

HARVARD UNIVERSITY  
TASK FORCE ON THE PREVENTION OF SEXUAL ASSAULT



**FINAL REPORT**  
*March 7, 2016*

**Introduction**

Sexual assault exacts a profoundly negative personal and academic toll on those students who experience it. In the spring of 2014, President Drew Faust charged this [Task Force on the Prevention of Sexual Assault](#) to develop recommendations for how the University could significantly improve its efforts to prevent sexual assault involving Harvard students. The importance of this work cannot be overstated.

The Task Force believes that to respond effectively to the president's charge, we must ask what sort of community we aspire to be. Consequently, this report not only addresses specific factors that increase the risk of sexual assault, but also considers what it means to be a citizen of this campus and the nature of our responsibilities to one another. The University has a special responsibility in this area: The actions of its leadership, the policies it advances, and the seriousness and effectiveness with which its leaders commit themselves to the problem of sexual assault provide the underpinnings necessary for a stronger community. Responsibility also lies with students, faculty, and staff, whose day-to-day interactions with each other largely define the community we form together. As the Association of American Universities (AAU) [Campus Survey](#) on sexual conduct demonstrates, sexual assault is a problem affecting all of higher education — and, indeed, society as a whole. It speaks to broader aspects of our culture and perceptions of gender, gender identity, sexuality, race, and equality. Given these overlapping responsibilities at the individual, leadership, and societal levels, it is only through the joint engagement of all parts of our campus that Harvard will make durable and significant progress in addressing the serious and longstanding problem of sexual assault. This engagement by all members of our community is a thread that runs throughout our report and final recommendations.

We are confident that the recommendations offered here will help Harvard in its aspiration to create an environment where all students can thrive and take full advantage of the opportunities this campus offers. This report builds on interim recommendations delivered to President Faust on [May 13, 2014](#), and [May 20, 2015](#). Still, we emphasize that our recommendations remain a first step. There is no single or simple solution to such a widespread, deeply entrenched problem. Progress will take time and will require the continued and consistent commitment of leadership at both the University and School levels.

Harvard must be prepared to evaluate the effectiveness of its approach to prevention regularly and with a critical eye, to retire programs that are not working, to experiment with innovative approaches, to study programs at other institutions, and most of all to ensure the continuous engagement of the entire campus in our common effort. Harvard has important resources to bring to bear in the form of our talented and innovative faculty, students, and staff; we should be certain to take full advantage of their creativity and wisdom as we work to bring about the changes in culture to advance our shared goal of a campus free from sexual assault.

## Key Recommendations

1. Implementation plans in place at all of Harvard's Schools before the beginning of the next academic year. Effective prevention requires the regular articulation and reinforcement of central institutional values and expectations of behavior. While the University as a whole plays an essential role in this work, our students experience Harvard mainly through their Schools, which differ from each other structurally, culturally, and pedagogically in many important ways. Recognizing this, the Task Force has identified certain activities — such as training and education — that are essential to prevention but must be developed at the local level if they are to be effective. We therefore recommend that President Faust ask the Schools to develop locally oriented implementation plans in the areas identified in this report to be in place by the start of the next academic year. Both the [Office of Sexual Assault Prevention and Response](#) (OSAPR) and the [Title IX Office](#) can provide substantive expertise to assist in the development of these plans.
2. Mandatory annual training for all students. We believe it is essential that every student in every School participate in sexual assault prevention awareness and training at least once every year during their time at Harvard. These education and awareness efforts should include a clear articulation of the range of resources available and be tailored to the local School context.
3. Annual training that encompass values, alcohol use, and healthy sexuality as well as policies. All our students must be informed of the relevant School and University policies. To be effective, however, training must go beyond this transfer of information. It must be rooted in a conversation about what it means to be a member of an academic community devoted to learning and discovery (and, in the case of some of our Schools, a member of a largely residential academic community). It must also engage students in a conversation about alcohol use (the AAU survey underscored the correlation between alcohol use and sexual assault) and healthy sexuality. It is essential that the University recognize that these are challenging conversations and that student input in devising training and orientation programs is necessary if we are to create activities that will resonate with our student body.
4. Creation of a new position in the Provost's office to provide additional attention to these important issues. As noted in the introduction, student sexual assault results from deeply entrenched behaviors, societal structures, and problematic beliefs that will be addressed effectively only through sustained effort by this community, other institutions of higher education, and society at large. Since our establishment in 2014, the Task Force has taken responsibility, together with other offices, for bringing University-wide attention and resources to the issue of sexual assault, engaging in activities such as helping create and administer the AAU survey, pursuing extensive outreach to the community, and evaluating what we can learn from activities on other campuses. As we conclude our work, we recommend that the University create a new position within the Office of the Provost to be responsible for ensuring that the University and the Schools regularly evaluate and improve their prevention efforts. We also recommend that it be responsible for coordinating and supporting the work of OSAPR, the Title IX office, and the Schools in addressing sexual assault and sexual harassment.
5. Additional resources for the BGLTQ community, especially at the graduate and professional Schools. Consistent with research elsewhere, the AAU survey indicated that members of the BGLTQ community disproportionately experience sexual assault. While the reasons for this are complex and go beyond the

expertise of the Task Force, we believe it is essential that Harvard work with members of the BGLTQ community and others to understand the problem and seek solutions. As a starting point, we recommend that the graduate and professional schools build upon the approach taken by Harvard College and devote administrative resources to the BGLTQ community in the areas of sexual assault prevention and support.

