

Title IX Annual Report: Student-  
on-Student Sexual Harassment and  
Sexual Violence

2015-2016



September 22, 2016

Dear Virginia Tech Students, Faculty, and Staff:

As the Interim Title IX Coordinator, I'm writing to update you on our progress confronting sexual violence on our campus. In the 2015-2016 report that follows, you'll find two important data points: 1) Student responses to experiences with, and perceptions of, sexual violence as described by our annual climate survey; and 2) a summary of student-on-student Title IX cases from the past year. It reflects our deep commitment to fostering a safe and inclusive environment in which our students can thrive. Yet it also shows that, like other campuses across the nation, we have far too many students who are impacted by violence.

As a campus community, we have pledged to address this problem head on, through prevention, education, and training; strong policies; and trauma-informed response efforts. We know that this work will never be done until sexual violence is eliminated from our community, and we continuously seek to understand better the experiences of our students, the cultural factors that underlie gender-based violence, and ways that we can promote and improve support resources.

I invite you to review this report and to consider ways to become part of the solution: learn how to be an active bystander in situations that may lead to abuse; find out how to support a friend who has experienced sexual violence; and examine your own biases and assumptions about gender, sex, and consent. This work is hard, but it reflects our highest calling at Virginia Tech: to understand what we value and to live in service to affect positive change in the lives of others, our communities, and the world.

In the spirit of *Ut Prosim*,

Frank Shushok, Jr., Ph.D.  
Senior Associate Vice President for Student Affairs  
Interim Title IX Coordinator

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## THE STUDENT TITLE IX TEAM

The Title IX team for student-on-student sexual harassment and sexual violence is led by Senior Associate Vice President for Student Affairs and Interim Title IX Coordinator Dr. Frank Shushok. Dr. Shushok's team includes two full-time investigators, Ennis McCrery and Katie Polidoro, who were hired in spring 2015. In addition to providing timely, thorough, and equitable investigations, these investigators also provide leadership on prevention initiatives in collaboration with other departments and organizations across campus.

### Title IX Advisory Group

The Title IX Coordinator and investigators meet regularly with the Title IX Advisory Group, a multidisciplinary team that includes representatives from the Women's Center, Student Advocacy, University Legal Counsel, Equity and Accessibility, Student Conduct, and the Virginia Tech Police Department. This group reviews cases to ensure that all students engaged in the process are treated fairly and that individual and community obligations are considered and appropriately balanced.

### Team Training and Professional Development

The team engages in ongoing training and professional development to ensure that the university's policies and procedures are informed by best practices and that students are supported and served well in and by the process. The Title IX coordinator and investigators have each received investigator certifications from the Association of Title IX Administrators (ATIXA). In addition, they have participated in trainings on trauma-informed investigations; lethality assessments; and the intersections between domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking. During the 2016-17 academic year, the team will host an expert on intimate-partner violence, who will provide training and make recommendations for improving the way these cases are investigated and adjudicated. Because a team approach is foundational to Title IX work at Virginia Tech, most of these training opportunities have included partners from across campus and the community, including Student Conduct, the Women's Center, Student Advocacy, Equity and Accessibility, and university and town police departments.

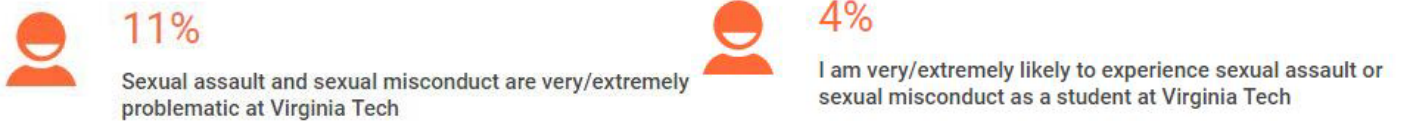
## SEXUAL ASSAULT AND SEXUAL MISCONDUCT CLIMATE SURVEY

As part of the university's ongoing commitment to addressing sexual violence on campus, the Division of Student Affairs conducted a campus-climate survey in spring 2016 to understand better students' experiences and perceptions. The anonymous survey asked students questions about their experiences with sexual assault and sexual misconduct, their knowledge of resources, and their perceptions of risk and university response. We are using the information gathered from this survey to help inform our prevention and education initiatives and response efforts.

The survey was distributed to a representative sample of 5,000 undergraduate, graduate, and professional students (part-time and full-time) on the Blacksburg campus. A total of 659 Virginia Tech students responded to the survey, with 472 completions (a 71 percent completion rate). The overall response rate, based on completions, was slightly over 9 percent.

