes and views on climate, support, and education**

Respondents reported viewing the general climate on campus as positive and supportive. The climate and support questions were a series of statements that asked for a strong agree to strongly disagree response, where neither agree nor disagree was the middle of the five-stage response.

- 86.4% agree or strongly agree that faculty, staff, and administrators respect what students think and 92.4% agree or strongly agree that faculty, staff, and administrators are genuinely concerned about students’ welfare;
- 78.9% agree or strongly agree that faculty, staff, and administrators treat students fairly;
- 79.1% agree or strongly agree that they feel close to people on this campus;
- 87.4% agree or strongly agree that they feel safe on campus.

A campus where everyone feels safe must be our goal, and we take this last number as direction that we need to do better. More specifically,

- 67.5% of respondents agree or strongly agree that campus officials do a good job protecting students from harm;
- 60.6% agree or strongly agree that campus officials respond quickly in difficult situations;
- 55.3% agree or strongly agree that there is a good support system at Colby for students going through difficult times.

Respondents were asked for their perceptions of the incidence of sexual assault:

- 44.7% agree or strongly agree that the number of sexual assaults that occur on campus or during off-campus events sponsored by Colby is low;
- 34.0% agree or strongly agree that they or one of their friends is not at risk for being sexually assaulted on campus or during off-campus events sponsored by Colby;
- 55.3% agree or strongly agree that students would intervene if they witnessed a sexual assault.

**Education and Information**

The survey provides us with some indication that our sexual misconduct education efforts are reaching the student community, with widespread knowledge of prevention and bystander intervention efforts. When asked about information or education they had received from Colby:

- 88.6% of respondents reported positively about their ability to recognize sexual assault;
- 78.6% reported knowing how to report an incident of sexual assault;
- 76.5% reported receiving information on confidential resources for sexual assault and how to locate them on campus;
- 53.3% of respondents report receiving information or education on procedures for investigating a sexual assault;
- 79.8% report receiving information or education on actions that can prevent sexual assault, such as bystander intervention, clear communication with a potential partner or some other action.

This last number highlights the values of community and the power of looking after one another.
Alcohol

Students who reported experiencing sexual assault were asked questions about alcohol and drugs. Approximately 70% of sexual assault incidents reported in this survey involve alcohol consumption by one or more people and 40% of people reporting a sexual assault reported being unable to provide consent or stop what was happening because they were incapacitated.

We recognize the difficulty of talking about alcohol use in cases of sexual assault and sexual misconduct. It is our responsibility to provide our students with the information they need to make the best decisions for themselves, and campus discussions about consent and alcohol use and abuse will continue.

Our current policies and procedures concerning sexual assault and other forms of sexual misconduct

As we look ahead, we know it is important to continually assess our sexual misconduct prevention efforts. We summarize here new or revised sexual misconduct prevention efforts undertaken as this academic year opened.

- We are in the second year of our Sexual Violence Prevention Peer Education Program, through which all first- and second-year students are mandated to complete peer-led training sessions.
- We are in our first year of using a Mentors in Violence Prevention (MVP) training model for hosting peer-led sexual violence prevention and healthy sexuality conversations with individual sports teams within the athletics department.
- The content of Colby’s Sexual Violence Response and Prevention website and Colby’s Sexual Misconduct Student Guide have both been updated for the 2015-2016 academic year, primarily to provide students with a more detailed understanding of our reporting process and a more thorough understanding of the range of confidential and non-confidential support resources available.
- For the 2015-2016 academic year, we have created a Sexual Misconduct Responsible Employee Reporting Guide, which provides employees with an overview of Colby’s Sexual Misconduct policies and procedures and a more in-depth understanding of how to fulfill the Responsible Employee reporting obligation set forth by the Office for Civil Rights, in accordance with Title IX. We are continuing to offer the expanded Title IX Responsible Employee trainings that we piloted during the 2014-2015 academic year.

Concluding thoughts

We undertook the survey to learn more about our campus climate on issues of sexual assault and sexual misconduct. It is our intention to use the results to better inform our educational, prevention, and formal reporting efforts. Strengthening bystander intervention, improving prevention efforts around unwanted sexual contact, and understanding the barriers to formal reporting are some areas where we will focus our continued efforts to change the campus culture.

On a personal note, we want to thank you for your strong and continued support as we work to make Colby an even safer place for our students. We are committed to working with you and others to find effective solutions to a problem that exists in sharp conflict with our fundamental values. These results remind us that our efforts to eradicate sexual violence and sexual misconduct must be
serious, ongoing, and persistent. It is up to all of us to ensure that Colby is a place where everyone can thrive and pursue the many possibilities for learning and growth that bring us together as a community.

Sincerely,

Lori G. Kletzer                     James S. Terhune
Provost and Dean of Faculty        Vice President for Student Affairs and Dean of Students