6. Address the distinctive problems presented by the Final Clubs and other unrecognized single-sex social organizations. The survey and our [outreach activities](#) have together persuaded us that the Final Clubs raise serious concerns (in terms of both culture and the well-being of our students) that require attention by Harvard. The increased and increasing presence of Greek organizations raise a related set of difficulties. We therefore recommend that President Faust ask the College for a plan to address the issues and express our strong support for those actions that would result in expanded membership practices that include all genders.

Although our charge was focused on sexual assault, we would be remiss if we did not briefly address conduct that the AAU survey describes as harassment, including inappropriate or offensive comments, sexual remarks, or continued requests for dates or sex. The results from the AAU survey, both on our campus and nationally, reinforce our pre-existing concern that this type of harassment is a significant problem on college and university campuses. While methodological and other issues do not permit us to draw definitive conclusions from the survey data at hand, a few themes are worth noting. First, fellow students are by far the most commonly reported offenders. Second, faculty or instructor behavior is also a problem, especially for graduate students. Finally, the survey suggests patterns similar to other forms of sexual misconduct: Female and BGLTQ students report higher prevalence rates than other populations. All forms of sexual harassment are inconsistent with the core values of our community and can prevent students from taking full advantage of the opportunities at Harvard, both academic and social. Given these consequences, notwithstanding the limits of our information, we urge the Schools to take steps to reinforce for students, staff, and faculty that sexual harassment is not acceptable, and encourage people who experience it to come forward for assistance.

## **In-Depth Recommendations**

The Task Force makes its recommendations with great conviction while recognizing that the diverse populations, organizations, and cultures of our Schools require attention to local conditions. We have therefore identified areas that we believe must be addressed, understanding that the details of implementation will appropriately be different in each of our Schools. Local efforts to implement our recommendations will have the added benefit of helping achieve the high level of investment on the part of students, faculty, and staff that will be necessary at each School if we are to make meaningful progress against sexual assault. The importance of local implementation notwithstanding, the Task Force believes that each School must engage with the fundamental recommendations that follow. In making these recommendations, we describe the underlying principles that framed our thinking and make suggestions as to how implementation might occur at the School level.

### Coordination and Infrastructure:

As we have noted throughout this report, the cultural and other factors that increase the risk of sexual assault are complex, intertwined, and deeply ingrained in society. If the University is to make significant progress in decreasing the incidence of sexual assault, it will take sustained effort and the continued emphasis of leadership. It is hard to imagine how such a long-term focus can occur without having a dedicated person responsible for ensuring that the University remains focused on the inevitably evolving requirements of an effective prevention program at a complex institution.

The Task Force therefore recommends establishing a University-wide position within the Office of the Provost. The University already has offices that are committed to important aspects of sexual assault and sexual harassment. The Title IX Office is responsible for prevention and education, and supporting the Title IX Coordinators in their response efforts; it also oversees the centralized investigation and resolution of complaints. OSAPR runs education and advocacy activities and provides support for students who have experienced assault. The network of more than 50 local Title IX coordinators provides services and education for students, faculty, and staff in every School. In addition to ensuring continued, focused attention on the issue of sexual assault, the individual in this position should take the lead in the actions that our recommendations require of the central administration, including the essential task of coordinating awareness, prevention, and response activities across Harvard. Likewise, such an individual could ensure follow-up on various initiatives currently sponsored by the Task Force, including the Sexual Conduct Survey, the [SHARE](#) portal, extension of the THRIVE mobile app across the University, and the Education Toolkit. The incumbent should also support the critical work accomplished in the University-wide offices and across the Schools by coordinating knowledge exchange among all our internal constituencies. It will be critical that the person appointed to this role be empowered and broadly engaged in relevant policy discussions to avoid the risk that over time this position may become bureaucratically isolated and ineffective.

### *Actions that such an individual should consider include:*

- Assembling a strategic working group to share and discuss educational programming and initiatives offered through the Title IX Office, OSAPR, and other School- and University-based offices as appropriate.
- Developing template informational tools for dissemination in the Schools.

- Serving as the central contact for University-wide technology sites and apps such as the SHARE resources portal or a federated version of the THRIVE mobile application.
- In collaboration with the Office of Institutional Research, the Title IX Office, and OSAPR, developing and implementing methods for measuring, through quantitative and qualitative research, the quality and outcomes of new education and training tools employed by the Schools and ensuring that there is regular effort to keep such tools updated in accordance with new information and evolution of student cultures.
- Coordinating student-generated ideas that cross the boundaries of Schools (e.g., pairing graduate/professional students with undergraduates on projects, peer advice, etc.).
- Serving as an organizing unit working with all stakeholders to plan, implement, and report on future surveys relevant to sexual assault and related issues.
- Coordinating annual reports from each School describing sexual assault prevention and response efforts and outcomes.

### Education and Training:

Effective prevention begins with the education of students, faculty, and staff about our values as an academic community, about our expected standards of behavior, about our policies, and about the rights and responsibilities inherent in community membership. Prevention is everyone's responsibility, and it is therefore necessary for the University to establish an environment in which informed engagement is not only possible but encouraged.

