

Yale University

# Report of the 2012-13 Campus Sexual Climate Assessment

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## Table of Contents

<b>Introduction</b> .....	2
<b>Process</b> .....	4
<b>Observations</b> .....	6
A. Student awareness of definitions of sexual misconduct and related University policies ...	6
B. Student awareness of resources for sexual misconduct response .....	7
C. Student perceptions of sexual climate.....	9
1. Undergraduate assessment of climate.....	10
2. Graduate and professional student assessment of climate.....	14
D. Administrator perceptions of sexual climate .....	18
<b>Conclusions and Future Steps</b> .....	20
A. Definitions and resources.....	20
B. Sexual climate.....	21
<b>Closing Comments</b> .....	25
Attachment A: University-wide Email from Stephanie Spangler.....	26
Attachment B: Discussion Groups.....	28
Attachment C: Facilitator Guide .....	29
Attachment D: Campus Climate Planning & Implementation Team.....	31

## Introduction

To the Members of the Yale University Community:

In the fall of 2012, my office embarked upon an initiative to assess certain aspects of the sexual climate on Yale's campus. The first such assessment had been conducted in 2011 by an external advisory committee chaired by the Honorable Margaret H. Marshall. The Marshall Committee's charge was broad: to recommend "how sexual harassment, violence or misconduct may be more effectively combated at Yale, and what additional steps the University might take to create a culture and community in which all of our students are safe and feel well supported." That Committee's findings and suggestions (available at: <http://provost.yale.edu/title-ix/reports>) have been invaluable guides in shaping our efforts to address and prevent sexual misconduct across the University and to build a culture of respect and responsibility. Equally important has been the ongoing, thoughtful and candid input from members of the Yale community regarding their experiences, observations, and recommendations relating to the sexual climate on campus.

The 2012-2013 campus sexual climate assessment was similar to the Marshall Committee's examination in that it sought largely qualitative information from convened discussion groups and through an email solicitation to the entire community. However, the purpose and focus of the 2012-2013 assessment differed from those of its predecessor. The intentions of the 2012-2013 assessment were two-fold: to gauge the community's current understanding of Yale's policies, procedures, and resources relating to sexual misconduct; and to engage the community in broad discussion of the sexual climate in their schools and departments and across the University.

In the following pages, we present the highlights and recurrent themes of many conversations and communications. Unfortunately, there is no way in this summary document to capture fully the richness of the conversations or the wisdom and generosity of the participants, who called upon both personal experience and shared perception to add not only content but texture to the discussions. In order to attend to the privacy of participants, we will not share verbatim the many comments that at various times pleased us, troubled us, moved us, and inspired us. Nonetheless, we will undoubtedly refer to them time and time again not only to inform our future

efforts but also to remind us of the power of engaging many views and voices across the University in order to make change.

Numerous individuals<sup>1</sup> contributed to this initiative; their skills and time and sheer effort allowed us to recruit a diversity of participants from across the University, create safe and supportive venues for open conversation and anonymous communications, and retain faithful and confidential documentation of participants' observations and suggestions. They deserve our heartfelt thanks.

I look forward to your thoughts about this report and, as always, welcome your own suggestions about how we can make Yale a better place.

Stephanie S. Spangler

May 15, 2013

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<sup>1</sup> See Attachment D for a list of members of the Campus Climate Planning and Implementation Team.

## Process

This report summarizes the general observations and recommendations gathered from the Yale community during the fall semester of 2012. Through a variety of venues (discussed below), we received input on the campus climate from many individuals with a wide range of perspectives and experiences, including undergraduates, graduate and professional students, faculty, staff, and administrators. In all, more than 300 members of the Yale community offered their feedback. We are very grateful to everyone who took the time to share their thoughts with us.

In an October 22, 2012 email,<sup>2</sup> we invited all Yale faculty, students, and staff, to share their insights, experiences, and suggestions on the campus climate. This invitation provided several options for the Yale community to provide input, including by email, in one-to-one meetings, and anonymously through an online comment form on the University's Title IX website (<http://provost.yale.edu/title-ix>). Roughly one third of the individuals who participated this past fall used one of these mechanisms to provide their comments and suggestions.

In addition to the venues described above, we also gathered input through discussions with more than 30 groups of community members held during November and December 2012, including many groups that had participated in the Marshall Committee's assessment in 2011. We met with faculty and administrator groups with a wide variety of roles and affiliations. We talked with undergraduates representing a range of student organizations, societies, and varsity athletic teams, as well as with randomly selected sophomores. We talked with graduate students and professional students from many of the schools as well as graduate and professional student leaders. In some cases, students were randomly selected to participate in a discussion group with colleagues from their class or school. In other cases, representatives of specific student organizations were invited to participate in a facilitated discussion.<sup>3</sup>

In each of the student group sessions, which generally lasted 60 to 90 minutes, a neutral facilitator guided the discussion,<sup>4</sup> a note taker captured comments without attribution, and a Title IX Coordinator or other administrator listened and responded to student questions at the close of the discussion.

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<sup>2</sup> See Attachment A, the email from Stephanie Spangler to the University community.

<sup>3</sup> See Attachment B for the list of the discussion groups that participated this past fall.

<sup>4</sup> See Attachment C for the questions that the facilitators used to guide the discussions.

Through both the University-wide email and the group discussions, we sought to:

- gauge the community's current understanding of Yale's policies, procedures, and resources relating to sexual misconduct;
- gather community members' impressions of the sexual climate in their own schools/departments and the University more generally;
- learn whether and how individuals feel they can influence the day-to-day climate in which they study, work, and live; and
- better understand what additional actions the University should take to address and prevent sexual misconduct.

