



Best Practices for Involving Students in Campus Violence Prevention & Response

**Created by the SATF [Student Committee](#) & informed by the SATF [Campus Committee](#)
of the [Oregon Attorney General's Sexual Assault Task Force \(2020\)](#)**

PURPOSE

The purpose of this document is to suggest strategies and best practices in involving students in campus interpersonal violence prevention and response work. Involving students and promoting student leadership in these efforts will assist campuses in creating student-centered interpersonal violence prevention and response programs, policies, and practices that are responsive to the unique needs of their communities.

BACKGROUND

The production of this document was a joint effort led by SATF's Student Campus Committee and informed by SATF's Campus Subcommittee.

The purpose of SATF's Student Campus Committee is to increase student-centered resources and leadership in the prevention and intervention of sexual, relationship, and interpersonal violence on college campuses across Oregon, bridge the gap between the students and administration regarding these issues, and represent the student perspective in relevant legislative efforts. You can find more information about the Student Campus Committee by visiting <http://oregonsatf.org/programs/campus/studentcc/>.

The purpose of the Campus Subcommittee is to promote sexual violence prevention efforts and a victim-centered sexual assault response on college and university campuses. You can find more information about the Campus Subcommittee by visiting <http://oregonsatf.org/about/task-force-advisory-committee/campus-subcommittee/>.

GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS

All schools should seek to involve and center students in their prevention of and response to interpersonal violence and harassment. As a guiding framework, all opportunities for involvement and inclusion should consider the following tenets:

- **Listen to students who bring forward ideas or concerns.** Avoid perpetuating adultism by assuming that students don't know what they're talking about because of their age or professional inexperience. Students are experts in their own communities, and are often able to envision new and creative solutions that professional staff/administrators miss.
- **Opportunities for involvement should be meaningful and substantive.** Allowing students to participate as a "check-box" on a committee, for example, does not equate to student-centered practices. Provide opportunities for meaningful participation, feedback, and leadership within the processes and programs. When students are invited to participate alongside faculty, staff, or others, ensure that students have equal voice and decision-making power to other participants.
- **Consider power structures.** If students, faculty, and staff are working together on programs and practices, take steps in advance to mitigate power differentials and to protect students from abuses of power by staff and faculty. Schools should also consider that some students may be in positions of power over others, which may include leadership positions, social status, TA (teaching assistant) or GA (graduate assistant) position, "prestige by proxy" (such as an affiliation with a specific faculty advisor), or other dynamics. Proactive steps can include bias and equity training, policies and procedures that prohibit abuses of power and promote accountability, safe and confidential support and reporting options for students, and leadership training on equitable facilitation and norms-setting.
- **Center marginalized and underserved students.** Because marginalized students/communities experience higher rates of sexual and interpersonal violence¹, it is especially important to center their experiences and draw on their expertise for solutions. Campuses should especially seek to involve and center students of color, Native students, queer students, trans and nonbinary students, students with disabilities, low-income students, international students, non-US-citizen students, veteran students, parenting students, students experiencing homelessness, and any other marginalized or underserved communities present on their campus. Often campus sexual violence organizations tend to be comprised primarily or solely of cisgender White women², which

¹ See for example: Breiding, M.J., Chen J., & Black, M.C. (2014). Intimate Partner Violence in the United States — 2010. Atlanta, GA: National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (pp.27-35).

² The book *Intersections of Identity and Sexual Violence on Campus* (edited by Harris and Linder, 2017, published by Stylus) explores this theme and how it has emerged in research studies as well as national media narratives.

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can lead to inadvertent exclusion of necessary voices and perspectives, and campuses should seek to avoid duplicating this practice.

- **Provide sufficient training, supervision, and support.** Schools must dedicate needed resources and personnel time to training, supervising, and supporting students in their roles. Student educator/leadership/committee roles are sometimes viewed as “money-saving” alternatives to full-time staff roles, but we caution universities against failing to account for needed staff time to properly train, supervise, and support students. Without meaningful training and support mechanisms, students cannot be effective and may even be harmed by the process.
- **Fairly compensate students for their time.** While taking into account college resources and equity of practices/opportunities³, it is important that schools fairly compensate all members of their community for their labor to avoid reproducing systems of oppression whenever possible. Compensation is not one-size-fits-all; it may include wages, stipends, course credit, certifications, or count towards graduation requirements. Where other compensation is not possible, schools should support students in their professional development and assist them in making professional connections, finding outside funding/training opportunities, and translating their experience to resumes or applications. Schools should also be upfront and transparent about what kind of compensation is or isn’t available, and why.
- **Communicate and manage expectations.** Be transparent about what participation/leadership will involve for students (including the amount of time, the responsibilities, any compensation, and the emotional/psychological toll of the work⁴) and what limitations exist (including resources, scope and reach of the potential activities, etc).
- **Be mindful of the amount of time and effort you ask students to put in.** Colleges should remember that while every member of the campus community plays a role in preventing and addressing interpersonal violence and harassment, the primary responsibility lies with the institution’s administration and paid employees⁵; it is unwise

