Senate Task Force to Address Sexual Violence and Survivor Support
Prevention Recommendations
October 9, 2014

Because sexual violence is infused into the culture – of all universities, not just UO – preventing sexual violence will require changing the culture of the university. This change must infuse every level of the university, and must start with the highest leadership. This message must make it clear that being a member of the University of Oregon community means respect for others. This sense of “what it means to be a Duck” should be evident throughout the university, from the material sent to prospective students, to communications from academic departments, to advertising for sporting events. Administrators should not be reluctant to name sexual violence, nor address its prevalence. If we are truly interested in changing campus culture, resources and support for prevention efforts should be allocated in a way that gives us leverage to address the epidemic. We encourage UO to use its resources to become a leader in sexual violence prevention, but to do so will require a strategic plan that incorporates all aspects of the university, not only the division of Student Life.

Prevention science has much to offer toward the development of a strategy to significantly reduce sexual violence at the University of Oregon. By drawing on this rapidly growing body of literature and the expertise among our faculty and Student Life staff, the University of Oregon is well positioned to develop a research-informed, comprehensive strategy to prevent sexual violence.

Prevention is often confused with, or subordinated to, survivor response. While responding appropriately to survivors is essential, it is equally important to “look upstream” and consider how to prevent perpetration and victimization before they happen. At the moment, the majority of UO’s resources around sexual violence are dedicated to survivor response. Staff devoted to prevention include one Director of Sexual Violence Prevention and Education, one Director of Experiential Education and Prevention Initiatives (whose focus is only partly on sexual violence), and one GTF. Effectively addressing the problem of sexual violence on this campus will require a significant investment of staff and resources.

We offer the following recommendations based on the best available research and theory. Taken together, they can communicate our commitment to changing aspects of UO culture that contribute to the problem of sexual violence.

1) **Prevention hub.** Ultimately, we recommend that all prevention efforts be housed in a “prevention hub,” which would include existing and new staff from Student Life as well as faculty and graduate student researchers. This would provide greater coordination between faculty and professional staff and would give us the theoretical and research framework to develop effective prevention models. A prevention hub would also allow for better collaboration with particular populations at especially high risk for sexual violence perpetration and victimization, e.g., international students, student athletes, or students involved in fraternities or sororities.
a. In particular, we recommend that the university seek funds to establish an **endowed chair** for a faculty member who focuses on sexual violence prevention.

b. We further recommend that development officers commit to fundraising for **faculty research monies and graduate student scholarships** for research in this area.

c. We recommend a **cluster hire** in the area of sexual violence, to include specialists in sexual violence prevention, response, and evaluation. Together with the faculty resources already in place at UO, such a cluster hire would position UO to be a national leader in this area.

2) **Evaluation.** Evaluation of all new and existing prevention efforts is urgently needed. Without evaluation, it is impossible to know whether prevention resources are being spent effectively, and indeed, whether the university is making progress in preventing sexual assault. Evaluation also permits effective strategies to be shared with other campuses. We recommend a dedicated staff member to conduct research and assessment on sexual violence prevention. This person should be knowledgeable about sexual violence evaluation methods. Because effective evaluation is longitudinal, this position should be ongoing.

3) **Mandatory class.** We endorse the suggestion of a mandatory class on healthy relationships and sexual wellness that contributes to a campus community that expects and supports non-violent sexual and interpersonal behavior. This should not be conceived narrowly as a Title IX effort, but as part of the core mission of the university. Applied universally and within the context of a systemic, campus-wide implementation strategy, this course can serve as a pivotal lever in changing campus culture.

4) Two promising prevention programs with preliminary evidence of effectiveness already exist at UO.

a. **SWAT.** The White House Task Force, following recommendations from the CDC, has identified bystander intervention as one of the few practices with promise to prevent sexual assault. The centerpiece of the UO’s current prevention efforts, the Sexual Wellness Advocacy Team (SWAT), already provides some bystander intervention training to students, along with peer-based, interactive education on sexual health, consent, and survivor support. All incoming students view a SWAT presentation during IntroDucktion, and SWAT also provides a yearly average of 30 presentations to classes and other campus groups. Preliminary evaluations of SWAT (Darlington 2013) have suggested that it is effective in changing student attitudes and bystander self-efficacy. However, the research on sexual violence prevention is clear that a one-shot presentation cannot be expected to change campus climate; the research literature is clear that one-shot educational programs are not effective in changing culture or behavior. To be effective, the SWAT program must be expanded to include multiple sessions targeted to specific audiences, which range from international students to
fraternity and sorority members to athletes to debate team members. This will require additional at least one additional staff person to develop the program and additional funding to train and hire more peer educators.

b. **Women's self-defense training.** Changing institutional culture is a long-term project. In the meantime, it is essential to provide our students with the best available tools to reduce their risk of victimization. One of the few sexual violence prevention strategies that has been demonstrated to reduce victimization is empowerment-based women’s self-defense training. (Some of this evidence comes from our own campus; see Hollander 2014.) Empowerment-based self-defense classes focus on the full range of violence against women, especially acquaintance assaults, and include awareness and verbal self-defense strategies as well as physical techniques. These skills empower women to stop assaults in their early stages, before they escalate to physical danger.

Self-defense training has been left out of the national conversation about sexual violence prevention because of the CDC’s decision to focus on preventing perpetration, rather than victimization. Although we strongly endorse efforts to reduce perpetration, we recognize that those efforts will take time to come to fruition, and that other measures are needed to prevent victimization in the meantime. Therefore, we recommend the expansion of existing self-defense programs on this campus to make them available to all students. Specifically, we recommend that funds be devoted to making the existing women’s self-defense class in Physical Education available to more students, and to offering regular, briefer workshops to specific student groups (e.g., new students, students studying abroad, or international students). Developing this program would require a faculty course buyout to oversee the development of such a program and two GTFs to help teach it.

These programs are already nationally visible. Providing institutional support to expand and evaluate them would position both programs to be national models for sexual violence prevention on college campuses.

5) **Approval of all programming.** While well-intentioned, current sexual violence prevention programming across campus is not always based on sound prevention principles. We recommend that all sexual violence prevention trainings at the university be reviewed and approved by the Director of Sexual Violence Prevention and Education.

There is no quick or cheap fix for the problem of sexual violence. In addition to the specific items suggested above, scaling up existing programs and adding new ones will be enhanced by site visits to and consultation with other universities that have effective programs at a larger scale. We encourage the university to invest the resources that will both reduce the incidence of sexual violence on this campus and position the UO to be a national leader in this area.