## Observations

### A. Student awareness of definitions of sexual misconduct and related University policies

Although rarely expressing quotable familiarity with the University's posted definition of sexual misconduct, undergraduate and graduate and professional student groups consistently offered up key elements of that definition. Responses to the question "what constitutes sexual misconduct?" routinely included terms such as "assault," "nonconsensual sex," "unwanted, unasked for sexual conduct including touching," "stalking," "intimate partner violence," and "harassment." Students repeatedly acknowledged that the definition is broad and includes verbal as well as physical behaviors. They also generally understood that the definition of sexual misconduct includes certain consensual acts involving individuals with unequal institutional power and were aware of the existence of Yale's Policy on Teacher-Student Consensual Relations.

Similarly, while rarely able to cite Yale definitions verbatim, student groups demonstrated a nuanced understanding of sexual consent. They acknowledged the need for consent to be explicit, clear, and current and were routinely aware that consent cannot be obtained from someone who is mentally or physically incapacitated.

In addressing the definitions, students frequently discussed the potential subjectivity of sexual misconduct, noting that in certain circumstances the definition seems to be dependent on an individual's perceptions and sense of boundaries. In several groups, this element of subjectivity became a focus of discussion, and students grappled with the interpretive elements of the definition and the related need to pay continual attention to what is and isn't appropriate in various contexts. Occasionally, students worried about the possibility of false accusations, arising either out of definitional ambiguity or malice. Despite these concerns, student groups repeatedly demonstrated their ability to make well-reasoned judgments regarding the presence of sexual misconduct in hypothetical examples.

While once again not always able to recite specific text, students were almost uniformly aware of the University's commitment to create a campus free of sexual misconduct. Many also observed that the University has been more open and clearer in stating its position. That said, there was variation in students' degrees of familiarity with University policies and definitions across

schools and among class cohorts; more specifically, those students who participated in orientation programs in the past two years appeared to be more deeply versed in the details of definitions, policies and procedures.

In the discussions about what would or would not constitute sexual misconduct, a few points of confusion emerged. Some of the graduate and professional school students raised questions about the limits of the consensual relations policy, e.g., regarding the scope of restrictions that apply to graduate student-faculty relationships. Others wondered about the definitional similarities and differences between sexual misconduct and gender discrimination.

Undergraduates' uncertainties related to sexual contact under the influence of alcohol. More specifically, a number of students seemed to equate intoxication, or even mild to moderate alcohol use, with incapacitation. Accordingly, these students often believed (inaccurately) that consent cannot be given by an individual who has consumed any amount of alcohol.

Finally, there were students in both undergraduate and graduate and professional student groups who sought clarification regarding which behaviors constitute sexual harassment and verbal sexual misconduct. They further suggested that exemplary "scenarios" might be helpful educational tools, especially to address areas of uncertainty.

While these discussions identified a few areas of uncertainty, the overwhelming message was positive. Students appear to know the core elements of the sexual misconduct definition and are capable of having thoughtful and substantive discussions about them.

## **B. Student awareness of resources for sexual misconduct response**

In the discussion groups, facilitators asked participants if they would know where to go for help, should an instance of sexual misconduct occur. Undergraduates uniformly responded with "SHARE" (the Sexual Harassment and Assault Response & Education Center). Graduate and professional students varied somewhat in their responses by school and by year-in-program, but many responded with this answer as well. Whether or not they mentioned SHARE or another specific sexual misconduct resource, almost all participants were confident that they could find such resources if necessary.



SHARE's key features—support, information, advocacy--were widely understood by most of the undergraduates and many graduate/professional students. However, some students, especially in graduate and professional student groups, were unaware of the full range of SHARE's services, and a few were under the impression that SHARE is only a telephone “hotline” or an extension of Mental Health.

Many students were able to name not just SHARE, but also one or more of the other key sexual misconduct resources: the Title IX Coordinators, the University-Wide Committee on Sexual Misconduct, and the Yale Police Department. Graduate and professional students were especially likely to point to their Title IX Coordinators as sources of help, and to refer to them by name. Undergraduates were much less likely to identify a Title IX Coordinator as a primary resource. Again, students who were unsure about specific resources were confident that they would be able to find them if needed. “Google it” was the most common strategy for locating resources, closely followed by “search my email” for messages from the deans and Title IX Coordinators, including the semi-annual reports of cases of sexual misconduct. Students also cited orientation trainings, as primary sources of information on the topic; however, they repeatedly emphasized the difficulty of absorbing and retaining orientation-related information given both the timing and volume of material presented in this setting. They further stressed the importance of ongoing communication both as a reminder and as a sign of administrative commitment.

In addition to University-wide resources, many students expected that, if they encountered sexual misconduct, they would turn to familiar and local sources of support: friends, deans, department chairs, directors of undergraduate/graduate studies, registrars, the Chaplain's Office, cultural center directors, freshman counselors, and so on. For some students, though, that very familiarity might pose a problem. Some graduate students in particular expressed concerns that there is risk in bringing complaints to or about an advisor due to “the power dynamics” and the influence that advisors have on students' academic success and future careers. The variations in these discussions underscored the importance of having both local and centralized resources.

For most students, the conversation about resources was largely hypothetical. They knew that these resources exist, but had no personal experience with any of them. In picturing what it might be like to engage support services and complaint procedures, students drew on their day-

to-day experiences of the sexual climate within their own schools or departments and sometimes also gleaned information from the semi-annual reports of complaints of sexual misconduct. Discussions of complaint procedures sometimes reflected ongoing uncertainty about distinctions between the formal and informal complaint processes and the available array and appropriate application of sanctions and remedies. In a few discussion groups, students suggested that the community's understanding of the procedures might be enhanced by supplementing existing textual descriptions on the Sexual Misconduct Response website with diagrammatic representations of complaint processes and detailed (but hypothetical) case scenarios.

