

**Annual Report to PLU Community
Submitted by the Title IX Working Group
2015-2016**

Sexual assault and gender-based violence are very real problems, not only on our campus, but in our nation and world. Sexual assault and other forms of gender-based violence directly affect how many individuals experience the PLU community and threaten the equitable access of all students to learning and success. We are grateful for the ways that the PLU community has responded to the issue of gender-based violence and sexual assault as a critical priority - and grateful for the student voices and student leadership that made this a critical focus of learning, partnership, and action this spring. This response has included two community forums that served as spaces for dialogue, care, assessment, engagement, investment, and action. These forums allowed participants to achieve shared understanding of current strengths and challenges in regard to campus climate, education, coordination of all aspects of care, and the student conduct process.

Community Forums

The first forum focused on assessing the questions and concerns present in the PLU community in regard to gender-based violence and sexual assault. Participants organized their questions and concerns under a set of broad categories that included, “Campus Culture,” “Living Environments,” “Faculty/Classroom” and “Conduct Policy and Process.”

Over 150 participant comments were posted. The energy and content of comments and questions centered on two overarching themes:

1. Student conduct policy and process
2. Impact of sexual assault on campus community and campus climate

The second forum focused more intentionally on the student conduct theme due to the large number of responses in regard to both questions and comments received from the first forum (approximately 75 comments and questions related to this area, more than any other category). Student conduct policy and process is also an area that provides the most immediate opportunities for response and improvement.

There were two sub-themes that emerged under the larger theme of student conduct policy and process. These themes were:

- Need for increased awareness, education, and transparency of student conduct processes associated with sexual misconduct policies
- Perception of strong student conduct policy versus inconsistent experiences in practice

In addition to providing additional comments and questions, the second forum also asked people to provide suggestions for moving forward. These suggestions very much mirrored themes from the first forum and reinforced the need for consistent education and training on process and policy, along with intentional, ongoing attention to the impact on our community of gender-based violence and sexual assault. In addition, the process and policy themselves deserve ongoing evaluation.

Climate Survey Results and Findings

PLU was an early adopter of the Campus Climate survey that is expected to become a mandated requirement of Title IX institutional compliance in the future. The purpose of the survey is to assess in a focused and intentional manner how sexual misconduct¹ shapes campus climate and how the impact of sexual misconduct (including prevention, education, and response to incidents) is experienced by students who are directly or indirectly affected.

PLU joined a cohort of colleges and universities who administered the survey in spring 2015 through the Higher Education Data Sharing Consortium (HEDS). This collaboration allowed for confidential comparisons between schools as well as collaboration in identifying strategies for sharing findings within campus communities and for initiating actions in response to survey findings. Many of the priority action steps implemented in 2015-2016 by the Title IX Working Group and listed in the Title IX Timeline document (www.plu.edu/title-ix/documents) were made in response to findings from the inaugural administration of the Campus Climate assessment at PLU.

A number of findings from the survey reinforce the need for explicit attention to the intentional sequencing of prevention education; the use of multiple and varied pedagogies for teaching and learning gender-based violence and sexual misconduct policy, process, and practice; and the continued assessment of the impact of trauma-informed process and care on all involved in a conduct process. The survey findings also confirm that the experience of sexual assault at PLU is consistent with that of other schools and with the national literature, in that a sexual assault is most likely to occur in the early part of a student's college experience, with an acquaintance or somebody who is known, and on or near campus. The findings also point to a difference between PLU and other universities: at PLU, students report that alcohol and other drugs are less frequently involved while coercion is more frequently involved in the experience of an assault. Finally, the survey findings reinforce the idea that gender-based violence and sexual assault is a systems issue that requires attention and disruption from multiple entry and vantage points at the university, in our communities, and in the greater world with which we intersect.

These findings, combined with what was learned from the spring 2016 forums, compel PLU to continue to prioritize action and investment in response to each of the above themes and to continue to understand gender-based violence and sexual assault as clear issues of student success, student well-being, and community well-being. The two sets of findings confirm the need to provide pervasive and purposeful learning opportunities focused on prevention early in the experience of new students, faculty, and staff and the need to continue this shared learning through ongoing attention to issues of sexual assault as dynamic and pressing community-based issues of social justice. The two sets of findings also point to the sexual misconduct policy and process as a place for better implementing PLU's mission-based commitment to care. This occurs through the full implementation and continuous assessment of the experienced impact of a trauma-informed process and practice.