Students arrive at Harvard with a wide range of experiences, having internalized differing behavioral norms and possessing diverse ideas about gender and sexuality. If our proposed efforts to decrease the incidence of sexual assault are to make a significant difference, it is first critical to communicate clearly the norms and expectations in this academic community and the University policies. Most sexual assaults occur between students. The University must do its part to prevent those assaults, but it must also help students reflect on their role in creating culture and in developing a principled framework to inform their decisions and actions, both as students and after they graduate into positions of responsibility in society.

Most education about norms, expectations, and policies, especially with respect to such matters as sexual misconduct and alcohol use, currently take place almost exclusively during new-student orientation — during which students are trying to absorb an enormous amount of information and are experiencing an intense period of adjustment to their new environment. There generally have been few efforts to reinforce or build on the information exchange and activities that occur during orientation. Moreover, the breadth and quality of education that does exist varies widely across the University. We believe that a single session devoted to sexual misconduct, especially delivered as a component of general orientation, is not sufficient to help students internalize the University's expectations of them as members of this academic community.

That said, it is no simple matter to identify, deliver, and evaluate effective approaches to educating students of different backgrounds and ages about such complex matters as gender and sexuality, while making salient the expectations of our community. This is clearly an area where the Schools would benefit from collaboration, expertise from central resources such as OSAPR and the Title IX Office, and tools to evaluate effectiveness. The new

position in the Office of the Provost, together with OSAPR and Title IX, should be responsible for convening the Schools, ensuring that best practices are shared, and helping the Schools and the University evaluate the effectiveness of approaches to prevention on this and other campuses. Currently, administrators trying to create and promote educational tools are not always aware either of the work that has been done elsewhere or of which tools have proved to be most effective. We suggest marshalling our own intellectual and academic resources to help select and adapt the prevention materials and programs most likely to resonate with our students. Greater sharing of tools and understanding, and coordinating across Schools where appropriate, will further enhance prevention efforts and reinforce the seriousness with which the Schools take the problem of sexual assault.

*The Task Force therefore recommends:*

1. Education about sexual assault — within the broader context of community expectations and School and University policies — must be a part of every student’s experience during every year of their program at Harvard.
2. All resident advisers, tutors, and proctors in both graduate and undergraduate dormitories must engage in sexual assault prevention training and response education necessary to support their specific student community.
3. Education and training should be used to establish institutional norms and culture while conveying basic rules and clear definitions, as well as describing risk factors and providing information about resources. The Task Force recommends that the following core topics be the focus of the education programs:
  - a. What it means to be a member of our community.
  - b. Responsibilities as an individual, community member, and bystander.
  - c. Awareness of resources that provide information on sexual assault, on support of those who have experienced assault, and for those who wish to report incidents.
  - d. Healthy sexuality.
  - e. Association between alcohol and sexual assault.
  - f. How the University defines the full array of prohibited conduct of a sexual nature.
4. The quality of educational efforts must be improved. Education must be delivered not in the spirit of a bureaucratic box to be checked, but as lessons that will be attended to, taken seriously, and internalized. Education must reach beyond the small portion of the community that is intensively involved in conversations about sexual assault; it must also make a significant impact on the larger population of students. The measures of success must focus not only on delivery of these materials, but also on outcomes.
  - a. As much as possible, this training should be performed in small groups. Peer-to-peer education conducted by well-trained and coordinated student educators appears to be particularly effective in this setting.

- b. Small-group training should be required of all student leaders and heads of student organizations who host Harvard-sponsored events, as well as all athletic team members .
  - c. Where alternative approaches must be used, the new position in the Office of the Provost might work with the Schools, the Title IX Office, and OSAPR to evaluate third-party materials and to develop materials of our own.
  - d. In addition to the education and training mentioned above, the University, working with the Schools, OSAPR, and the Title IX Office, should investigate the possibility of developing a campus-wide online training module tailored to our community and taking advantage of our distinctive technical, creative, and pedagogical resources.
5. The Schools should engage in periodic programming throughout the year (and not just at new-student orientation) that weaves sexual assault prevention education into residential and academic life, for all new and returning students — both undergraduate and graduate/professional populations. Examples might include:
  - a. Small-group discussions in the undergraduate Houses and dormitories as well as the graduate dormitories that include strong voices of student leadership, such as captains of athletic teams, heads of student government, heads of organizations and clubs
  - b. Distribution to faculty of a PowerPoint presentation with information on available resources, which could be displayed at the start of a lecture early in the academic year
6. Harvard should harness its students' creativity by providing incentives for student participation in developing innovative prevention messages and delivery methods. We strongly believe that communications generated by students hold the greatest promise of capturing the attention of their peers and of propelling the cultural changes within the student body that are essential if we are to make progress. Examples might include a competition among students to create a Harvard-specific PSA or short film that could be shown at events and in dining halls and student-generated social media campaigns.
7. The Schools should make funding of relevant student events contingent on inclusion of basic sexual assault information, with additional resources made available for completion of more in-depth programming.
8. Faculty should be provided with information on how to direct students to campus resources through a quick-reference "Faculty Primer." This information should be distributed annually and available online. The new position in the Office of the Provost should work collaboratively with OSAPR and the Title IX office to create the primer.
9. Surveys should be conducted at regular intervals to measure and inform ourselves about how well the University and the Schools are accomplishing our goals. Connecting outcomes to particular interventions will likely involve both quantitative and qualitative follow-up studies on appropriate samples. The results and learning should be communicated across the University as part of the survey process.