### Perceptions of Risk

Students who took the survey were asked whether they perceive sexual assault or sexual misconduct to be a problem on campus and how likely it was to happen to them. Responses were as follows:



### University Response

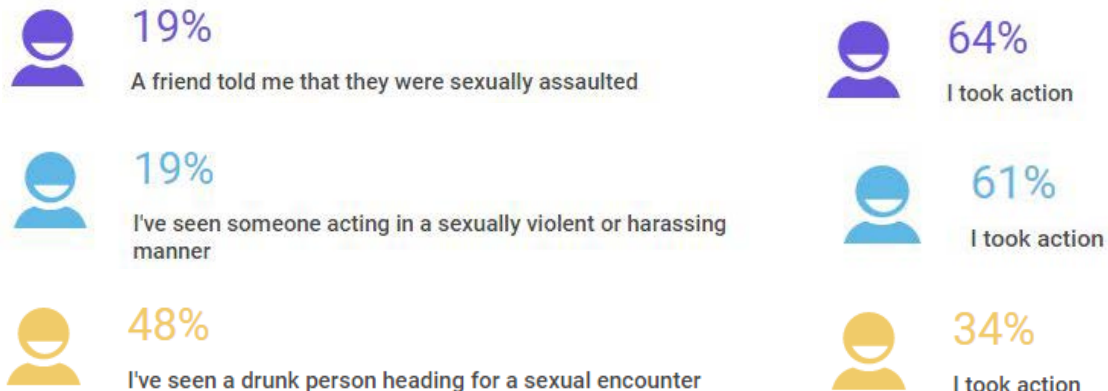
Overall, Virginia Tech students who responded to the survey had positive perceptions about how university administrators would respond to a report of sexual assault or sexual misconduct.

Students who responded to the survey said it was very/extremely likely that the university will:



### Bystander Intervention

Students were also asked a set of questions regarding whether they had ever witnessed an incident that they perceived as sexually violent or harassing. If they indicated yes, those students were asked if they took action. Students who responded to the survey reported the following:



The most common type of action students reported taking included helping a friend and seeking help.

**Prevalence of Sexual Assault and Sexual Misconduct**

In the survey, students were asked a series of questions about their experiences with sexual assault, sexual harassment, intimate-partner violence, and stalking while they were enrolled at Virginia Tech.

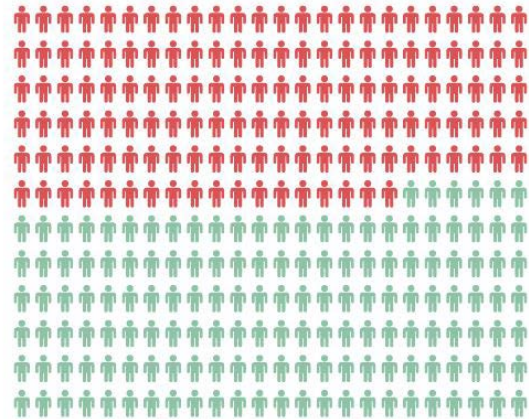
**Sexual Harassment**

In the survey, sexual harassment was defined as follows:

- Someone making inappropriate or offensive comments about someone’s body, appearance, or sexual activities
- Someone saying crude or gross sexual things or trying to get a student to talk about sexual matters when they didn’t want to

Of the kinds of sexual violence represented in the survey, sexual harassment had the highest percentages of reports, at **48%**.

**Sexual Harassment: 48%**



Some important findings about sexual harassment

Student status: While overall the survey results showed that in cases of sexual harassment, offenders were most often students, graduate and professional students’ reported incidents showed a much higher percentage of employees as offenders than did undergraduates.

**Sexual Assault**

In the survey, sexual assault was defined as follows:

- Physical force or threats of physical force for sexual penetration or oral sex
- Physical force or threats of physical force for kissing, touching breasts, chest, crotch, groin or buttocks, or grabbing, groping or rubbing against the other in a sexual way, even if the touching was over clothes
- Sexual penetration or oral sex that occurred while the student was unable to consent or stop what was happening because they were passed out, asleep or incapacitated due to drugs or alcohol
- Kissing, touching breasts, chest, crotch, groin or buttocks, or grabbing, groping or rubbing against the other in a sexual way, even if the touching was over clothes that occurred while a student was unable to consent or stop what was happening because they were passed out, asleep or incapacitated due to drugs or alcohol
- Penetration or oral sex by threats of serious non-physical harm or promising rewards such that the student felt they must comply