³ We acknowledge that different institutions have different resources available; community colleges and small institutions, for example, may have smaller budgets, and less flexibility in financial allocations. Schools should seek creative opportunities to fund these positions. Schools should also assess for equity in student leadership/employment funding - are some types of leadership or peer educator positions funded, but not others? Why or why not?

⁴ Interpersonal violence prevention and response work can lead to burnout, vicarious trauma, and compassion fatigue. For further discussion of what these experiences look like on college campuses, as well as prevention and coping strategies, SATF presented a webinar on this topic on September 17, 2019 which can be accessed at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UWf0RL6RLtQ&feature=youtu.be>.

⁵ This responsibility comes both from a compliance-based perspective and from a power-conscious approach to violence response and prevention. From a compliance standpoint, the institution’s administrators, leadership, and/or designated employees in general are responsible for carrying out the school’s responsibilities under regulations like Title IX and the Clery Act. Utilizing a power-conscious approach to interpersonal violence, individuals with more
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and unethical to shift sole or primary responsibility for addressing these issues onto students. Administrators must also remember the students are attending college for the primary purpose of receiving an education, and should build into any involvement opportunities the prioritization of educational attainment and goals. This can include (but is not limited to) being mindful of meeting times or presentation dates, and managing/flexing the workload around school schedules.

- **Build student involvement and leadership opportunities into campus infrastructure.** This can include writing student leadership or involvement opportunities into policies and procedures, allocating funding to student participation and leadership, and including support and supervision of student involvement/leadership opportunities in staff position descriptions. Practices and opportunities that are institutionalized are more likely to become long-term practices and are less likely to be ineffective one-off efforts.

RECOMMENDATIONS BY FOCUS AREA

The following recommendations are not holistically inclusive, but provide a starting place for campuses looking to further center and involve students in specific program areas.

Interpersonal Violence Prevention

- **Involve students in the creation of prevention programs and initiatives.**
 - Rely on student expertise in what kind of prevention is needed. This can be assessed through conducting needs assessments, formal/informal feedback solicitation, and soliciting meetings with student organizations/groups who represent student interests (such as student government, student activist organizations, student unions), or other formal and informal procedures.
 - Seek student feedback to vet online programs, speakers, curriculum, etc. Provide students with any training or information needed to effectively evaluate these programs (such as information about Clery prevention compliance, training about what primary prevention is, etc).
- **Use peer educators/facilitators to implement programs.** If utilizing peer educators/facilitators, make sure to take into account the following recommendations:
 - Provide subject matter and facilitation training.

structural, social, and hierarchical power should assume greater responsibility for preventing and addressing violence because of their greater social and political capital and capacity to do so.

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- Provide feedback and coaching for peer educators to aid in their professional development.
- Provide support before, during, and after presentations, potentially including: debriefing sessions, support for students who experience harassment/microaggressions/hostility/etc while facilitating, emotional/psychological support for vicarious trauma/compassion fatigue/burnout.
- Avoid making assumptions about which students “want” or are “capable” of working with specific communities. For example, some programs default to assigning only male facilitators to work with fraternities or men’s sports teams, even though not all male facilitators may be comfortable with this, and facilitators of other gender identities may be interested in and excited about the opportunity.
- Actively work to minimize the harm students experience as peer educators/facilitators, potentially including: setting minimum standards for presentation requests that factor in the safety and comfort of presenters, providing clear support options and reporting measures for students to use if they experience harm or pushback from session participants.
- **When doing prevention work with specific communities (e.g. Athletics, grad students), partner with students from those communities to tailor programs to that audience and to provide feedback.**

Advocacy

- **Conduct regular needs assessments of advocacy-related student needs**, and provide sufficient services and staffing to accommodate those needs. Make needs assessment data available (while preserving confidentiality).
- **Train advocates in serving all students who attend the institution.**
 - Provide cultural competency training that supports advocates in serving all the populations who access your campus. Ideally, advocates of multiple identities that reflect the populations on your campus should be available.
 - Provide services in multiple languages as reflected in your communities. If advocates cannot be found who speak those languages, provide translation services.
 - Provide training in dynamics and service areas that reflect your community. For example, if needs assessments show that students are experiencing stalking and

human trafficking, advocates should receive updated/ongoing training in those dynamics.

