

National survey finds colleges want more guidance on how to best handle cases of student sexual misconduct

March 13 2014, by Rick Fitzgerald

(Medical Xpress)—Colleges and universities across the nation would welcome additional support and assistance in creating appropriate sanctions or interventions with students who are found responsible for sexual misconduct.

That was one of the main findings of a first-of-its-kind national [survey](#) sponsored by the University of Michigan, the Center for Effective Public Policy and the Association for Student Conduct Administration.

While the survey found that nearly all participating institutions had written policies for addressing student [sexual misconduct](#), it also found that 83 percent of those same institutions said they would benefit from guidelines or model practices for sanctioning students who are found responsive. None of the [respondents](#) favored mandated approaches.

The survey findings follow on the heels of President Obama's Jan. 22 announcement that a White House task force would be assembled to combat [sexual assault](#) on college campuses nationwide.

"There is no doubt that representatives from institutions of higher education echo the president's concerns," said Jay Wilgus, director of the U-M Office of Student Conflict Resolution, the unit responsible for sanctioning students found responsible for sexual misconduct. "We are deeply concerned about the problem of sexual misconduct on campus

and are strongly committed to preventing and effectively responding to campus sexual misconduct."

Wilgus says this commitment from his colleagues across the nation was confirmed in the survey findings. Most respondents reported that campus safety was the chief priority when considering sanctions. In addition, he noted a desire among respondents for additional training, technical assistance and resources regarding a range of issues pertaining to sexual misconduct matters.

The online survey was distributed to more than 2,600 representatives of colleges and universities nationwide. Those colleges included both public and private institutions representing a range of student body sizes. Completed surveys were returned from 385 institutions. About two-thirds of respondents were from public institutions.

More than 80 percent of respondents reported that sexual misconduct matters were addressed at their institutions during the 2012-13 academic year. Nearly 15 percent of respondents reported that they addressed more than 10 sexual misconduct matters during that time.

Kurt Bumby, senior associate at the Center for Effective Public Policy, said the survey results are timely and provide important new information.

"These findings can help inform the national conversation and guide our ongoing efforts to assist stakeholders in responding appropriately to campus sexual assault and implementing effective strategies after a student has been found responsible," he said.

Holly Rider-Milkovich, director of the U-M Sexual Assault Prevention and Awareness Center, says the survey results help advance an evidence-based approach to [student](#) sanctioning.

"From a survivor advocacy perspective, I think it's quite important that we think more critically about sanctioning methods that are the most likely to reduce the risk of re-offense, while also serving to remedy the existing effects among those harmed by the behavior," she said.

Initial findings from the survey were presented last month during the Association for Student Conduct Administration's annual conference. Reporting on the survey were Wilgus, Rider-Milkovich and Stacy Vander Velde, associate director of the U-M Office of Student Conflict Resolution. A briefing sheet discussing the key findings can be found online at www.oscr.umich.edu/research and a full report discussing the results is expected in April.

Provided by University of Michigan

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