

**TOPIC:** Update: Statewide Report on Campus Climate and Sexual Violence at Maryland Colleges and Universities

**COMMITTEE:** Education Policy and Student Life

**DATE OF COMMITTEE MEETING:** Tuesday, January 17, 2017

**SUMMARY:** The Maryland Higher Education Commission's (MHEC) report on Campus Climate and Sexual Violence at Maryland Colleges and Universities was submitted to Governor Hogan and the Maryland General Assembly in November 2016. This report was prepared in response to legislation passed in the 2015 legislative session requiring institutions to do a sexual misconduct campus climate survey and a report of incidents. A workgroup, including USMO and USM institution representatives, developed a core survey and the format for the report of incidents. We will learn of the response of the Legislature during this session and will report to the BOR as needed.

Each of our institutions implemented the climate survey within the flexibility allowed by MHEC. Select key findings of the climate survey include:

- Most students feel their institutions handle crises well and take reports seriously.
- The vast majority of students feel valued, respected, and safe.
- Institutions in urban areas and those with recently publicized incident reported more issues with students feeling completely safe.
- Many students are still confused about the reporting process.
- There remains a disconnect between student training and the understanding of the reporting process.
- Most students report they would intercede in an incident, and bystander intervention is seen as an indicator of culture change.

The executive summary of the MHEC Report and a summary sheet are included, and Dr. Joann Boughman will share additional details with the Committee.

**ALTERNATIVE(S):** This is an information item.

**FISCAL IMPACT:** This is an information item.

**CHANCELLOR'S RECOMMENDATION:** This is an information item.

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COMMITTEE ACTION: Information Only

DATE: January 17, 2017

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BOARD ACTION:

DATE:

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**MHEC Report on Campus Climate and Sexual Violence Survey  
Education Policy and Student Life Committee Report  
January 17, 2017**

While the USM institutions' results have not been separated from "all public four year institutions" in the MHEC report, the results are reflective of our institutions.

The executive summary of the MHEC Report is included in the materials. Each of our institutions implemented the climate survey within the flexibility allowed by MHEC. The larger campuses surveyed a sample of students, while most campuses sent the survey to all students. The response rate varied from 5% to almost 40%, for the campus providing incentives for responders. Most campus response rates were in the 12% range, as expected.

Key findings of the climate survey include:

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- The vast majority of students feel valued, respected, and safe.
- Institutions in urban areas and those that have had a recent publicized incident reported more issues with students feeling completely safe.
- Many students are still confused about the reporting process.
- There remains a disconnect between student training and the understanding of the reporting process.
- Most students report they would intercede in an incident; such bystander intervention is seen as an indicator of culture change.

Aggregated incident data from all public four-year institutions indicate:

- A total of 634 incidents of sexual misconduct.
- Two hundred four (32.2%) were categorized as sexual assault I or II (non-consensual sexual intercourse and non-consensual sexual contact) incidents.
- Only 28% were reported with 24 hours and >20% were reported more than a semester after the incident occurred.
- Less than half of the incidents occurred on campus.
- Forty-four percent of the incidents involved one or more non-student perpetrators.
- One hundred fifty-one (23.8%) of the incidents resulted in formal complaints.
- In 57 (37.7%) incidents, the perpetrator(s) was/were found responsible.
- Result actions in cases: 19 suspensions, 10 expulsions, and 31 "other" actions. (The "other" category will be more detailed in the future).
- In 20 cases, the respondent appealed.

Our Title IX offices are quite busy with providing comprehensive investigations and overseeing the processes required by regulations. Our counseling centers and academic and student affairs staff are responsible for the counseling follow up, academic and other accommodations, as well as support for the student conduct processes.

Continuing discussions will lead to improvements in the reporting and data collection processes, and we recognize that underreporting remains an important issue. While all students

who reported an incident are offered counseling, in many situations (over 50%) other accommodations were also made to alleviate continued trauma to a victim.

We have learned from this first comprehensive report on campus climate and sexual misconduct, and USM will work to improve the training at our institutions. Part of the ongoing discussion is the importance of privacy for those involved and the management of publicity around these incidents. Institutions will continue to work on this important issue, with procedures for reporting, investigation, and adjudication constantly being improved. We will continue to work at the state and federal levels as changes are made to laws and regulations, making sure our institutions are in compliance, while our focus will remain on the well-being of our students.