Worth noting here are the reports of a few students for whom this was *not* a hypothetical conversation. The group of participants with first- or second-hand experiences of taking action felt, in general, that the process had gone very well. However, a few students raised questions about the efficiency of the system—were there too many options? too many hand-offs?—and a few raised concerns about the ways in which their or their friends' cases were handled.<sup>5</sup>

### **C. Student perceptions of sexual climate**

For the purposes of this assessment, we defined sexual climate very broadly. We asked students to consider the overall atmosphere in their schools, including casual comments, attitudes, patterns of behavior, and presumptions, and to share their general awareness of incidents of sexual misconduct. In applying this broad definition, participants were asked to reflect on the full range of their social, educational, and professional experiences at Yale.

One theme emerged in all groups and across all schools: *climate is local—or, at least, is experienced as local*. Students were aware of University-wide actions, and often expressed a belief that these broad strategies will make change, but only insofar as they engage the interest and action of local communities that some students referred to as “microclimates.”

Students' assessments of their “microclimates” varied widely. Some felt they inhabit safe, respectful, supportive spaces; some felt their situations were mixed; some perceived a strong

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<sup>5</sup> When students expressed concerns about their own or a friend's specific experiences, Title IX Coordinators and/or other administrators followed up afterwards; information about specific experiences is not included in this report in order to protect individuals' privacy.

negative climate. Across these varying assessments, undergraduates consistently focused on the climate impact of social interactions among peers, rather than with faculty or staff. Graduate and professional students, by contrast, focused almost exclusively on professional and educational interactions with faculty. Given the sharp difference in perspectives, we have provided two separate summaries of the climate discussions, one relating to undergraduates and the other for graduate and professional students.

### **1. Undergraduate assessment of climate**

Undergraduate students described a wide range of sexual climates that vary across different campus communities and even among specific groups of friends. Despite significant differences in students' observations and experiences, some common themes and shared core perceptions emerged in discussions, which are listed here and described in more detail below:

- (a) Yale is making substantial change, and progress, in addressing the sexual climate;
- (b) Students feel Yale is more comfortable than many other campuses;
- (c) There are still issues to address;
- (d) Patterns of social and sexual life change dramatically between freshman and senior year; and
- (e) Conversations about sex, relationships, and sexual misconduct are both difficult and necessary.

Variations on these themes emerged among and within discussion groups as students moved into more detail. This flow of observations and ideas was itself a measure of climate – once conversations began, students had a lot to say, especially on the topic of how the administration should (or shouldn't) attempt to reshape undergraduate life.

*(a): Yale is making substantial change, and progress, in addressing the sexual climate*

To many undergraduates, the most salient aspects of Yale's climate are the ways in which it is actively, rapidly evolving. They frequently remarked that, with regard to its approach to sexual misconduct, the Yale of today is substantially different—and better—from the Yale of last year or two years ago. Students appeared to be aware of the intensity of University efforts to address sexual misconduct and felt those efforts were paying off. Even though some expressed

skepticism regarding the stimulus for these efforts, e.g., as reaction to regulatory pressure, students generally offered a narrative of progress and optimism.

Students were aware of the institutional support for change and most seemed to appreciate it. However, some students expressed frustration with the volume of communication they receive from the University and the expectations being placed upon them, e.g., to attend multiple mandatory trainings.

Students emphasized the importance of their ongoing participation in institutional efforts, especially those relating to alcohol and other drugs, and wanted to make sure their perspectives are included in institutional planning. They also recognized the active roles that students themselves are now playing in attempts to transform campus climate, e.g., by having frank and open daily conversations, organizing and leading group discussions, and setting examples by making responsible choices with regard to social activities.

*(b): Students feel Yale is more comfortable than many other campuses*

In many of the discussion groups, students expressed their opinion that the climate is better at Yale than at other colleges and universities. They compared their experiences at Yale to those of friends at other schools and shared impressions about their own visits to other institutions. They frequently described Yale as an open and safe environment where they felt they could discuss sensitive issues. They often credited this comfortable culture to their peers, whom they described as both knowledgeable and accepting of differing views about sexuality. However, some were quick to point out that comfort levels vary depending on a student's local climate and social group.

*(c): There are still issues to address*

While the majority of students perceived the overall campus climate as positive, there were students in nearly every session who had encountered situations or patterns of behavior that fell short of campus ideals. The problems described ranged from inappropriate comments to incidents of assault.

Most often, students described problems that arose among peers and in social settings. Many students pointed to campus pressures toward casual sex; they felt these pressures caused

difficulties for students who want to form other kinds of romantic relationships, as well as for students (often, but not only, women) who find themselves treated disrespectfully within the hookup culture. Some students expressed concerns about the effects of the culture on broader social interactions among peers.

Students observed that the incidents of sexual misconduct that they were aware of frequently occurred between individuals who know each other. Accordingly, many students worried about not only the direct harm of these behaviors—the impacts on survivors of these assaults and abuses—but also about the divisive effects on social groups and communities.

Infrequently, students noted examples of sexual misconduct, largely in the form of inappropriate comments, that took place in academic settings and/or involved faculty members. Such situations were cast as rare, but nonetheless are quite troubling when they occur.

A number of students discussed the inherent difficulties in reporting incidents of sexual misconduct to those in positions of authority. Many students spoke of the risk of fracturing one's own social group or community, of being dismissed or even abandoned by friends. Other students expressed discomfort at the thought of describing such a deeply personal experience to an institutional figure. Still others worried about what would happen once a complaint was filed: would they retain control? would appropriate action be taken? would there be enough evidence for anything to happen? Many students offered suggestions for increasing the likelihood of reporting: make the details of the complaint process more readily available; stress the breadth of behaviors that are considered to be misconduct; give more specifics in the semi-annual reports of complaints to make both the incidents and the responses to them more easily imaginable.

