

Our Work to End Sexual Misconduct at Trinity

President Joanne Berger-Sweeney <President@trincoll.edu>

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To: President Joanne Berger-Sweeney <President@trincoll.edu>



Trinity College
HARTFORD CONNECTICUT

OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

September 4, 2020

Dear Students, Faculty, and Staff,

We write today to respond comprehensively to the list of demands the college received earlier this summer regarding sexual misconduct at Trinity. We begin by thanking all who contributed to the @trinsurvivors Instagram account and all who have amplified their voices demanding that we respond as an institution to eliminate sexual violence, harassment, and discrimination at Trinity. We also thank the members of the TrinSurvivors Team for meeting with senior administrators on two occasions to discuss each of the demands in more detail. We learned a lot from those conversations and now have a deeper understanding of each demand. We also thank the members of the Title IX working group for their conscientious and thoughtful dialogue as we engaged in the challenging task of constructing a new interim sexual harassment policy (as directed by the Department of Education), meeting almost weekly over the past three months.

All of this, as well as a thorough review of the 2019 campus climate survey responses, has informed our response to the list of demands presented by @trinsurvivors. We apologize for the amount of time it has taken us to provide a more concrete response—and for the length of this message—but we felt we needed all of the above components to help us reflect on what is being asked of us, and we were committed to responding comprehensively to these complex issues.

Our work is guided by a set of principles that we believe will change campus culture regarding sexual violence, sexual and gender-based harassment, relationship and interpersonal violence, stalking, and all other forms of sexual misconduct. We must:

1. Foster an environment to ensure the safety and well-being of all members of our community. The college is committed to protecting members of the community from all forms of sexual misconduct.
2. Develop and enhance preventative practices that teach individuals, academic and

administrative departments, athletic teams, and student organizations our community values, social norms, and standards as related to a campus culture in which campus sexual violence and sexual harassment are not tolerated and must be eliminated from campus.

3. Provide the most effective forms of support and resources for individuals who report incidents of sexual violence, sexual and gender-based harassment, relationship and interpersonal violence, stalking, and all other forms of sexual misconduct.
4. Respond equitably, promptly, and holistically to all reports of sexual misconduct.
5. Develop and implement sanctions that discipline violators appropriately, prevent recurrence, and remedy the harm to individuals and the community as a whole.
6. Create opportunities for members of our community to provide ongoing input into how we hold ourselves accountable to each of these principles.

We know that words must be accompanied by action. Today, we commit to the following actions toward eliminating sexual misconduct. These steps are significant, and they build on several years of progress in addressing campus culture and strengthening policies and procedures at Trinity. These steps alone will not rid the campus of sexual misconduct; doing so will require our continued commitment and partnership with all of you.

1. Enhance education, training, awareness, and prevention.

In August 2014, we created a Task Force on the Prevention of Sexual Assault. The task force made a number of recommendations concerning education, training, awareness, and prevention of sexual misconduct, understanding that prevention requires a comprehensive approach. We have an excellent foundation of programs on which to build, and by increasing funds for training, prevention, and educational initiatives we can support an ongoing and sustained effort to reinforce the values of respect, safety, consent, and shared responsibility. Listed below are the most significant action steps that resulted from the recommendations of the 2014 task force:

- A universal sexual misconduct policy for faculty, staff, and students was implemented in fall 2015 and updated in August 2020 to be in accordance with newly issued federal regulations.
- Panel members that hear cases involving sexual harassment have been trained to adjudicate and sanction cases. The training involves an in-depth review of all policies and laws that inform our policy and a focused workshop on trauma-informed responses in relation to sexual harassment.
- Faculty and staff received training on their roles as “responsible employees” and participated in required training on the prevention of sexual harassment in Spring 2019. All new employees are required to complete a workshop on the prevention of sexual harassment.
- The college has trained students, faculty, and staff to be part of the Green Dot Violence Prevention Strategy in an effort to reduce incidents of power-based personal violence and to create a safer culture on campus. Fifteen individuals are currently certified to facilitate Green Dot Overview and Bystander Trainings. Over the last three years, more than 750 students have participated in the Green Dot program.
- Your Rights, Your Options—a guide to our policy and to available resources and assistance on and off-campus—is published annually and distributed to the entire campus.
- For the last six years, all first-year students have completed online training about sexual assault prevention and consent and workshops during orientation. Further, all sophomores are required to attend a workshop on sexual assault prevention and bystander intervention.

First-years and sophomores are educated about the Green Dot Violence Prevention Strategy through this required training.

- For the last three years, and as required by the NCAA, all student athletes have attended a workshop on the prevention of sexual harassment. Further, coaching staff and administrators in Athletics have been trained as part of the Green Dot program over the last two years.
- Members of Greek life are required to attend Green Dot training as part of new member education. Also, in fall 2018 and spring 2019, all Greek letter organizations participated in campus workshops designed to create awareness on how they can prevent sexual violence from occurring both as individuals and as organizations.

We are committed to ensuring that social environments, including those associated with Greek life and athletic teams, are fully integrated into the educational framework to address sexual violence, sexual and gender-based harassment, relationship and interpersonal violence, stalking, and other forms of sexual misconduct. The college does and will continue to require that all members of athletic teams and Greek life members attend Title IX education and prevention programs, including Green Dot. Moving forward, the college will work to enhance our efforts to provide student athletes and Greek life members with the knowledge and skills to prevent sexual violence and gender-based harassment and to build a community of respect, safety, and consent. The focus for student organizations and teams will be to learn about the environmental factors and behaviors that increase the likelihood of misconduct and to understand the types of prevention efforts that are most effective.

