

Tulane University Plan for Addressing Sexual Violence within Student Communities of Color

To follow up from the Spring 2017 Wave of Change campus climate survey on sexual violence, Tulane's All In Sexual Violence Prevention Task Force contracted with Dr. Jordan West. Tulane University developed this plan based on the report submitted by Dr. West.

Jordan S. West, pronouns she, her, and hers, is currently serving as the Inaugural Director of Diversity & Inclusion Education at The George Washington University in the Office for Diversity, Equity and Community Engagement in the Office of the Provost. Dr. West completed her PhD in Cultural Foundations of Education and received her Certificate of Advanced Studies in Women and Gender Studies, both at Syracuse University. Dr. West earned her Master's degree in College Student Affairs – with an emphasis on social justice in higher education at The Pennsylvania State University and her Bachelor's degree in Psychology at the University of Maryland College Park. Dr. West is actively involved with the American College Personnel Association (ACPA), where she serves as a Past Chair for the Pan African Network (PAN) and the Assembly Coordinator for Coalitions + Networks for the Association's Governing Board & Assembly. Jordan's experience and continued research interests focus on campus climate, narrative and storytelling as a method, and how People of Color and individuals from historically marginalized identities work towards liberation while in higher education through the lens of Black Feminist Theory and Critical Race Theory.

The purpose of this evaluation was to understand the experiences of students of color around sexual violence and harassment as well as their general experiences as a community member at Tulane University. Data collection on campus occurred over two days in December 2018 and two days in March 2019. In total, Dr. West met with 11 undergraduate students. Of these, 2 identified as Asian, 7 as Black, 1 as Latinx, and 1 as White. Dr. West's also gathered information from key stakeholders within the Tulane University community, including an array of faculty, staff, and administrators. Tulane University developed this plan based on the report submitted by Dr. West.

Recommendations and Implications

Dr. West put forward a series of themed findings and recommendations. The Department of Campus Health has identified those recommendations in the report that can be executed through The Well, CAPS, and Student Health or other departments in the Division of Student Affairs and identified next steps. These include:

- In each conversation, members of the Tulane University community spoke about how often the institution frames sexual violence on campus as a "white student issue." Some students shared that they only feel safe in The O, though that was not a shared sentiment from every student. Students of Color demonstrated their desire for space to share and feel heard. It would be valuable for the university to create more intentional spaces to learn from students.
 - *Tulane Plan of Action: The Carolyn Barber-Pierre Center for Intercultural Life will be moving into a newly renovated and larger space spring 2020. This will add more spaces for students from many marginalized groups. The Office of Multicultural Affairs and The Well for Health Promotion are partnering to create additional spaces for Student of Color through several initiatives including a sister-circle program called "My Sister's Keeper." In addition, the All In initiative provided The Office of Multicultural Affairs funding for a new graduate assistant to focus on sexual violence prevention for Students of Color. The Office of Multicultural Affairs will continue to host the annual Women of Color Luncheon to increase safe spaces and connect staff, students, and faculty to one another to increase comfort with reporting sexual violence.*

Students of Color shared a significant amount of concern about the potential consequences if they reported any sexual violence they experienced or witnessed. They expressed concerns that they would not be believed or would somehow get in trouble.

- *Tulane Plan of Action: In partnership with The USG Sexual Violence Prevention and Response Committee, Campus Health will coordinate and provide a Trauma Informed Care Training to frontline and adjacent staff who serve students. Trauma Informed Care Training is designed to help front line staff respond appropriately to individuals who have experienced trauma. This training will help Tulane staff be better prepared to respond to students who have experienced a variety of different types of trauma.*
- Several of Dr. West's comments focused on campus climate and feelings of safety, stating that Students of Color report experiencing a campus climate as toxic, unsafe, and hostile according to students, staff, and faculty. Dr. West recommends an Institution-Wide Campus Climate Assessment project. While understanding the experiences of Students of Color and sexual violence was at the core of this project, in each conversation with students, faculty, and staff, the overall campus climate rose to the top as a major issue.

Students expressed a significant amount of concern regarding the lack of staff who understand their lived experiences and particular needs at Tulane University. Students emphasized the lack of staff and faculty who they felt looked like them, and the ways in which they feel dismissed by staff and faculty overall.

Students of Color shared an overall lack of trust of faculty and staff, and a lack of transparency from the institution. In alignment with the institution's strategic planning process, there should be a representative committee led by the senior diversity officer of the institution who advise on the development of a strategic plan for diversity, equity, and inclusion. The plan needs to have clear, realistic, and measurable goals that are rooted in research and best practices and mapped to specific roles at Tulane University for accountability.

- *Tulane Plan of Action: Tulane University is currently searching for a new Associate Provost for Diversity and Faculty Development/Chief Diversity Officer. This newly created position will report directly to the Provost and will lead institutional efforts to address diversity, equity, and inclusion. This newly created position will identify a process, or multiple processes to examine the campus climate and will help lead Tulane to create a safer and more inclusive environment for Students of Color on campus.*
- *In the meantime, members of the Sexual Violence Task Force will take the following actions:*
 - *Continue conducting focus groups and discussions with Students of Color to determine how to best meet their needs.*
 - *Provide funding and support for interventions to support the various marginalized communities on campus. This will be done in collaboration with The Office of Multicultural Affairs.*
 - *Actively work to engage a broader group of students, faculty, and staff in the ongoing conversations around sexual violence.*
 - *Actively engage with a national trainer to better prepare faculty and staff to respond to the diverse needs of Tulane community (anticipated Spring 2019).*
 - *Recommend adoption of an optional annual implicit and explicit bias training to help to increase cultural competence for staff and faculty.*
 - *Recommend continued work to hire diverse candidates with demonstrated experience working with underrepresented populations and cultural competence in Case Management and Victim Support Services and CAPS to meet student needs.*
 - *Recommend continued work to meet the needs of special populations on campus through collaboration and additional support.*
 - *Recommend the creation of intentional affinity spaces for students of color to feel safe and engage with individuals who share their lived experiences on campus, both in and outside of the Carolyn Barber Pierre Center for Intercultural Life.*