In these discussions of sexual climate, the presence of alcohol in sexual situations was often mentioned or presumed. Students had widely divergent assessments of the role alcohol plays—a trigger for misconduct, or just an excuse for it—and about what peers should do in response. Rather than pursue these debates, however, students quickly turned the focus of these conversations to recent changes in undergraduate alcohol regulations and procedures. Important content emerged in these often critical discussions, e.g., students are often confused about the origin and nature of the changes and they want administrators to seek more student input. However, the students' focus on policy pre-empted more extensive discussion of the role of

alcohol and other drugs in campus climate.

As students discussed the problems they see—ranging from inappropriate joking to disrespectful social interactions to incidents of assault—they almost always framed the problems as exceptions in an otherwise safe and supportive environment. Still, these exceptions troubled them and colored their sense of the climate at Yale. At the same time, most students felt that change was possible. Overwhelmingly, they thought that a combination of strong University action and ongoing community reflection and engagement could address the problematic situations they observed.

*(d): Patterns of social and sexual life change dramatically between freshman and senior year*

Students described a campus climate that shifts for students as they move along the trajectory from freshman to senior year. They note that although freshmen receive substantial training and support, they are uniquely vulnerable because of their relative inexperience in navigating the academic and social aspects of university life. Sophomores, juniors, and seniors understand themselves to be increasingly enfolded within protective social structures—in residential colleges and in well-chosen microclimates, they feel safer.

Most students attributed the relative vulnerability of younger students to both social inexperience and limitations on social venues imposed by the drinking age. Due to these limitations, freshmen are more likely to be drawn to large parties where they know very few people. Furthermore, because they have no established social groups, they lack peer support to assess risks and navigate uncomfortable situations.

Some students felt that even though upperclassmen are in a better position, they, as well as freshman, would benefit from continued training and support. Many felt that the training they had received at orientation was not as robust as that currently provided to freshman. Others suggested that all students could benefit from well-timed “refresher courses.” Some upper-class students wanted not just reminders, but expanded training opportunities that included content such as hypothetical scenarios and information about how to help friends who had been impacted by sexual misconduct.

*(e): Conversations about sex, relationships, and sexual misconduct are important and difficult* <sup>6</sup>

Overall, students felt that in order to effect campus-wide change the community must find ways to have ongoing, productive, and open conversations about sex, relationships, and sexual misconduct. In particular, many noted that current conversations about sexual misconduct are not sufficiently frank. Many also felt that there is not enough discussion about the “little things” people do or say that cumulatively shape the sexual climate.

The desire to discuss sexuality (not just sexual misconduct) came up repeatedly. More specifically, many students expressed the need to hear more about healthy relationships and positive experiences of sexuality.

Students stressed that these conversations should be conducted and cultivated at all levels. Many suggested that professors, deans, and masters be trained to address these issues meaningfully with students. Students also noted the importance of conversations happening within peer groups and local student communities and a few gave examples of successful student-led discussion groups. While opinions varied regarding the details of content and implementation, there was overwhelming consensus that these were important, if sometimes challenging, conversations for the campus to pursue.

## **2. Graduate and professional student assessment of climate**

As with the undergraduates, the graduate and professional (G&P) students experience the sexual climate as largely local; and, indeed, student perceptions varied widely across different professional schools and Graduate School departments. Some groups felt strongly that their schools or departments are supportive communities—and frequently used the words “open,” “safe” and “respectful” in describing departmental or school culture. This sense of shared community was expressed more frequently by professional students than by graduate students. Other groups were deeply concerned about their local environments.

Across the groups, four themes recurred. Students expressed:

- *A sense of vulnerability:* G&P students focused on their status as professionals-in-training, and the dependence upon faculty that this status creates. Many groups felt it

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<sup>6</sup> This finding may reflect self-selection bias, in that participation in the discussion groups was largely optional.

would be risky to raise concerns, even in settings where they felt the climate to be generally positive.

- *An awareness of gender as a potential factor in professional success:* many G&P students were concerned that their disciplines and professions are still shaped by gender bias; they were alert to ways their programs at Yale resist or perpetuate such dynamics.
- *An attention to administrative cues:* G&P students look to faculty and administrators for signs of leadership in and commitment to addressing sexual misconduct and other climate issues within their programs.
- *A belief that “it’s better here:”* thinking of other institutional contexts, many students expressed appreciation for the climate in their G&P programs; their own local concerns notwithstanding, most students expressed confidence that Yale is doing comparatively well.

In the G&P student sessions, these four themes arose repeatedly and were deeply intertwined across many topics, including the impacts of: subtle and repetitive sexual harassment; gender dynamics in mentoring, hiring, and tenuring; faculty misbehavior (rumored or experienced); fears about the difficulty of filing a complaint against an advisor; experiences and expectations of change within their own programs; and the possibility of more active and visible faculty and administrative engagement, especially at the school or departmental level, in issues relating to sexual climate and gender dynamics.

G&P students, in contrast to the undergraduates, had relatively little to say about interactions with peers when discussing sexual climate, despite prompts from the group facilitators. What they did say was mostly positive. With a few exceptions, the G&P students characterized their peers as respectful and open-minded. They often added that they felt the G&P peer interactions at Yale are significantly better than those they had experienced as undergraduates.

G&P students reflected on the sexual climate mainly in the context of their professional lives. With regard to classroom interactions, G&P students discussed their roles both as teachers and as students. Graduate students often focused on their vulnerability as teachers, worrying about crossing boundaries or somehow triggering a false accusation; some called for additional clarification about the range of acceptable graduate-undergraduate relationships, where “the line”



should be drawn. Students in certain professional schools, primarily where physical contact or issues relating to sexuality and sexual misconduct are components of the curriculum, expressed discipline-specific concerns about navigating the boundaries between the personal and the professional—the theoretical and experiential—aspects of these issues and underscored their need for faculty to help them explore and define those boundaries. In both graduate and professional student sessions, when discussions turned to specific examples of sexual misconduct, students primarily referred to episodes involving the faculty in their schools and departments, and issues such as consensual relationships and ongoing patterns of inappropriate speech.