We recognize that ongoing training about sexual assault prevention and consent is needed throughout the college experience. Therefore, beginning with the 2020-2021 academic year, juniors and seniors will be required to complete an interactive workshop on Green Dot, Trinity resources, and sexual assault prevention and bystander intervention strategies.

To promote accountability in the classroom and workplace, the college will enhance and supplement current required online courses addressing sexual violence and sexual harassment with more in-person and ongoing education for employees.

The college is committing \$100,000 to support these important educational and prevention efforts. The Women and Gender Resource Action Center (WGRAC) will continue to have a significant role in leading this educational and prevention work.

2. Review and assess allegations on @trinsurvivors and @blackattrin Instagram accounts.

The college retained a law firm to review and analyze the allegations on @trinsurvivors and @blackattrin Instagram accounts, and to provide a comprehensive report to the college administration that will inform our actions with regard to these allegations of race and sex discrimination at Trinity.

These legal experts are not being asked to investigate specific allegations or complaints. Rather, the firm will review the allegations as a whole, review relevant college policies and procedures, and conduct informal interviews, as necessary and appropriate. The firm will produce a confidential report that the college will use to develop and enact short- and long-term strategies with the goal of providing Trinity students, faculty, and staff a campus environment that is free of race and sex

discrimination. Individuals who wish to file a complaint of race or sex discrimination may do so by contacting the college's Title IX officer, the general counsel, the assistant vice president for human resources, or any division head.

3. Seek input on the interim sexual harassment policy.

A multi-constituent working group of students, staff, and faculty met over the summer to revise the prior sexual misconduct policy to meet federal new regulations. The interim policy went into effect on August 14, 2020, and can be found [here](#). The members of the working group were committed to developing a fair, thorough, and equitable policy that followed the regulations. We encouraged each member of the working group (in accordance with their comfort level) to read the posts on @trinsurvivors, and we discussed and considered each of the @trinsurvivors demands as part of the process. One outcome of this was the agreement by our working group with the demand that the college's new sexual misconduct policy should continue to use the "preponderance of the evidence" standard for adjudicating complaints. We will be seeking additional input from our community on the interim policy in the coming weeks. Any material changes to the sexual harassment policy will be communicated via a campus-wide email.

4. Hire an Assistant Vice President for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion and Title IX Coordinator with input from our community.

A search committee comprising students, faculty, and staff is working to hire an individual for this newly created and better-resourced position. The location of the Title IX Coordinator in the Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion affirms its central importance to all members of the Trinity community and recognizes the intersectionality of Title IX issues with diversity, equity, and inclusion. The role's primary responsibility is to serve as the Title IX coordinator. The search committee shared the trinsurvivors demands and the @trinsurvivors Instagram account with the candidates selected for initial interviews. Understanding the vital role that the person in this position will have, we will make ample opportunities for members of the campus community to participate in the interview process.

5. Create a Title IX Advisory Board.

Trinity will create an advisory board to review and make recommendations on programs, policies, and educational initiatives focused on ending sexual violence and gender-based harassment. The advisory board will comprise students, faculty, and staff who will work with the Assistant VP for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion and Title IX Coordinator to address sexual violence, sexual and gender-based harassment, relationship and interpersonal violence, stalking, and other forms of sexual misconduct. The advisory board will have access to the Campus Climate survey results related to discrimination and harassment from spring 2019 and subsequent climate surveys. The advisory board can use these results, and other relevant information to continually assess issues such as how to:

- Develop culture-change strategies
- Focus on educational and preventative initiatives and to offer relevant topics that help create a campus culture that has a shared understanding of behavior that is not tolerated, bystander intervention strategies, and values that foster healthy interpersonal behaviors

- Review the types of sanctions and enforcement practices when it is determined that an individual has violated college policy to ensure that sanctions are proportionate to the offense, provide a remedy to the complainant, and prevent recurrence of the conduct for the protection of the individual and campus community
- Review whether, and how, other college policies may need to be revised to include behaviors no longer covered by the sexual harassment policy given the new DOE regulations
- Continue to assess the policy on sexual harassment to ensure it is informed by the needs of our community and is functioning as part of an overall approach to affect change
- Ensure the most appropriate and effective resources are dedicated to support survivors including processes for informing
- Identify additional technologies to enhance our ability to provide timely information and warnings to protect the safety and well-being of all members of our community
- Annually review campus climate and other evaluative data to assist in addressing all complaints of mismanagement and to improve our policies, procedures, and practices
- Review and recommend improvements in campus communication about the Title IX policy and process

In closing, we know that no single email will create the kind of change that is needed on our campus. What's required is ongoing, sustained effort by the leadership of the college and our entire community. As administrators, we pledge our unwavering commitment to do all we can to foster a campus environment where sexual misconduct of any kind is not tolerated and to partner with all other members of our community to work toward actualizing this critical goal.

Working together, we can transform our culture into one where all who come to our campus feel welcome, valued, respected, and safe. We are grateful for your partnership.

Sincerely,

Joanne Berger-Sweeney, President and Trinity College Professor of Neuroscience
Anita Davis, Vice President for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion
Joe DiChristina, Vice President for Student Success and Enrollment Management