### *Harvard College-Specific:*

Given the age of its students, its size, and its residential characteristics, Harvard College presents distinctive issues, and therefore some of our recommendations will be specific to it. In the areas of training and awareness, we recommend that the College:

1. Formalize and standardize training on hosting safe parties (formerly known as Party Savvy), to include both alcohol and sexual assault prevention education. This optional program should be expanded to become required training for party suite representatives and student groups at the College.
2. Consider creating a bystander-intervention program and test effectiveness of differing approaches to shifting norms around personal boundaries and respect.
3. Enhance residential staff training to focus on building trust and providing knowledgeable guidance to direct students to University resources. Key staff would include CARE tutors in the freshman dorms and SASH tutors in the College Houses.
4. Subject to the appropriate faculty review and approval process, consider creating a team-taught undergraduate course that addresses the subject of sex from a variety of disciplinary perspectives. Faculty might include those outside FAS. This course, which might build on the recently introduced “Ethical Reasoning 42,” could be designed to encourage open discussion and respectful debate about topics related to sex, sexuality, and gender, thus bringing the questions into students’ daily conversations through the process of academic engagement.

### Awareness and Resources:

Students in all of Harvard’s Schools need to know how to get help if they or their friends experience sexual assault. Harvard’s many resources are of little value if students do not know they exist or if they cannot be readily accessed. This lack of knowledge can have devastating consequences for students who have experienced sexual assault. They are not likely to receive appropriate support, which in turn risks magnifying the already-serious injury they have suffered. In addition, they may assume institutional indifference to their situation, which may discourage them from coming forward so that the University can provide support and take steps to prevent further harm. It is therefore imperative that the University build on existing efforts to ensure that students know how to get help from OSAPR, their respective School Title IX Coordinators, the Title IX Office, HUPD, and HUHS. The SHARE Web portal, which emerged from a Task Force recommendation, is a critical tool in the University’s efforts to inform students about the available resources. But for this and similar resources to have any utility, there must be a consistent campaign to create awareness among students and other members of the community.

Based upon the AAU Survey and the Task Force’s outreach findings, it is clear that we have fallen short in making students aware of how sexual misconduct is defined, where to get help when sexual assault or other misconduct occurs, where and how to report incidents, and what is likely to happen after an incident is reported. In both the AAU survey and responses to outreach, students have told us that they lack basic information and feel that there are barriers to reporting and to getting help, including fears of stigmatization, of being excluded from social groups that include the alleged assailant, of the possibility of retaliation, of time commitments, and of escalating consequences if they share information with the University staff. The survey data showed that many did not report



sexual assault because they thought it was not serious enough. At the time when the survey was administered, many students also reported a lack of trust that the University would take reports seriously, investigate fairly, and punish offenders.

It is important to note that, at the time of the survey, the new Title IX policy and procedures and the newly-created Office of Dispute Resolution had been in place for less than a year — and thus may have had insufficient time to take root and be understood by Harvard students. The 50 Title IX Coordinators, who were appointed and trained in the summer of 2013, have already seen a significant increase in the number of students requesting support. Still, the survey results require a response from the University to ensure that its messages about resources and prevention are heard. Future communications efforts should consider including factors such as the frequency or timing of messages about sexual assault support and prevention resources, their prominence in University and School communications, the content or mode of expression for those messages, and other reasons, including trust in the institution, that may have led to messages being ignored.

We recommend that the Schools, working as appropriate with the proposed University-wide official in the Office of the Provost and other institutional officials involved in Harvard’s response to sexual misconduct such as OSAPR and the Title IX office:

1. Continue in their efforts to develop materials that provide necessary information in a manner that will be clear to all of our students. Areas of particular need include clear definition of terms in language that is relatable to students and a way to clarify the options for getting help, perhaps through the use of a visual map. In particular, a transparent description of the process for filing a charge of sexual assault and delineation of which resources one might consider in different circumstances should be articulated further.
2. Create campaigns to heighten awareness about sexual misconduct and reinforce where to get support using a variety of channels. Channels might include awareness events, email initiatives, public service announcements, digital channels, social media, mobile applications (Omni @ Harvard College and School-based versions of THRIVE), text-based applications, the Web (SHARE, my.harvard.edu “Health” tab, and other websites), and hotlines. Campaigns could be coordinated across Schools, as was done by the Task Force in rolling out the SHARE website with the message that resources were available for all students in our community.
3. Evaluate the option of piloting an anonymous, low-barrier way to ask questions and be directed to resources that best fit student needs, perhaps through an anonymous, text-based application. The adoption of such a service would need further evaluation and planning either by individual Schools or as coordinated through the new position in the Office of the Provost in conjunction with OSAPR and the Title IX Office. It is worth noting that the desire for this type of service was brought up by students in a variety of forums.
4. Ensure that such materials are widely distributed using mechanisms that match Harvard’s social and academic structures, for example partnering with graduate and professional Schools’ sections, societies, and cohorts or working with leaders of undergraduate organizations, teams, and clubs.