In session after session, especially those involving graduate students, discussions regarding sexual climate shifted quickly to explorations of power dynamics. More specifically, students referred repeatedly to their perceptions of the power that advisors have over them and the potential for advisors to use that power not only to impose unacceptable behaviors but also to retaliate against complaints about those behaviors. Many G&P students found it difficult to imagine that they would be able to take effective action to address sexual misconduct, even if they were fully aware of University resources. Many worried that filing a complaint, or even just discussing an uncomfortable situation, would risk disrupting their careers.

Not all groups talked about reporting sexual misconduct in terms of risk or worry. Some students, primarily in professional schools, reported that they would feel comfortable going to an advisor or administrator for help. Other students described local climates that not only accommodate complaints but actively stimulate positive behavioral change by promptly calling out inappropriate behaviors and by engaging students and faculty in productive conversations about cultural and climate issues.

Given the power exerted by faculty, almost all students called for more faculty training on issues of sexual climate not only to increase their awareness of sexual misconduct issues and procedures but also to engage their active leadership in cultivating a positive climate. Many students felt that faculty would welcome more guidance and looked to the University administration to be clearer and firmer with faculty regarding their responsibilities not only to set good examples themselves, but also to address the behaviors of their colleagues and to promote open conversation about issues of concern and opportunities for improvement. However, there

were also some students who expressed skepticism about the University's commitment and ability to address incidents of sexual misconduct among the faculty; to these students, it seemed that powerful faculty members were beyond accountability. Graduate and professional students frequently discussed the impacts of gender dynamics on their experiences of the sexual climate. Recurring topics of discussion included faculty diversity, patterns and styles of mentoring, the availability (or lack thereof) of role models, and the interactions between junior and senior faculty.

A number of groups raised concerns about the scarcity of female faculty in their departments, schools or disciplines. They noted that students view female faculty not only as mentors and role models, but also as evidence that women can succeed in specific fields. Some students observed that female students were frequently overlooked in the classroom and were also less likely to receive good mentoring from male faculty. Ironically enough, mentoring problems were sometimes attributed to male professors' fears of sexual harassment accusations or even the appearance of impropriety. Some students were wary of relying on female faculty to mentor female students because of the potential risk of further exclusion of "the girls' club."

Many students acknowledged that they have the ability and opportunity to influence the sexual climate in their departments and schools and, in particular, in their relationships with peers and trainees. However, most students felt that it is the faculty and local administrators who have the most powerful influence on the climate and therefore the greatest ability to establish enduring cultures of respect. Students in nearly every session advocated for departmental/school sponsorship of open and recurring discussion of issues relating specifically to sexual misconduct and more broadly to sexual climate. In many fields, students were particularly grateful to faculty who offered strategies for navigating the sexism and sexual harassment they expected to encounter after graduation. That said, students generally felt powerless to impact faculty diversity and gender dynamics issues in their schools and departments. While generally appreciative of the University's recent initiatives relating to sexual misconduct, students also offered suggestions for ways in which the University leadership might address sexual misconduct and impact the sexual climate more effectively. Students viewed the routine emails from their deans, as well as the semi-annual reports from the Title IX Coordinator, as very important in terms of both content and community significance. They also expressed interest in

additional anonymous and routine mechanisms for reporting complaints, such as surveys at the end of each semester.

Most students also placed responsibility—and their hopes—with the University leadership for improvements in power and gender dynamics and the diversity of the faculty. Some expressed their hopes that the University would address gender and diversity issues with an intensity equal to that used to address sexual misconduct.

#### **D. Administrator perceptions of sexual climate**

We met with several groups of administrators from across the University and asked them to discuss their observations regarding student awareness of sexual misconduct policies and resources, as well as their perceptions of the sexual climate for students on campus. During these discussions, the administrators repeatedly echoed the themes we heard in the student discussion groups.

With regard to student awareness of the University's definitions and policies related to sexual misconduct, administrators felt that most students have a general understanding about the range of behaviors that constitute sexual misconduct, even if they don't know every "twist and turn." The administrators pointed to the discussions at orientation and during other training programs as providing good basic information for students about the University's policies. However, they, like students, emphasized the need for both regular reminders and ready access to information when needed. They also highlighted several areas of uncertainty for students, most frequently regarding the definitional scope of sexual misconduct particularly as it applies to inappropriate language and, for graduate students, consensual relationships with undergraduates.

With regard to student awareness of the University resources available for responding to sexual misconduct, administrators felt that students, particularly the undergraduates, are widely aware of the resources and, in those cases where the students may not recall every resource, they agreed that students would use the University and school-specific websites to find the information they need. In discussing their interactions with students regarding questions or concerns about sexual misconduct, the administrators generally concurred that maintaining the current range of "entry points" is important so that students can decide which is most comfortable for them. That said, they also stressed the need for coordination among the various resources to ensure that students

do not feel that there are too many steps in the complaint process or that they will be required to repeat their stories on multiple occasions.

In discussing their interactions with students, administrators noted several factors, in addition to definitional confusion and perceived or real procedural impediments, that seem to discourage some students from reporting sexual misconduct. They noted that among undergraduates peer pressure and the fear of negative impacts on their social group or classmate's reputation are frequently cited disincentives. In contrast, some graduate students fear that reporting faculty behaviors will undermine their careers at Yale and beyond.

In reflecting upon the sexual climate for students, administrators drew conclusions that often resonated with those of the students themselves. They noted frequently and firmly that climate is largely "local" and dependent on the dynamics of small academic and social communities. They cited alcohol as a "problem," predominately for undergraduates, and, while not delving deeply into the details of the relationship between alcohol and sexual climate, noted the need for clear and effective policies to address alcohol use. They also suggested that undergraduates in particular would benefit from more extensive training about and exposure to models of healthy relationships and behaviors. When discussing graduate students' circumstances, administrators, like students, highlighted the central role of the power gradient between faculty and students in shaping local culture, and called for more intensive training and active engagement of the faculty on matters relating to sexual misconduct and gender dynamics.

