

June 30th, 2014

Dear University of Oregon Faculty, Administrators, and Staff Members,

As individual members of the University-wide Diversity Committee, we applaud recent efforts to strengthen policies and procedures related to sexual violence and especially support improvements that recognize and respond to student diversity. We advocate for policies, procedures, and preventive measures that allow all students to engage in educational, social, and recreational activities without discrimination, exclusion, or fear for their safety. We commend our colleagues who have been in the front lines of this work for many years and recognize the accomplishments already made in this area. The purpose of this letter is to support ongoing efforts to ensure that diversity, equity, and inclusion continue to be an integral part of any discussion of sexual violence at the University of Oregon.

In an October 31, 2013, address to our campus community, President Gottfredson charged faculty, staff, administrators, and students across the university with participating in the strategic plan to develop diversity, equity, and inclusion at the University of Oregon. The University-wide Diversity Committee includes representatives from all these groups who work together to connect campus-wide efforts to make inclusion and diversity commonplace concerns. In outlining his charge, President Gottfredson stated, “equity, inclusion, and diversity are core values of this institution. They are values that should permeate everything we do.” As we apply this lens to efforts to improve our response to sexual violence, it becomes important that as a university community we continue to acknowledge the ways sexual violence can affect students differentially depending on race, ethnicity, national origin, immigrant status, gender and sexual identity, and physical ability. Women from historically underrepresented ethnic groups, international students, and transgender individuals in particular may be at higher risk for sexual assault than the general population and may be less likely to report sexual harassment or assault when they do occur.¹ The University of Oregon needs to further develop

¹ While studies that specifically analyze campus sexual harassment and sexual assault according to race, ethnicity, and LGBT status are currently still underway (most notably, here at the University of Oregon), the 2010 National Violence Against Women Survey found that while white women have a 18.8% lifetime rate of rape or attempted rate, African American women have a 22% rate, Native American/Alaskan Native women have a 26.9% rate, and women of multiracial heritage have a 35.5% rate. The National Sexual Violence Resource Center cites multiple studies showing that LGBT individuals report significantly higher rates of sexual assault than the general population. A 2014 summary of research done by University of Oregon psychologists Cunningham, Smith, and Freyd shows that LGBT students are 3 times as likely as heterosexual students to experience sexual harassment and 4 times as likely to experience sexual assault.

culturally appropriate policies and procedures that respond to these differences. Job descriptions for future university positions designed to serve survivors of sexual assault should highlight expertise in the needs of these diverse groups and proven ability to develop ongoing relationships with student organizations that represent their interests. Any task force or committee assembled to consider university policies and procedures on sexual assault should similarly include members with expertise in cultural differences and the effects on individuals of long-term societal inequalities.

Paying attention to the ways that members of different social groups experience sexual harassment and sexual assault differently is one important way we can address the needs of all students. As a community we can also encourage each other to reflect on the more subtle ways that unconscious bias can affect our views of sexual violence. While acts of sexual violence are crimes regardless of who commits them, we need to be aware of the long history in the U.S. of representing African American men as sexually violent and ignoring or downplaying sexual crimes committed by white men. Limitations in our historical awareness in the present can contribute to a hostile, inhospitable climate for students of color.

With the ongoing support and input of the entire University of Oregon community, we seek to foster a campus climate in which sexual assault is consistently condemned and actively prevented. While many in our community have long worked hard to stop sexual violence, we all need to keep working together both to recognize and to bring into open discussion the unconscious bias that is the legacy of histories of patriarchy, white supremacy, and other forms of exclusion. Even as positive steps to strengthen policies on sexual violence at the University of Oregon are already underway, let's continue to create policies, procedures, and preventive measures that make equity and inclusion a reality.

Sincerely yours,

Collette M. Niland, Lundquist College of Business
Cris Clifford Cullinan, Ph.D., Organizational Development and Training
Jane Cramer, Political Science
Maureen Procopio, University of Oregon Development
Alan Dickman, Environmental Studies
Shelly Kerr, University of Oregon Counseling and Testing Center
Suzanne Hanlon, Outdoor Program
Karen Ford, English Department
Mary E. Wood, English Department
Lara Bovilsky, English Department
David Vázquez, English Department
Jane Brubaker, Campus Operations
Johnny Earl, Campus Operations

Kathy Cooks, Office of Human Resources
Raahi Reddy, Labor Education and Research Center
Cindy FitzGerald, Physical Education and Recreation
Kimberly M. Wylie, Business Affairs Office
Teri Jones, Campus Planning, Design, and Construction
Lynn Stephen, Department of Anthropology
Chantelle Russell, Fitness, Physical Education and Recreation
Lauren Moe, University Advancement
Courtney Thorsson, English Department
Scott Morrell, Office of the Registrar
Daniel Pascoe Aguilar, [University of Oregon Career Center](#)
Bob Bussel, Labor Education and Research Center
Gordon Lafer, Labor Education and Research Center
Sara Clark, Mills International Center
Melissa Peña, School of Music and Dance
Stephen Wooten, International Affairs, International Studies, Anthropology
Rita Radostitz, Strategic Communications, Division of Student Affairs