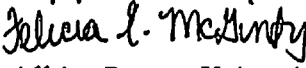


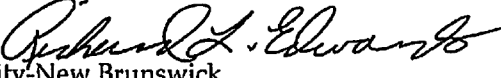


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To: Senior Student Affairs Officers

From: Felicia E. McGinty, Ed.D. 
Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs, Rutgers University-New Brunswick

Richard L. Edwards, Ph.D. 
Chancellor, Rutgers University-New Brunswick

Re: Campus Climate Assessment Pilot Updates

Date: July 29, 2014

On April 29, 2014, the White House Task Force to Protect Students from Sexual Assault Task Force issued "Not Alone: The First Report of the White House Task Force to Protect Students from Sexual Assault," which highlights four action steps and recommendations for colleges and universities to address sexual assault on their campuses. The first of those recommendations is that schools conduct a campus climate survey. To assist schools with this process, the Task Force included in its report a 36-page toolkit on conducting campus climate surveys. One item in that toolkit is a sample survey instrument provided by the U.S. Department of Justice's Office of Violence Against Women (OVW); the instrument is comprised of a compilation of best practices in the field which were crafted and validated by experts throughout the country.

In March 2014, the White House Task Force and OVW asked Rutgers-New Brunswick, a leader in addressing campus sexual violence, to independently pilot this survey instrument as part of a rigorous methodology for surveying students to better understand the campus climate regarding sexual assault. Rutgers will share our experience with implementing and adapting the survey instrument with OVW and the White House; we expect that they will take our feedback, as well as that of others who share it anecdotally, and provide an updated tool via the White House Task Force.

We have been told that the AAU is also working to identify external consultants to create an alternative campus climate survey for its institutions. Rutgers University-New Brunswick would be happy to share its campus climate survey instrument, as well as all other components of the climate assessment, with all interested colleges and universities, including our fellow AAU members, once the pilot process has been completed at Rutgers. Member schools would not need to pay outside consultants to create and pilot such an instrument. Schools would be given all of the information on how to implement a comprehensive assessment on their campuses in a series of user-friendly documents describing the essential components of a campus climate assessment and important considerations at each step for developing a meaningful survey. Rutgers-New Brunswick will make each document/tool available as soon as the related stage of the project is completed, thus giving other schools access to these resources as soon as possible.

Please see the attached information about the Campus Climate Assessment pilot taking place at Rutgers University. We encourage you to examine this information and see if this study meets the needs expressed by member schools. If you have any questions please feel free to contact us.



Rutgers University Campus Climate Pilot Assessment Information

The White House Task Force and the U.S. Department of Justice's Office of Violence Against Women asked Rutgers-New Brunswick, a leader in addressing campus sexual violence, to pilot a campus climate survey instrument as part of a rigorous methodology for surveying students to better understand the campus climate regarding sexual assault. To carry out this charge from the Department of Justice and the White House Task Force, Rutgers has developed a comprehensive methodology that includes four key elements that comprise the campus climate assessment:

- A resource audit, to fully catalog the university's policies, programs, services, and supports related to preventing or responding to sexual assault. The resource audit includes a thorough review of university websites and interviews with key informants. The research team has already completed this resource audit.
- A student survey, to capture what students know about campus resources, behavioral norms around sexual violence, and experiences of victimization. The survey itself is largely drawn from the White House Task Force's toolkit on climate assessments, and includes a limited number of additional, evidence-based modules. The research team expects to administer the survey in October 2014.
- An environmental scan, to assess both the campus's physical environment, such as the visibility of fliers and support centers, and the information environment, such as the availability of a clear definition of sexual assault. A checklist-type tool, with items derived from scholarly research, is currently in development.
- Student focus groups and interviews, to gain in-depth, qualitative information to complement the quantitative data gathered by the student survey.

One goal of the campus climate assessment is, obviously, to gain a richer picture of the campus climate at Rutgers and use that information towards enhancing our own strategy to address campus sexual assault. However, another, and equally important goal, particularly in light of our charge from the White House and the U.S. Department of Justice, is to develop, test and present a comprehensive methodology for campus climate assessment that can be applied in other institutions. Therefore, to accompany each of the four elements of the climate assessment, Rutgers will produce a series of documents and tools designed to assist other colleges and universities with developing their own campus climate projects. These documents and tools will be designed to be general enough for use in other higher education settings while including examples of the specific choices made by the Rutgers research team and the rationale behind them. The goal is to create a series of user-friendly documents describing the essential components of a campus climate assessment and important considerations at each step. Rutgers will make each document/tool available as soon as the related stage of the project is completed, thus giving other schools access to these resources as soon as possible. Below are descriptions of the anticipated products, as well as projected dates for dissemination. Please note that the dates are estimates and subject to change, though the research team has already made significant progress and intends to stay as close to this timeline as possible.

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- “How To” document/one-pager for developing methodology. This will include information on building research capacity to conduct the campus climate assessment; engaging key stakeholders; and determining methodology strategy. This brief document will likely be ready to share with other schools by the end of August, 2014, via the Rutgers University School of Social Work Center on Violence Against Women and Children (VAWC) website.
- “How To” document for conducting a resource audit. The research team is developing a tool detailing the resource audit process, which will be written as a guide for colleges and universities embarking on their own resource audits. This document should be ready to share with other schools by the end of August, 2014, also via the VAWC website.
- Validated Tools. These tools will be part of a larger toolkit designed to assist other schools with conducting their own comprehensive climate assessment. The research team aims to make this toolkit available to share with other schools in late spring/early summer 2015. The toolkit will include:
 - Additional information on conducting the resource audit;
 - An environmental scan protocol, including a detailed description of its development and directions for use;
 - Survey questions; and
 - Interview questions/topic guides for focus groups.
- Resource Checklist. This checklist will enable schools to compare findings of their resource audit, environmental scan and survey with a list of federally mandated resources and evidence-based best practices.