Finally, in both student and administrator discussion groups, participants reflected upon the unique challenges faced by international students in understanding and navigating the cultural norms and expectations at American academic institutions and Yale, more specifically.

Although we did not find it possible, due to logistics, to recruit discussion groups largely composed of international students, we did get input from individual international students that reinforced their colleagues' reflections about these challenges. We will be sure to focus our efforts in the near future on identifying and implementing ways to more fully and meaningfully engage and educate this group.

## Conclusions and Future Steps

We were extremely gratified by the high level of community engagement in all aspects of this climate assessment initiative. The discussions were invariably vibrant and far-ranging. The correspondence we received was deeply thoughtful. Both the conversations and the communications showed the community's sophisticated awareness of the issues and genuine interest in creating a campus-wide culture of respect and responsibility.

### A. Definitions and resources

While we were encouraged that the community members who participated in this initiative demonstrated a broad general knowledge of the University's policies, procedures and resources, we also identified a number of opportunities to address points of uncertainty, to simplify processes, and to communicate in ways that are clearer and more meaningful to each and every University constituency. We list those opportunities and some responsive actions below.

- Confusion persists regarding distinctions between the University-Wide Committee (UWC) informal process and the Title IX Coordinator process for addressing complaints. Indeed, in our experience with these processes over the past two years, we have identified substantial overlap and a few significant, but perhaps unnecessary, differences between them. We are working to better harmonize—and perhaps consolidate—these approaches. We have also worked to fortify communication among the directors of the various complaint processes (UWC leadership, Title IX Coordinators, Yale Police Department) both to assure appropriate consistency in addressing cases and to reduce the number of “hand-offs” that an individual might face when bringing a complaint forward.
- Students suggested that they might be more likely to report incidents of sexual misconduct if they had a better sense of how the complaint process transpires and what array of outcomes are possible. Some suggested hypothetical case scenarios might be illuminating. We are considering placing such scenarios on our website and incorporating case studies in our training.
- We recognize the need to provide more complete and clearer information regarding the roles played and range of support provided by the Title IX Coordinators, especially for undergraduates who seemed to be relatively unaware of this resource. Additionally, we

will work to better communicate, especially to graduate and professional students, the full range of supports offered by SHARE.

- In discussing hypothetical and actual incidents of sexual misconduct, students frequently identified individuals, other than explicitly designated sexual misconduct resources, whom they would seek out for advice and support, e.g., deans, masters, registrars, advisors, directors of undergraduate/graduate studies. We will intensify our efforts to provide specialized training with these “go to” resources and partner with them to assure that they have ready access to our office for support and guidance.
- As noted above, but worth repeating here, since faculty play such a powerful role in shaping students’ experiences and perceptions of the climate, we must continue to develop guidance, training, and resources that are relevant and useful for faculty.

## **B. Sexual climate**

One of our most consistent findings from this initiative was that community members from all areas of campus, and students in particular, are eager for more opportunities and venues for open discussion of sexual climate, gender dynamics and broader cultural issues. In light of this strong and repeated request, coupled with the equally firm and prevalent assertion that “climate is local,” we feel it will be important over the coming months to meet with the leadership of schools, departments and student groups to discuss in greater detail the findings pertinent to their constituencies and to explore means to continue and expand these valuable conversations.

Another common finding from this initiative was that students, especially in the graduate and professional schools, are looking to faculty not only to be responsible for knowing and complying with Yale’s policies regarding sexual misconduct, but also to serve as models of exemplary behavior and to influence colleagues to do likewise. Additionally, many graduate students expressed the hope that faculty would create safe and productive “spaces” for open explorations of the influence of power structures and gender dynamics on their academic experiences. In order to address these expectations, our office will intensify its efforts to train and communicate with faculty using materials that are both informative and relevant to their roles and their disciplines. Along those lines, we have already developed and disseminated guidance for faculty and academic administrators who may be approached by students with

concerns about sexual misconduct. We have also worked with a number of departments to develop training materials and programs that are more discipline-specific and reflective of local cultural issues. In the future, we must expand both the substantive scope and the “geographic” reach of our educational initiatives. However, as we heard over and over in discussion groups, enduring cultural change is dependent upon “local” action and diligent attention to both subtle and overt influences on climate. We must find ways not only to educate but also to engage and support academic leaders in their efforts to address issues and pursue opportunities for change in their own academic settings.

Gender diversity of the faculty and the impact of gender on student and faculty professional advancement were strong and recurrent themes in our discussions with G&P students, themes that were inextricably related to students’ perceptions of the sexual climate. As was the case with sexual misconduct and departmental power dynamics, students expressed a strong interest in engaging in ongoing dialogue with faculty and departmental and school leaders on these issues. We plan to share the relevant results of this initiative with the individuals and University offices that are devoting their efforts to faculty diversity and development initiatives so that they can continue to engage G&P students in discussions and, where appropriate, decisions regarding academic environment and career trajectories.

Like their graduate and professional school colleagues, undergraduate students stressed that climate is locally determined and expressed their eagerness for models of positive behaviors and relationships. In contrast to the graduate and professional students, however, undergraduates made it clear that they experience Yale’s sexual climate largely through peer interactions. While they made some observations that applied to a broad range of classmates, they returned again and again to the profound importance of relatively small social groups. In working to improve undergraduate climate, thus, it is clear we must engage these “microclimates,” offering students additional tools for creating and sustaining protective, respectful groups. At the same time, we must continue to build a stronger “safety net” of broad community support and clear community values, ensuring that even students in less cohesive or less respectful groups have places to turn for guidance and help. Such small-group and community work will be especially important in addressing the needs of freshmen, who may not have established social groups, a well-developed sense of social norms, or access to all of the structural supports of the residential college setting.

