Create New Advocacy and Prevention Positions

At Illinois, the Women’s Resources Center serves as the designated provider of confidential advisors and support services to students, faculty, and staff who have experienced sexual misconduct (sexual assault, sexual harassment, sexual exploitation, stalking, and/or dating/domestic violence). In Spring 2019, the Office of the Provost allocated annual funding to hire the first full-time positions dedicated to confidential advising for survivors of sexual misconduct. In 2019–2020 the Women’s Resources Center will hire three positions dedicated to this work for survivors who need to discuss their rights and options.

In Summer 2019, the Office of the Vice Chancellor for Diversity, Equity & Inclusion established the office of Prevention and Climate. The focus of the office is to partner with colleges and departments to conduct climate assessments of their units and recommend policies and practices consistent with the assessment findings and with fostering an inclusive and culturally responsive educational and work environment. Another aspect of the office is the coordination of training and workshops with units such as the Title IX office, the Office for Access & Equity, and other campus partners to provide departments in-person, relevant educational programs on the campus climate and sexual misconduct policies.

Improve the Coordination of Services and Review Policies

In the past year, several committees have been charged to respond to changes in policy as well as to review existing policies and guidelines. The Sexual Misconduct Prevention and Response Task Force was formed to work toward improving coordination between community leaders and service providers to prevent sexual violence, domestic violence, dating violence, and stalking; the university’s policy and procedures; and collaboration and information-sharing among the university, community-based organizations, and law enforcement, including without limitation discussing memoranda of understanding, protocols, or other practices for cooperation.

The Committee on Faculty Sexual Misconduct was charged by the Provost in January 2019 with evaluating the University’s policies on sexual misconduct by faculty. Their report, released in October 2019, includes a comprehensive package of recommendations that would allow the University to respond to sexual misconduct more expeditiously and in a more trauma-informed manner. The full report is available at go.illinois.edu/misconductreport (PDF). Currently, the University is looking at the recommendations and evaluating next steps.

Build University-wide Capacity to Effect Change

On October 16, 2019, “Cultivating Bravery, Changing Culture: the Illinois Summit on Sexual Harassment” brought together senior leadership from across the university, including deans, directors, and department heads, as well as faculty senate leadership, to provide them with the tools and knowledge to move beyond a culture of compliance and understand our collective responsibility. Over 100 participants attended this day-long event, which included several presentations by nationally recognized scholars in the field. Attendees had an opportunity to safely ask questions as well as discuss how they as leaders can facilitate the implementation of report recommendations and to be culture change agents.