5. Engage the creativity and energy of our students in shaping the communications and the messages. The Task Force included student voices in our work in many ways. Our students have an unmatched credibility with their peers and bring thoughtful, innovative approaches to the challenge of culture change.
6. Designate and train a limited number of additional individuals as confidential resources in order to better reflect the diversity of our student body. Sexual assault and sexual misconduct affect different parts of our community in different ways. It is essential that students from all backgrounds be able to find an appropriate resource for information and help. Those designated individuals must be appropriately skilled and trained to respond to the immediate needs of those who have experienced sexual assault. They must be equipped to provide objective and accurate information on institutional policies and resources while acting as a bridge for these students to appropriate resources at the University.
7. Provide additional resources for the BGLTQ population within the graduate and professional schools. The survey data makes clear that this group is disproportionately affected by sexual assault. Although the College has dedicated resources for its BGLTQ community, efforts should be made to continue to enhance these resources and to provide comparable resources for graduate students.
8. Deepen understanding about the specific sexual assault risks for the BGLTQ community. Use that understanding to raise awareness about BGLTQ issues and to promote alliances with others in the broader Harvard community.
9. Commit to measuring, through both quantitative and qualitative research, the quality, effective distribution, and outcomes of the materials recommended above.
10. Through statements from School leadership, clarify expectations for third parties engaging with our students during recruitment, conferences, guest lectures, etc. The statement might be included in registration forms and event materials used with external parties, such as recruiters and academic conference attendees, thereby providing a shared understanding and a basis for Schools to establish repercussions as appropriate.

#### Space, social venues, and organizations:

Space — who controls it, what is allowed within it, who finds it attractive — shapes the possibilities for social interaction. This is especially true in the College, where 97 percent of the students live on campus. The Outreach Subcommittee reported that an important theme for the College was the domination of the social scene by Final Clubs, with a lack of social spaces that students perceive as more inclusive. This, together with the survey results indicating that the vast majority of sexual assaults in the College occur in the Houses and freshman dormitories, shaped the Task Force's recommendations.

While the Task Force believes that the following recommendations are relevant to the graduate and professional Schools, they will undoubtedly be most important for the College, given its residential character. The ideas that follow are meant to be directional rather than specific. The College and the Schools are better situated than the

Task Force to know how best to translate these recommendations into action. Indeed, the College has already made important efforts that anticipate the following approaches.

1. Offer student-generated social programming in common spaces designated for freshmen who do not have the benefit of residential common areas.
2. Ensure sufficient social and common spaces for undergraduates by assessing needs and currently available space. Consider temporary alternatives and pop-up spaces during the period before the Smith Campus Center and House renewal projects are complete, and consider the continuation of effective programming even after current construction is complete.
3. Create a sense of shared campus culture by supporting a number of large undergraduate parties organized by the students. These parties should be open and inviting to the entire community using the model of this year's Blank Party and Annenberg Halloween Party.
4. Make it easier for students to socialize in the undergraduate Houses, both to reinforce the centrality of the Houses to the undergraduate experience and to provide broad access (in contrast, for example, to social events at the Final Clubs, which are typically open only to members and selected guests). This might include funding for events and continuing to support House-wide gatherings.
5. Standardize and streamline rules across the undergraduate Houses pertaining to social events. This could include party registration processes that promote safe and inclusive gatherings at the Houses. Sexual assault prevention and alcohol awareness training should be incorporated into a "fast-track" process for registration as a prerequisite.
6. Continue creating spaces in the undergraduate Houses that allow for alternative types of social events, both large and small, in order to build a sense of community within the Houses as well as provide additional spaces for registered student organizations to host events.
7. Combine the larger School-based conversations and training with more intimate discussions within the Houses and freshman dormitories. The AAU survey indicated that most sexual assaults reported by Harvard College students took place in the dormitories. Residential staff in the College must be given the training and tools on issues of sexual assault that enable them to initiate appropriate conversations and to encourage students in Houses and dorms to look out for one another. Although the incidents of sexual assault are fewer in the graduate and professional School dormitories, the need to train residential staff, and to reinforce notions of mutual responsibility within a residential setting, is equally urgent.

### The Final Clubs:

Final Clubs present special concerns related to impact on campus culture, gender equality, sexual misconduct, and the role of alcohol. At the end of this document, we describe in greater detail what the Task Force learned, both from the AAU sexual conduct survey and through our extensive outreach. However, the survey results demonstrate that female Harvard College students participating in Final Club activities are more likely to be sexually assaulted than participants in *any* other of the student organizations we polled. Other than in dormitories, Final Clubs are the single most likely location for a student to experience a sexual assault (as identified from the list of locations given in the survey). One cannot uncouple the role of alcohol and sexual assault. In addition, the unmonitored nature of

Final Club activities, including access to alcohol in settings that may encourage the abuse of alcohol, is undoubtedly an important factor that contributes to their attractiveness as a social option.

The survey data was consistent with reports we heard about activities at Final Clubs during our outreach. We were told about specific incidents of sexual misconduct originating and often occurring on their physical property. We also heard reports of deeply misogynistic attitudes, reflected by the long-standing refusal of many Clubs to admit women as members; parties at which the only non-members in attendance were women selected mainly by virtue of their physical appearance; party themes depicting women as sexual objects; competition among members for sexual conquests. In our view, the very structure of the Clubs — men in positions of power engaging with women on unequal and too often on very sexual terms — speaks tellingly to the work ahead of us if we are to create an environment where all students, of all genders, can thrive.

The qualitative and quantitative information before us is deeply troubling and requires a strong response from Harvard. While Final Clubs are not the exclusive or even the principal cause of sexual assault at the College, we also do not see any solution that does not involve addressing the disturbing practical and cultural implications they present in undergraduate life.