Given their focus on local culture and peer interactions, it is not surprising that many undergraduate students expressed a preference for small group, peer-led venues for learning about sexual misconduct and discussing sexual climate. They also made it clear that training sessions should be frank and direct in addressing sexual misconduct and include information about sexual health and positive relationships. We are aware (as were the students in our groups) that a number of initiatives that respond to student calls for more extensive and nuanced discussion are already underway through the efforts of the Yale College Dean's Office (YCDO), which include expanded training for student leaders, such as freshman counselors, peer liaisons, and officers of student groups; and the addition of a number of small-group workshops, such as the "Health and Sexuality" sessions during freshman orientation.

The YCDO has also created the Office of Gender and Campus Culture, with a core mandate of building a more positive sexual climate. Prominent among its many efforts is the Communication and Consent Educators (CCEs) program. While the CCEs have been most visible in large-scale trainings, they spend most of their time on small collaborative projects with a range of student groups and communities, helping to address issues as they arise at these more local levels. In 2012-13, the CCEs engaged in 1800 individual conversations and hosted over 2500 students in small workshop events, including the CCE-led course, "The Myth of Miscommunication," and sophomore training in "Bystander Intervention: Breaking the Script of Sexual Violence."

As we review the findings of this climate assessment with the YCDO, we will work with the deans and masters to develop mechanisms to assess the effectiveness and impacts of existing programs, to make revisions where indicated, and to identify new opportunities to train and engage the undergraduate community. We are particularly interested in exploring additional strategies to fortify community-wide support systems, especially, but not only, for freshmen.

Although alcohol was mentioned frequently in undergraduate discussion groups and communications with our office, the discussions shed little light on the specific impacts of alcohol on the sexual climate. To the contrary, students underscored the complexity of the relationship between alcohol and sexual misconduct, behaviors that each carry a wide range of possible harms. That said, these discussions and the presence of alcohol use in some reported cases of sexual misconduct, underscore the need to continue to study each of these behaviors and



how their associated harms may be compounded when the behaviors occur together. Over the past months the University, through the Yale College Dean's Office Task Force on Alcohol and Other Drugs and the University Council Committee on Alcohol in Yale College, has conducted both an internal and external review of alcohol use and its impacts. Our office has been in contact with the leaders of these efforts, and over the coming months we will review together the findings of the alcohol studies with those from this initiative to better define and address the intersection between sexual misconduct and alcohol.

## Closing Comments

This campus climate assessment, like its predecessor conducted by the Marshall Committee, has provided us with abundant information about community members' day-to-day experience of the sexual climate at Yale. This information will be invaluable as we chart our future directions and plan programs and initiatives. We recognize, however, that the results of this assessment provide only a "snapshot" of the sexual climate at Yale – a climate that will continue to evolve over time. We also recognize that this initiative engaged only a fraction of the Yale community and focused primarily on students. Accordingly, we are committed not only to continuing and expanding the discussions we began this past fall but also to pursuing opportunities to better understand the experiences and perceptions of a broader array of constituencies – especially staff, faculty, and postdoctoral trainees – across Yale's campus. Additionally, while rich in content, this assessment has been largely qualitative; as our programs and initiatives mature, we will explore the use of alternative and/or additional assessment methodologies to measure the impacts and effectiveness of our programs.

In closing, I would like reiterate my appreciation and admiration for all of those who contributed to this initiative. The extraordinary efforts and deep wisdom of those who supported and participated in this assessment confirm the community's overwhelming message to the Marshall Committee: "Yale is an amazing place."

## Attachment A: University-wide Email from Stephanie Spangler

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**From:** Stephanie Spangler <TitleIX@yale.edu>  
**Sent:** Monday, October 22, 2012 6:01 PM  
**To:** All Yale Faculty, Students & Staff  
**Subject:** Seeking community input: Campus Climate

To the Members of the Yale University Community:

I am writing to invite you to participate in an important University-wide activity.

Over the past few years, the University has fortified its commitments, enhanced existing programs, and introduced a number of new initiatives to address issues related to sexual misconduct and to strengthen the culture of respect and responsibility at Yale. Among those initiatives are periodic assessments of the sexual climate on Yale's campus. The first such assessment, conducted by an external advisory committee chaired by the Hon. Margaret H. Marshall, proved to be an invaluable guide in shaping our ongoing efforts and charting our future directions. The Marshall Committee Report and President Levin's response are available at <http://provost.yale.edu/title-ix/reports>.

Over the next few weeks, my office will be conducting a second climate assessment with the overarching goal of determining how well our current programs are working and what future steps—on the part of the institution and individuals—might prove most effective in addressing and preventing sexual misconduct. More specifically, we hope that this year's assessment will help us to:

- gauge the community's current understanding of Yale's policies, procedures, and resources relating to sexual misconduct;
- gather community members' impressions of the sexual climate in their own schools/departments and the University more generally;
- learn whether and how individuals feel they can influence the day-to-day climate in which they study, work, and live; and
- better understand what additional actions the University should take to address and prevent sexual misconduct.

The value of this assessment will be highly dependent on the breadth of input we receive from the University community. We have therefore created a number of venues for participation (listed below), and I encourage you to choose one or more of them to provide us with your own insights and suggestions relating to the objectives listed above. Please provide your input by November 16, 2012.