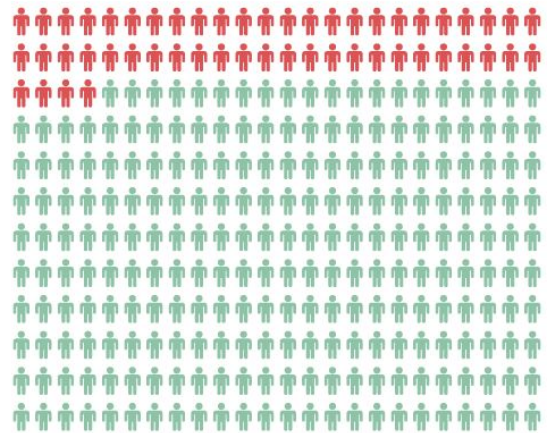
- Contact involving penetration or oral sex without the student’s active, ongoing voluntary agreement
- Kissing or sexual touching without the student’s active, ongoing voluntary agreement

Of the Virginia Tech students who responded to the survey, **18%** reported an incident of sexual assault.

## Sexual Assault: 18%

### Some important findings about sexual assault

**Gender:** The survey results show important differences by gender, with **21%** of women and **4%** of men reporting experiences. Undergraduate women reported the highest rates of sexual assault, at nearly **86%** of reported incidents. These statistics closely mirror the results of national studies on sexual assault, which report that 20% of women and 6% of men experience sexual assault during their time in college. It is important to note that studies also show that transgender and gender-nonconforming students face particularly high rates of sexual assault; however, the response rates among these students in the Virginia Tech survey were quite low, making it difficult to assess prevalence.



**Alcohol:** Virginia Tech students who responded to the survey indicated that one or more parties in more than **70%** of sexual assaults used alcohol or drugs. This percentage is particularly concerning, though it is slightly lower than numbers cited in *The Campus Sexual Assault Study* that found that 89% of college sexual assaults involved alcohol.<sup>1</sup>

**Location:** Among the students who reported being sexual assaulted while students at Virginia Tech, **35%** said that it happened on campus, including residence halls, fraternity/sorority housing, and non-residential buildings. The majority of these reported incidents occurred in residence halls.

### ***Stalking***

In the survey, stalking was defined as follows:

- Someone making unwanted phone calls, sending emails, voice, text or instant messages, or posting messages, pictures or videos on social networking sites in a way that made the student afraid for their personal safety

<sup>1</sup> Krebs, C.P., Lindquist, C.H., Warner, T.D., Fisher, B.S., & Martin, S.L. (2007). *The Campus Sexual Assault (CSA) Study*. Washington, DC: National Institute of Justice, U.S. Department of Justice.

- Someone showed up somewhere or waited for the student when they did not want that person to be there in a way that made them afraid for your personal safety
- Someone has spied on, watched or followed the student, either in person or using devices or software in a way that made them afraid for their personal safety.

Of the Virginia Tech students who responded to the survey, **3-6%** reported an incident of stalking.

## Stalking: 3-6%



### ***Intimate-Partner Violence (IPV)***

In the survey, intimate-partner violence was defined as follows:

- A partner controlled or tried to control the student
- A partner threatened to physically harm the student, someone they love, or themselves
- A partner used physical force against the student

Of the Virginia Tech students who responded to the survey, **12%** reported incidents of IPV.

## IPV: 12%



### Some important findings about IPV

Of those students who indicated they had experienced IPV, **14%** said that they were physically injured as a result of an incident, though no students reported seeking medical attention.