The Task Force therefore reiterates its earlier recommendation and urges the President to ask the College for a plan to address the problems presented by Final Clubs. As part of that work, we also recommend that the College consider the growing role of the fraternities and other unrecognized single-gender social organizations — which, like the Final Clubs, are gender-exclusionary, play an expanding role in undergraduate social life, and, as reflected in the survey results, themselves present heightened risks for sexual misconduct.

#### Alcohol:

Although the precise causal relationship between alcohol use and sexual assault is debated, there is no question, based on the AAU survey results, our outreach interviews, and the existing peer-reviewed literature, that alcohol use interacts with other risk factors to increase the likelihood of sexual assault. If we are to effectively decrease the incidence of sexual assault, we must address the role of alcohol. We must educate our community about the documented associations between drinking and the risk both of being assaulted and of committing assault. However, the goal of altering behavior also requires adjustments to our policies.

Alcohol presents a special set of challenges at the College because many undergraduates are under the legal drinking age and live on campus. However, the AAU survey data showed that alcohol is a factor in a large percentage of sexual assaults at our graduate and professional Schools as well. Our first two recommendations apply to all of the Schools, while the final three are aimed at the College.

#### The Task Force recommends that all Schools:

1. Make alcohol education an integral and robust part of sexual assault education and training programs. These programs should present the known data about the risks of excessive and overly rapid consumption of alcohol, the risks associated with the consumption of hard liquor as compared with wine and beer, and all relevant University policies.

2. Consider providing facilities and funding for food (which slows alcohol absorption) to students organizing parties in order to encourage healthier cultural norms with respect to alcohol.

The Task Force urges that the College:

1. Support environmental interventions aimed at reducing high-risk behavior that results from drinking. These could initially be based on interventions that have been implemented selectively but successfully within segments of the College and could include the following:
  - a. Moving parties such as the Freshman Formal onto campus.
  - b. Seeking venues on and off campus that provide activities such as dancing and games that would encourage students to socialize without alcohol in a respectful and safe environment.
  - c. Requiring that water and non-alcoholic beverages are provided to students at events that are known to include alcohol consumption.
  - d. Increasing the availability of food at and around parties. For example, DAPA (Drug and Alcohol Peer Adviser) deals at local restaurants that offer discounted food on nights of big events have proven popular and effective.
  - e. Prohibiting third-party vendors from selling hard alcohol at large events such as the Harvard-Yale game.
2. Develop new initiatives aimed at reducing excessive and risky alcohol consumption. Possible approaches include:
  - a. Updating Harvard Proof — the customized online educational programming for freshman — on a yearly basis. This program uses upperclassmen to deliver its message and regular updating is essential if it is to remain relevant to incoming students. In addition, information on the correlation of drinking with sexual assault should be included.
  - b. Expanding Alcohol and Other Drug Services (AODS) collaboration with local bars and package stores to reduce the likelihood that students under 21 are served.
  - c. Increasing grants that allow DAPA to give funding for food and beverages at alcohol-free parties.
3. Where possible, decrease entry points in dorms and Houses so that students entering and leaving the buildings would need to pass a security officer who would be trained to detect students in need of help and resource availability, including safe transport.
4. Consider a pilot study of policies to discourage consumption of hard liquor. There are valid concerns that students in search of hard liquor might be driven off campus to high-risk locations. At the same time, outreach sessions support the concern that “pre-gaming” with hard liquor is a particular risk for adverse outcomes, especially for freshman. Interventions that might be studied in explicit experiments could

include bans on possession of hard liquor on campus or differential sanctions related to serving hard liquor to underage students. Penalties worth studying need not be draconian — the goal is to bias drinking away from its most dangerous forms.

## **Conclusion**

We end this report where we began: The problem of sexual assault in society, on college and university campuses, and on this campus is serious and reflects deeply entrenched societal structures, assumptions, and biases. Our work as a Task Force has underscored that there is much to do for Harvard to live up to its aspiration of ensuring that every student has the opportunity to succeed, academically, socially, and personally in their time as part of our community.

We anticipate that the recommendations in this, our final report, will make a difference in the culture, climate, and experience of students at Harvard. But, as we have emphasized, they are first steps in a process that will require sustained attention, a commitment to experimentation and innovation, and tolerance for trying new approaches, some of which will undoubtedly prove unsuccessful. Progress will require the collective engagement of every part of our community. The University must set policies, articulate values, and respond effectively to situations when they arise. Faculty and staff must help reinforce the values and culture and guide students to resources. These actions are essential. It remains the case, however, that sexual assault most often occurs on this campus between students, often in private settings. Without the active engagement of the students in the culture they help create and sustain, any effort to bring about enduring transformation on this campus is unlikely to work.

We conclude by expressing our gratitude to President Faust for entrusting us with the important work set forth in the charge and for her steadfast commitment to addressing the profoundly upsetting and harmful problem of sexual assault.

## Further Observations on the Final Clubs

In her charge to the Task Force, the President asked that we consider whether “specific locations or situations ... present particular risks” for sexual assault and other forms of sexual misconduct. This instruction helped guide our work in two principal respects. Through our participation in the design of the AAU survey, we ensured that questions about on- and off-campus environments were included. In our outreach to the community, we specifically sought to understand the perspective of students about physical spaces on or near campus.