- Email: [titleix@yale.edu](mailto:titleix@yale.edu)
- Online (anonymous): <http://provost.yale.edu/campus-climate-feedback>

- Letter: Deputy Provost Stephanie Spangler, Office of the Provost, P.O. Box 208365, New Haven, CT 06520
- Office hours: by appointment, contact 203-432-4446

I realize that “sexual climate” is difficult to define with precision, and, indeed, it is a term that is intentionally broad, designed to capture not only incidents of misconduct but also the dynamics within the professional, educational and social contexts in which those incidents occur—or are prevented. In reflecting upon your own experiences and impressions of Yale’s climate, it may be useful to think about patterns of behavior, casual comments, formal expectations, and attitudes in your own department, school, or office and their impacts on the productivity and well-being of you and your classmates or colleagues. Which behaviors and attitudes should attract our concern? Which should warrant our praise and serve as models for others?

Thank you very much for your participation in this initiative. It is only with the active engagement of community members like you that we can make Yale a better place to study, work, and live.

Sincerely,

Stephanie Spangler

Stephanie S. Spangler, M.D.  
Deputy Provost for Health Affairs and Academic Integrity  
University Title IX Coordinator  
Clinical Professor of Obstetrics and Gynecology

Telephone: 203-432-4446  
Fax: 203-432-8139

## **Attachment B: Discussion Groups**

### *Yale College Students*

Communication & Consent Educators  
Feminist & LGBTQ leadership  
Fraternity leadership  
Peer Liaisons  
Sophomores, randomly-selected (female only group)  
Sophomores, randomly-selected (male only group)  
Sophomores, randomly-selected (mixed gender group)  
Varsity athletic captains (male and female teams)

### *Graduate and Professional Students*

Divinity School students  
Graduate & Professional Student Senate  
Graduate Student Assembly  
Graduate Student Assembly Steering Committee  
Graduate students in the Humanities  
Graduate students in the Natural Sciences  
Graduate students in the Social Sciences  
School of Architecture students  
School of Art students  
School of Drama students  
School of Forestry & Environmental Studies students  
School of Law students  
School of Management students  
School of Medicine students  
School of Music students  
School of Public Health students

### *Faculty, Administrators, and Staff*

Deans of Student Affairs from the graduate & professional schools  
Departmental business administrators  
Faculty Committee on Athletics  
Residential College Deans and Masters  
Title IX Coordinators  
Varsity coaches  
Women Faculty Forum  
Yale College Dean's Office  
Yale Police Department

## Attachment C: Facilitator Guide

### 1) Policies and Resources

**a) The University has been working to educate the community about Yale’s policies and resources for addressing sexual misconduct. We’re curious to know how far we’ve gotten in that process. What do you think? How well do you feel you understand Yale’s policies—the definitions and the procedures—relating to sexual misconduct? Not every twist and turn, but basically?**

i) Can you explain the definitions, in your own words?

~ What counts as sexual misconduct?

~ What behaviors does the University prohibit?

~ What counts as consent?

~ What elements seem most important? Is there anything missing?

~ Are there elements of the definition that seem confusing?

~ Where would you go for more details if you needed them?

ii) If you wanted to report an incident of sexual misconduct, would you how?

~ What are the options?

~ If you weren’t sure where to go, or whom to contact, how would you find out?

**b) What do you know about the resources available at Yale for responding to sexual misconduct – not just for reporting, but for getting other forms of help?**

i) Which people or campus services would you turn to?

ii) What do you think would happen?

**c) Do you feel your level of knowledge about resources and procedures is pretty typical? What makes you feel that way?**

## **2) Sexual Climate**

- a) I want to turn now to the questions about “sexual climate.” As I said earlier, this is the term we use to describe the overall atmosphere: casual comments, attitudes, patterns of behavior, presumptions, and so on, as well as incidents of sexual misconduct. The dynamics of the sexual climate do have something implicitly or explicitly sexual about them, but they aren’t necessarily social or peer interactions—i.e., these issues arise in educational and professional contexts as well, with faculty, staff, and administrators as well as with fellow students.**

**How would you describe the sexual climate at [your school]? What do you experience?**

- i) In what ways does your school feel like a safe, respectful place?
- ii) In what ways does it feel unsafe? Do you see patterns of disrespect?
- iii) Do the patterns change in different contexts and relationships, i.e., social vs professional vs educational – and peers vs faculty vs other administrative staff?

## **3) Influencing the sexual climate**

- a) How much do you feel that you and your peers can influence the sexual climate?**
- i) What kinds of things can people do?
    - ~ Ways to respond to specific problems? (Small things? Bigger steps?)
    - ~ Strategies for encouraging positive dynamics?
    - ~ What kinds of steps do you see people taking? What do you do yourself?
  - ii) What do you think enables people to take action? What prevents them from doing so?
  - iii) Do you feel support from the faculty and/or administration in building a more respectful sexual climate? What form does that take?

## **4) What haven’t we asked you that we should have?**

## **Attachment D: Campus Climate Planning & Implementation Team**

### University Title IX Coordinator

Stephanie Spangler

### Deputy Title IX Coordinators

Joan Channick

Betsy Dailinger

Margaret Deamer

Joanne DeBernardo

Paul Hawkshaw

Dolores Hayden

Lisa Huck

Lisa Kereszi

Jean Koh Peters

Melinda Pettigrew

Lois Sadler

Pamela Schirmeister

Valarie Stanley

Rebecca Udler

Merle Waxman

Vince Wilczynski

### Other Collaborators & Advisors

Amy Backus

Elisabeth Becker

Melanie Boyd

David Caruso

Alison Coleman

Jennifer Czincz

Lani Danilowitz

Elena DePalma

Chelsea Doub

Meredith Fahey

Garrett Fiddler

Rebecca Friedkin

Marichal Gentry

Alicia Grendziszewski

Carole Goldberg

Joseph Gordon

Caroline Hendel

Martha Highsmith

Hellen Hom-Diamond

Jason Killheffer

Cynthia Langin

Laverne Marks

Aley Menon

Hannah Peck

Susan Sawyer

Ernie Scrivani

Cynthia Smith

Elizabeth Stauderman

Linda Veronneau

Kim Zarra Wieler