¹ While the Federal Government defines Title IX using the terms "sexual assault and gender-based violence," the University defines PLU policy and uses the term "sexual misconduct." This term will be used for the remainder of the document as it reflects PLU policy.

The recommendations that follow reflect thematic recommendations that evolved from the Campus Climate survey; comments, questions, and concerns expressed in the forums; and vetting of a draft set of recommendations with individuals and groups most directly affected by these changes.

Recommendations and Action Steps (as of May 23, 2016)

Theme: Institutionalize responses to gender-based violence and sexual assault as priorities reflecting a campus culture of care.

- Formalize Title IX working group as a University Standing Committee with recognition in the Faculty Handbook. (Timeline: fall 2016)
- Schedule gender-based violence and sexual assault forums for each semester of the academic year. Focus community discussion on additional themes emerging from spring 2016 forums, the spring 2016 Dear Colleague Letter, and other topics that are timely and relevant to campus culture. (Timeline: fall 2016)

Theme: Enhance visibility, pervasiveness, and scaffolding of cross-campus learning opportunities for students, staff, and faculty

- Examine current sequencing and scope of gender-based violence and sexual assault-related education for campus community, identify gaps, and locate relevant opportunities to situate learning in additional relevant contexts (e.g., revision of Emerging Leaders program). (Timeline: academic year 2016-2017)
- Evaluate pre-orientation online student modules for effectiveness; expand or transition to new option, if needed. (Timeline: summer 2016)
- Intentionally align New Student Orientation and First-Year Experience Program activities to engage questions and expectations related to sexual assault prevention (e.g., Bystander Training and Common Reading purposefully connected). (Timeline: summer 2016)
- Engage new Wellness Residential Learning Community (RLC) in sexual assault prevention work and focus on healthy relationships. Reinvigorate peer health educators through RLC/Health Center and as partners to SAPET for on-going education in residence halls. (Timeline: academic year 2016-2017)
- Develop and deliver active and passive educational campaign that specifically addresses overview of sexual misconduct policy, including requirements of due process. (Timeline: academic year 2016-2017)
- Submit proposals offering annual faculty- and staff-focused sessions at University Conference; provide relevant training during staff and faculty orientations; and schedule regularly held workshops on gender-based violence and sexual assault and related topics. (Timeline: ongoing)
- Identify and implement mandatory reporter training 2.0. (Timeline: academic year 2016-2017)

Theme: Strengthen conduct process to function fully as a trauma-informed and victim-centered process

- Provide overview of trauma-informed care and process during trainings and workshops for faculty, staff, and students. Share conduct flow chart visual, definitions, and points of care across campus constituencies and in multiple forms, including through web-based presence, campus workshops, educational campaigns, and publications. (Timeline: ongoing)
- Tighten communication protocols, responses and threshold for elevation of response for No Contact Orders and Removals From Campus. (Timeline: ongoing)
- Implement investigator model for sexual misconduct cases fully. (Timeline: academic year 2016-2017)
- Build ongoing education about remedy and proactive remedy consideration into conduct process. (Timeline: ongoing)

Theme: Strengthen transparency, communication, and intentional assignment of sanctions

- Develop and share a transparent suspension and expulsion sanctioning rubric for gender-based violence and sexual assault cases as part of expanded educational campaign and culture of care. (Timeline: summer 2016)
- Use recently signed Memorandum of Understanding with Pierce County Sheriff's Department to train staff for proactive coordination of legal and educational response to a sexual assault, when appropriate and while honoring the wishes of a survivor. (Timeline: ongoing)

Conclusion

Responding to the issue of gender-based violence and sexual assault continues to be a critical priority for the PLU community. Once again, we thank our students for uplifting these concerns and for their participation in assessing and improving our processes and procedures. The findings from both the Campus Climate survey and two campus forums confirm that we must continue to focus on education and learning in order to support student success and well-being as well as the wellbeing of our larger community.

The Title IX Working Group, along with other departments, groups, and committees, will be focusing on the recommendations and action steps as outlined in this report and providing ongoing updates (on the Title IX website) with progress as well as new recommendations and action steps as they develop. We also intend for this to be the first of regular annual reports to the PLU community.

2015-2016 Title IX Working Group

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