Taken together, these two sources of information strongly reinforce the concerns that College administrators have had for many years about Final Clubs. The survey included Harvard-specific questions that allowed students to identify a range of student organizations in which they were a member or otherwise participated. The list included academic groups, athletic teams, fraternities or sororities, student government, and Final Clubs. Nearly one out of every two (47 percent) female College seniors participating<sup>1</sup> in the Final Clubs reported experiencing nonconsensual sexual contact since entering college — the highest rate for any of the organizations identified in the survey. The AAU survey indicated that 31 percent of female Harvard seniors reported nonconsensual sexual contact since entering college; the corresponding prevalence rate for the Final Clubs (47 percent) suggests that a Harvard College woman is half again more likely to experience sexual assault if she is involved with a Club than the average female Harvard College senior.

The survey data on locations in which sexual misconduct occurred give further reason for concern. Here, too, students were offered the opportunity to identify the locations where nonconsensual sexual contact occurred. Choices included university residence hall/dorm, fraternity or sorority house, other space used by a single-sex student social organization, other residential housing, non-residential building, other property (e.g., outdoors). Not surprisingly for a residential campus, the majority of nonconsensual sexual contact involving Harvard College females took place in dormitories. The next most common location was “other space used by a single-sex student social organization.” (In fact, the rate of sexual assault occurring at “other space used by a single-sex student social organization” was more than double that of the next most frequent location.) Given the separate listing for fraternities and sororities, the category “other space used by a single-sex student social organization” mainly refers to Final Clubs at Harvard.<sup>2</sup> Of the Harvard College women reporting nonconsensual penetration through the use of force, 17 percent designated this “other space used by a single-sex student social organization” as the location (the corresponding number for nonconsensual penetration through incapacitation was 10 percent). The numbers for nonconsensual sexual contact occurring at this “other space” were 19.5 percent (force) and 13.9 percent (incapacitation).<sup>3</sup> These rates are alarming, especially given the limited time non-members spend in the Final Clubs.

---

<sup>1</sup> Because women were not eligible to join any male Final Club at the time the survey was administered, we interpret “participate” as meaning primarily non-member interaction with the all-male Final Clubs through social and other related events, as well as any assaults experienced by women who have joined one of the all-women Final Clubs.

<sup>2</sup> The question on location was common across all participating schools. Because Final Clubs are distinctive to Harvard, a reference to them would have been confusing to survey respondents at other colleges and universities. To permit Harvard a better understanding of the situation on our campus, the AAU agreed to include the response category “other space used by a single-sex student social organization” as a proxy for the Final Clubs. Also, given the Clubs’ locations and the inevitable confusion about whether they are technically part of Harvard’s physical campus, the survey asked students to report about activities in “other space used by a single-sex student social organization,” in both an on-campus list and an off-campus list.

<sup>3</sup> In at least one respect, these numbers may materially understate the prevalence of nonconsensual sexual contact associated with the Final Clubs. A survey responder could reasonably have interpreted the question as asking only where the actual nonconsensual



In addition to conducting the AAU survey, the Task Force also gathered information from outreach interviews. These conversations provided distressing context to the statistical picture that emerged from the survey. In short, we heard reports by many female students of unwelcome sexual encounters involving Club activities. These experiences ranged from unwanted advances to involuntary sexual encounters to comments and actions that contribute to a harmful sexual culture on campus. Incidents were described as happening on Final Club dance floors, in hallways, and in private rooms at the Clubs.

Specifically, we heard reports from students of a strong sense of sexual entitlement within some of the male Final Clubs, stemming in part from the members' control of social spaces that are imbued with a certain historical tradition and that elevate members' social status on campus. A woman's physical appearance is often seen as the basis for entry to these spaces, and female students described a general expectation that entering Final Club spaces could be read as implicit agreement to have sexual encounters with members. We understand that many of the Clubs typically exclude non-member men from parties, which gives an unambiguous frame to social events, eliminates non-member male bystanders, and enables a gender ratio that makes it easier for members to have a sexual encounter. Party themes and invitations have reflected a misogynistic view of women and reinforced a sense of sexual entitlement. Students pointed to competitive games between members where a man will "win" a particular woman or compete for the most sexual triumphs.

As largely unsupervised social spaces, Clubs also present special opportunities for underage and dangerous drinking. This would be a serious matter of concern independent of the role of alcohol in sexual assault, yet the survey results and outreach interviews demonstrate that sexual assault and alcohol are highly correlated. In fact, a culture of heavy alcohol use has been institutionalized as inherent to students' social and sexual culture, and alcohol is often seen as a tool for getting sex. Many students voiced concern, based on personal experience, over the ability to return to their dorm room safely after a Final Club party, when it can be difficult to get back alone without someone "walking them home" and seeking a sexual encounter, especially when they have been separated from friends. Students raised specific concerns for freshmen women and for female guests from other schools, who may be less aware of the unsafe culture the Clubs can present.

We are not suggesting that the problem of sexual assault at Harvard is solely or even principally a byproduct of the activities and influence of Final Clubs. The behavioral and cultural problems run deep and implicate a range of institutional structures and behavioral choices that extend well beyond the Clubs. We also recognize that the survey data are not particularized, the information from the outreach was likewise often general in nature, that collectively they do not offer insight into potential variations among the Clubs, and that they do not permit us to untangle complex questions of causation. That said, the information in our possession makes clear that any effective response to unwelcome sexual conduct on the Harvard campus must include a serious and sustained examination of the contribution of Final Clubs to the problem.

