Confidential Reporting and Advocacy

**Why?** The goal is to foster a supportive campus climate that encourages those affected by interpersonal violence to connect with Project Safe to obtain health and support resources and to explore reporting options. This goal is balanced by Project Safe maintaining sufficient communication with University units that ensure campus safety.

**Who/What?**

In 2014, Vanderbilt University opened the Project Safe Center for Sexual Misconduct Prevention and Response as a stand-alone central hub for navigating campus and community resources available to those impacted by sexual harassment, sexual assault, dating and domestic violence, stalking, and other forms of sexual misconduct. Although Project Safe was initially designated a private (but not confidential) resource, in fall 2016 the University transitioned Project Safe to provide increased confidentiality for victims. Project Safe now offers “limited confidentiality”, enabling the Project Safe Victim Resource Specialists to offer victim advocacy services according to professional best practices, while balancing community needs and University obligations to take action, when necessary, to ensure campus safety. The Director of the Project Safe Center provides de-identified crime statistics information to our University police department in a timely manner as required by state and federal law. The Director of the Project Safe Center also provides the University Title IX Coordinator with de-identified information, so guidance institutional initiatives and priorities.

This increased level of confidentiality enables the Project Safe Victim Resource Specialists to offer victim advocacy services according to professional best practices, while balancing community needs and University obligations to take action, when necessary, to ensure campus safety. The Director of the Project Safe Center provides de-identified crime statistics information to our University police department in a timely manner as required by state and federal law. The Director of the Project Safe Center also provides the University Title IX Coordinator with de-identified information, so that the Title IX Coordinator can track prevalence, location, and other relevant data, as needed and appropriate, to guide institutional initiatives and priorities.

Reducing the Power Differential

**Why?** The goal is to mitigate the power differential between graduate students and faculty, particularly PhD advisors.

**Who/What?**

In March 2019, SoM Associate Deans Linda Sealy and Kathy Gould invited all ~600 PhD students affiliated with 14 biomedical research programs to participate in one of three “Listening Session” to brainstorm ideas to reduce the power differential. 41 total students attended along with all 14 Directors of Graduate Study (faculty). Kathy and Linda facilitated brainstorming and recorded the ideas that came out (see boxes).

The table at left shows the percentage growth in persons seeking advocacy services* from Project Safe since its opening in Fall 2014 through Spring 2019. As Project Safe allows persons to remain anonymous, demographic data were not available for all persons. The chart at left compares only those for whom such information was available. People are counted as they self-identify.

*Advocacy services offered by Project Safe (not a complete list):
- non-judgmental listening, including crisis hotline
- referral to legal and medical services,
- accompaniment to investigative meetings,
- assistance obtaining interim measures, including housing changes, work assignment changes, academic flexibility
- accompaniment to campus or community services
- crisis counseling

Student recommendations to be addressed by graduate education leadership
- Develop consequences to faculty for exhibiting a pattern of incivility and harassment of students and other colleagues that is below legally actionable threshold
- Develop a new approach to faculty mentoring, unconscious bias, bystander training
- Support students on a temp basis for switching groups

Student recommendations to be addressed by institutional leadership
- Develop consequences to faculty for exhibiting a pattern of incivility and harassment of students and other colleagues that is below legally actionable threshold
- Develop an anonymous reporting mechanism for incidents of incivility and harassment below legal threshold
- Prevention: training for faculty, staff, postdocs, students in culturally aware mentoring, unconscious bias, bystander training
- Independent student funding. A corollary: develop fund to support students on a temp basis for switching groups

Trainee-led Educational Initiatives: Intersectional Perspectives in STEM

**Philosophy**

The goal is to educate graduate students, postdocs, and faculty about issues underlying many instances of harassment or discrimination, encourage open dialogue across the power hierarchy, and provide tools for positive change.

**Who/What?**

In August 2019, we hosted a half-day workshop titled Intersectional Perspectives in STEM (IPSTEM), to provide an educational opportunity for interested trainees and faculty to address several topics impacting both students and faculty in the academic environment: (1) sexual harassment, (2) gender identity and sexual orientation, and (3) under-representation: bias and privilege. The closing session included a brief bystander intervention training.

The workshop was intended to promote discussion and serve as a springboard for a monthly journal club focused on issues of intersectionality in the workplace. It was designed and hosted by a group of PhD students and postdocs affiliated with the Vanderbilt Genetics Institute. The journal club is scheduled to begin in early 2020.