# **Report on Campus Climate and Sexual Violence at Maryland Colleges and Universities Volume 1**

**November 2016**

MSAR #10622

Lawrence J. Hogan, Jr.  
Governor

Boyd K. Rutherford  
Lt. Governor

# **Report on Campus Climate and Sexual Violence at Maryland Colleges and Universities**

## **Volume 1**

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## Executive Summary

The State of Maryland and its colleges and universities are leading the nation in an effort to address the problems of sexual assault and sexual misconduct on campuses, and this report represents the next step in that endeavor. Chapter 436 of the Acts of 2015 requires Maryland colleges and universities to conduct surveys and report incidents of sexual assault and other sexual violence. The aggregated survey data indicate that students feel safe. The incident data indicate that the chance of a student being a victim<sup>1</sup> of sexual assault or other sexual misconduct is very low (according to the statewide data, 3 in 1,000) overall on Maryland's campuses.

Framing this incident data within a national or regional context is difficult because estimates of the prevalence of sexual assault on college campuses and in the United States in general vary considerably. These estimates can differ significantly depending on the method of data collection, the definition of sexual assault, the wording of the survey questions, and the population under study. In addition, Maryland, with this legislation, is the first state to collect institution-level data so comparisons to other states' data are not possible at this time. Therefore it is difficult to compare the incident data outside Maryland.

Maryland's legislation arose within a larger national discourse on sexual assault and sexual violence on college campuses. Federal government intervention has deepened over the past five years, with changes to legislation and guidance that expand the scope of institutional responsibility for reporting incidents of sexual violence on campus. This federal activity has been accompanied by an increase in attention on college campuses from students, activist groups and the media, all engaging in the discourse on the prevalence of sexual violence and the need to keep students safe on college campuses. Another concern among many groups is the issue of underreporting of sexual assault and other sexual violence, a problem which can be exacerbated by a hostile campus climate or a lack of clarity regarding the process of reporting.

Despite these challenges, Maryland's institutions report that they are enacting comprehensive plans to address issues such as the importance of peer support, the need to create a culture of trust and support, and underreporting. By improving the campus climate, institutions can aid survivors in finding help and can ensure safety for all on campus.

Plans are underway and practices are already in place at Maryland's institutions to continue improvements to the incident reporting process. Some steps include strengthening educational programming to students so they better understand the process and creating or improving the training faculty and staff receive so they are aware of their role in the reporting process. Increasing incident reporting and pursuit of formal complaints also relies on student trust and confidence that the systems in place will support them through a difficult and traumatic process.

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<sup>1</sup> Throughout this report the terms "victim" and "survivor" are used interchangeably to refer to persons who have experienced sexual assault, sexual misconduct, and other forms of sexual violence. Both terms are used in federal and state laws as well as in college and university policies. It must be acknowledged that there is some debate about the use of these terms, and that different individuals and organizations encourage the use of one over the other in different contexts and for a variety of reasons. MHEC encourages respect for the expressed preferences of individuals for one term or another.

Title IX coordinators on all campuses are central to these efforts, and campuses are committed to providing the training and support these staff members need to do their jobs well and to serve the needs of the students. Many institutions discussed forming or strengthening Title IX teams, wherein the Title IX coordinator assembles a team of experts from around the campus to aid with training, education, reporting, policy, and compliance.

Improving the campus climate around sexual assault is a more complex task requiring a longer time horizon. Perceptions of campus climate include the attitudes and beliefs members of the institutional community (students, faculty, and staff) have regarding the issues of sexual assault and sexual violence. Students report trusting faculty and administrators to a greater degree than their own peers, and yet peer relationships are paramount in college. As a result, institutions are improving and expanding their bystander behavior training. This will help achieve two concurrent goals: (1) increase the chances of incidents being reported and (2) leverage the students' intentions as helpful bystanders to create a stronger culture of support and caring. These in turn, can help improve the overall campus climate for all students.

Moving forward, campus climate surveys will be central to an improved understanding of the campus community and its needs. The data that result from these efforts are of greatest help at the institution level because the findings can affect immediate change and help in longer-term planning. As an assessment tool, surveys can help the institution determine whether the policies and practices implemented have made a difference, allowing for faster adaptation.

Future plans for reporting the incident data include revising the data collection process so that institutions can provide more information on such details as accommodations offered (e.g., counseling, housing accommodations), timelines to complaint resolution, and outcomes of formal complaints. The report will allow for a cross analysis of outcomes by type of incident. For example, data will discern which incidents (by type) were reported to law enforcement or resulted in suspension versus expulsion.

In sum, the institutional survey and incident data collected in 2015-2016 set a foundation from which the institutions and MHEC can build. In the coming year, additional materials will be distributed to the institutions to guide them in the process of collecting data and conducting surveys in preparation for 2018. In the meantime, institutions are well underway in their plans to strengthen processes and practices to ensure the safety of all their students. The State of Maryland and its colleges and universities are leading the nation in an effort to address the problems of sexual assault and sexual misconduct on campuses, and this report represents the next step in that endeavor.