- **Consider using peer advocates.** Although young adults are widely trained and employed as advocates in many campus and community-based settings, establishing a peer advocacy program may not be appropriate or feasible for all campuses. Caveats to consider include:
 - Will the institution/administration recognize the value of peer advocates and institutionalize them as a resource by providing adequate funding/support, including in the form of some sort of compensation for advocates?
 - Is adequate training and ongoing supervision available, including support for vicarious trauma, compassion fatigue, and burnout?
 - Would community size/dynamics/structures allow for students to serve as advocates in a way that preserves survivor confidentiality AND allows peer advocates to engage fully/primarily in their own educations?

Sexual Misconduct/Title IX Policies and Processes

- **Include students in evaluations and audits of existing Title IX policies, processes, and practices for their intended and actual effect.**
- **When creating new policies, or revising policies, students should be involved in their creation and assessment.**
 - Consider training students to conduct listening sessions with peers to gather information on perceived needs, resources, and barriers.
 - Allow students to participate in revisions/feedback, which could be solicited through avenues such as student government review, open town hall, etc.
- **Provide appropriate training, supervision and support for students involved in Title IX/sexual misconduct case procedures.** The appropriateness of involving students in these cases depends on individual factors of each campus, including the size, support available, and campus culture. When students are involved (such as by serving on hearing boards/panels), students should receive appropriate training, supervision, and support just as other faculty/staff would when serving in these roles. Supervision and support should also recognize the unique dynamics and challenges students may face in these roles, especially as they continue to engage with the campus community.

Academics and Research

- **Involve students (both graduate and undergraduate) in research on interpersonal violence.** Students should be looked to as experts, and should be invited to assist with all elements of research including study design, data collection, writing, and presentation⁶. This also includes supporting faculty who want to conduct research in these areas, and providing support or incentives for faculty to utilize students as partners and researchers, as well as helping interested students connect with faculty and research opportunities.
- **Draw on student expertise for integrating violence prevention and response efforts into the classroom.**
 - Some schools require or encourage faculty/instructors to include statements in their syllabi related to Title IX, campus-based resources, or faculty/instructor obligations as responsible employees. If schools require or encourage these, students should be involved in the process of drafting these statements.
 - Some classes may discuss or assign content that discusses sexual violence (or other topics related to oppression and structural violence), and those classes may want to give content notices or further explain available campus resources. Students can be helpful in drafting these statements, as well as in providing feedback to instructors regarding what kinds of content/courses need these statements.

Institutional/Structural

- **Involve students in the creation and interpretation of campus climate surveys.** Campus climate surveys are a best practice that can help schools assess both experiences of violence and harassment on their campus as well as campus perceptions, attitudes and needs. Students should be involved in creating surveys, including the decisions about what kinds of questions to ask, what language to use, and what resources should be provided to participants throughout (e.g., where to insert statements about content warnings or confidential resource access). Students can also be a valuable resource regarding survey distribution methods and participation incentive strategies. Students should also be involved in data interpretation, and in decisions about what resources, programs, or procedures will be implemented following the interpretation of results.
- **When universities convene task forces or work groups to address interpersonal violence and harassment on campus, students should be represented.** Schools should strive to have multiple student stakeholders present; one or two students, no

⁶ For further recommendations, see Krause, K. H., Miedema, S. S., Woofter, R., & Yount, K. M. (2017). Feminist Research with Student Activists: Enhancing Campus Sexual Assault Research. *Family Relations*, 66(1), 211–223. <https://doi-org.proxy.lib.ohio-state.edu/10.1111/fare.12239>

matter their positionality or leadership roles on campus, cannot fully represent the spectrum of student experiences and concerns. Likewise, students should be given equal voice and decision-making power to other committee members, including but not limited to: equal prioritization of scheduling (i.e., staff/faculty scheduling preferences and conflicts should not be prioritized over student schedules, which could lead to an imbalance in ability to attend and participate), equal opportunity to speak and present ideas, and equal voting power.

- **When hiring for staff positions related to interpersonal violence prevention and response, students should be part of hiring procedures.** This could include having students sit on search committees, allowing students to provide feedback when winnowing down applicant pools, providing dedicated time for students to meet with candidates, etc. Students should also be involved whenever possible in creating new positions and when developing/changing position descriptions for these roles.

SUPPORT FROM THE OREGON SATF CAMPUS PROGRAM

The SATF Campus Program provides training, technical assistance, and resources to support the work of campuses in creating student-centered interpersonal violence prevention and response. You can read more about our support services and explore our resources by visiting www.oregonsatf.org/programs/campus. Please email taskforce@oregonsatf.org to learn more.