It is important to underscore our view that the problem goes beyond the number of sexual assaults that are completed or that originate in a Club's physical spaces, as significant as that is. As we have noted throughout this report, culture — both on our campus and in society at large — matters tremendously, both in creating an

---

contact took place, not where the sequence of events leading to the contact originated. In other words, a student could have reported the location of a sexual assault as solely occurring in a dormitory even if most of the participants' interactions that evening had occurred at a Final Club.

environment where nonconsensual sexual assaults can take place and for any prevention efforts to be sustained and successful. Our outreach interviews indicate that Final Clubs have a disproportionate influence on campus culture — and, more importantly, one that is in many respects negative and helps perpetuate an environment where sexual assault occurs with the frequency reported in the AAU survey.

For example, students shared their deep concern about the continuing presence of social spaces owned by male-only groups with exclusive membership practices. Students understand that Harvard's centuries-long history as a predominantly white male institution creates an imprint on their educational experience, but they expect to see progress moving forward. While many institutional issues related to gender inequality were addressed in the 1970s-'90s, partly through the merger of Radcliffe with Harvard, male-only Final Clubs are a vestige of gender inequity that also perpetuates a significant divide on campus. This divide begins in freshman year, when freshmen men resent being denied entry to desirable social spaces and losing an opportunity to connect with female peers. Excluded women feel the same resentment, while women who are included as guests are exposed to a culture often inimical to Harvard's mission and over which women have little control.

Likewise, Harvard's pedagogy is deeply based in the residential experience and, in particular, the role of the Houses in our students' intellectual, personal, and social development. As we have noted, any effort to address sexual assault starts with reinforcing essential notions of what it means to be a member of a community and, more importantly, *this* academic community. To the extent that the Final Clubs undermine the centrality of the College's residential spaces, they make it harder for messages about community membership to take root — and for Harvard's aspirations for its students to be fully realized.

The Task Force has not been involved with the ongoing conversations between College administrators and the leaders of the Final Clubs (nor should we have been). We recognize that the situation is fluid, with some clubs going co-ed and others considering it. We also recognize that the University and the College are in the best position to determine the specific actions to address the problems presented by the Final Clubs, and we want to express our strong support for those actions that result in the elimination of discriminatory membership practices. As we have noted, cultures that reflect male control and exclusivity encourage the marginalization of women and assumptions about sexual entitlement. Inclusive membership would necessarily shift that culture at the same time that it would affirm fundamental principles of equity.

We urge the College to continue to engage with the Final Clubs toward the objective of nondiscriminatory and open membership practices. If those conversations fail to make progress, or if the transition by the Clubs to open and nondiscriminatory membership practices fails to address the issues we have identified in this report, we believe the University should not rule out any alternative approaches. We also urge the College to continue in its efforts to re-center student life on the Houses and on-campus activities.

We recognize the limits of the information available to us about the Final Clubs. We therefore recommend that the College periodically survey its students to gain more specific information about the practices, experiences, and implications of the Final Clubs, including the effectiveness of any changes undertaken by the Clubs or by the College as related to the Clubs.

Finally, we should say a word about Greek life on the Harvard campus. Historically, fraternities have had little presence on campus. However, in recent years, the presence of Greek organizations has been slowly growing, not

as a formal part of the institution but, like the Final Clubs, as unrecognized social organizations outside the supervision of the College. According to the results from the AAU survey, students participating in fraternities and sororities have a higher than average likelihood of experiencing sexual assault (roughly 40 percent of female Harvard College seniors participating in these organizations report having been sexually assaulted, as compared with the campus-wide average of 31 percent). Given this experience, and the implications of gender-exclusionary social organizations in a campus working toward broad inclusivity, we recommend that any review of social spaces and Final Clubs include the role of fraternities, sororities, and other unrecognized single-gender social organizations at the College.



*List of Appendices*

- A. [Members of the Task Force on the Prevention of Sexual Assault](#)
- B. [Members of the Task Force Working Groups](#)
- C. [September 21, 2015 President Drew Faust's Statement on the Results of the Sexual Conduct Survey](#)
- D. [September 21, 2015 Letter from Professor Steven Hyman on the Results of the Sexual Conduct Survey](#)
- E. [June 2, 2015 Response from President Drew Faust on Interim Task Force Recommendations](#)
- F. [May 20, 2015 Letter from Professor Steven Hyman on Interim Task Force Recommendations](#)
- G. [September 4, 2014 Update to the Community from Professor Steven Hyman](#)
- H. [May 14, 2014 Response from President Drew Faust on Interim Task Force Recommendations](#)
- I. [May 13, 2014 Letter from Professor Steven Hyman on Interim Task Force Recommendations](#)
- J. [Office of Sexual Assault Prevention & Response \(OSAPR\) Program Description](#)
- K. [Title IX Program Description](#)
- L. [Report of the Outreach Subcommittee](#)
- M. [Report of the Subcommittee on Research Literature & Best Practice Review: \*Review of Prevalence and Risk Factors Related to Sexual Assault\*](#)
- N. [AAU Campus Survey on Sexual Assault and Sexual Misconduct](#)
- O. [Harvard-Specific: AAU Campus Survey on Sexual Assault and Sexual Misconduct](#)
- P. [September 2015 Harvard-Specific Supplement to the AAU Campus Survey Report](#)
- Q. [March 2016 Harvard-Specific Supplement to the AAU Campus Survey Report](#)