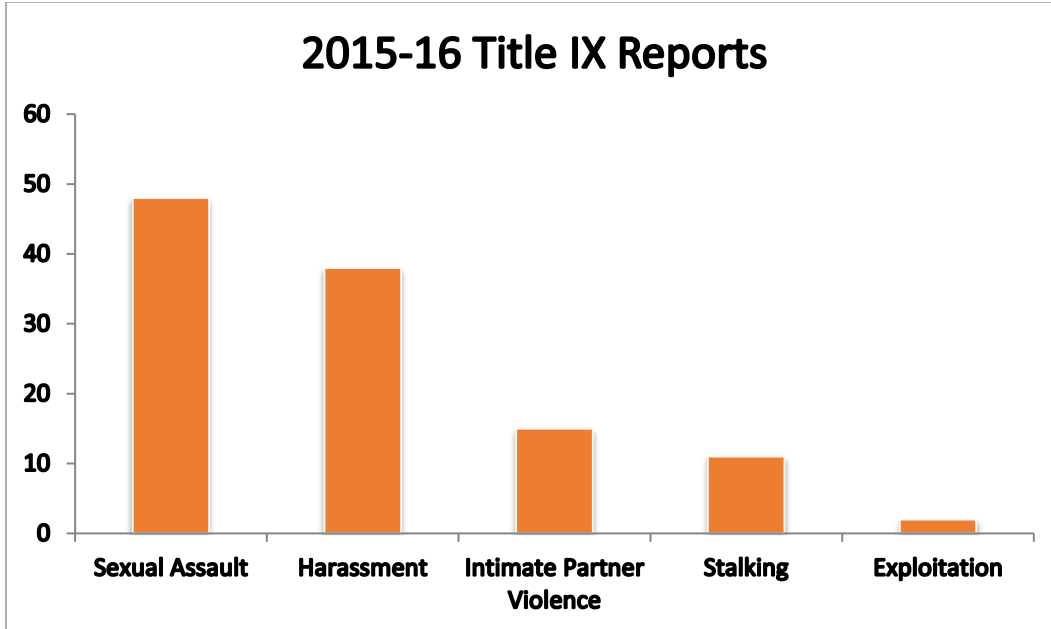
## **2015-2016 TITLE IX REPORTS: STUDENT-ON-STUDENT SEXUAL VIOLENCE**

Title IX Investigators in the Division of Student Affairs respond to reports of Gender Based Harassment and Violence experienced by students. While some reports come directly from students, the majority reports come from third-part *responsible employees*. These faculty and staff members are required by university policy to report disclosures made to them by students to the Title IX Coordinator. No matter how reports are received, DSA Title IX Investigators act quickly to provide resources and information to students. The safety and wellbeing of students is our first concern.

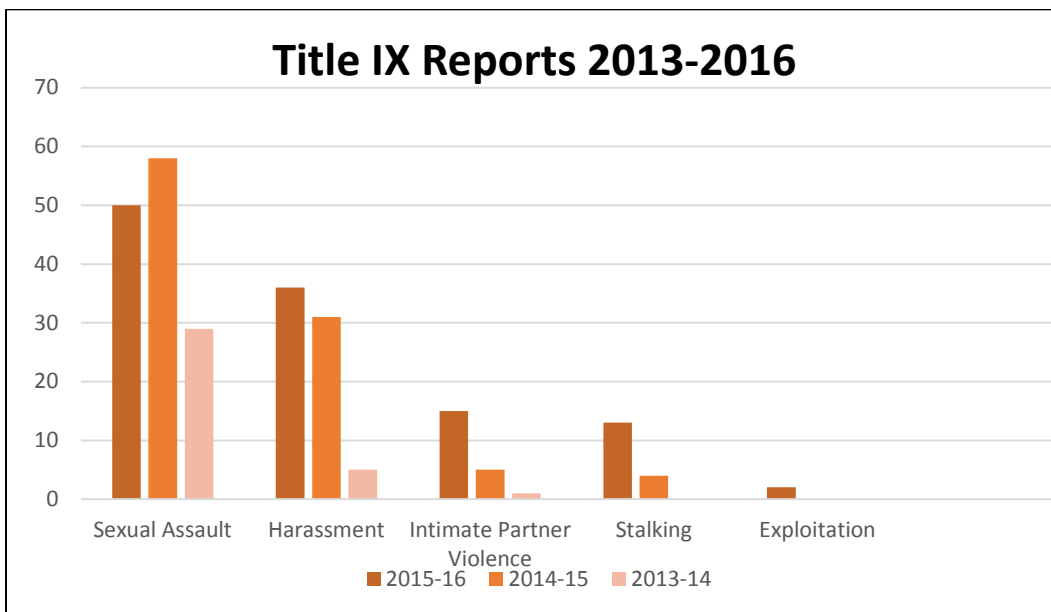


### Reported Incidents

Overall, 114 reports were received during the 2015-2016 academic year. Sexual assault accounted for 48 of those reports, harassment 36, dating and domestic violence 15, stalking 11, and sexual exploitation 2.



The 2015-16 academic year saw an overall increase in reports from previous years. This upturn is likely due to increased training and outreach and an increase in third-party reports from employees, who are mandated to report incidents to Title IX. In addition, training and development efforts were increased for student staff, including Residence Life, Fraternity and Sorority Life, and the Corps of Cadets.

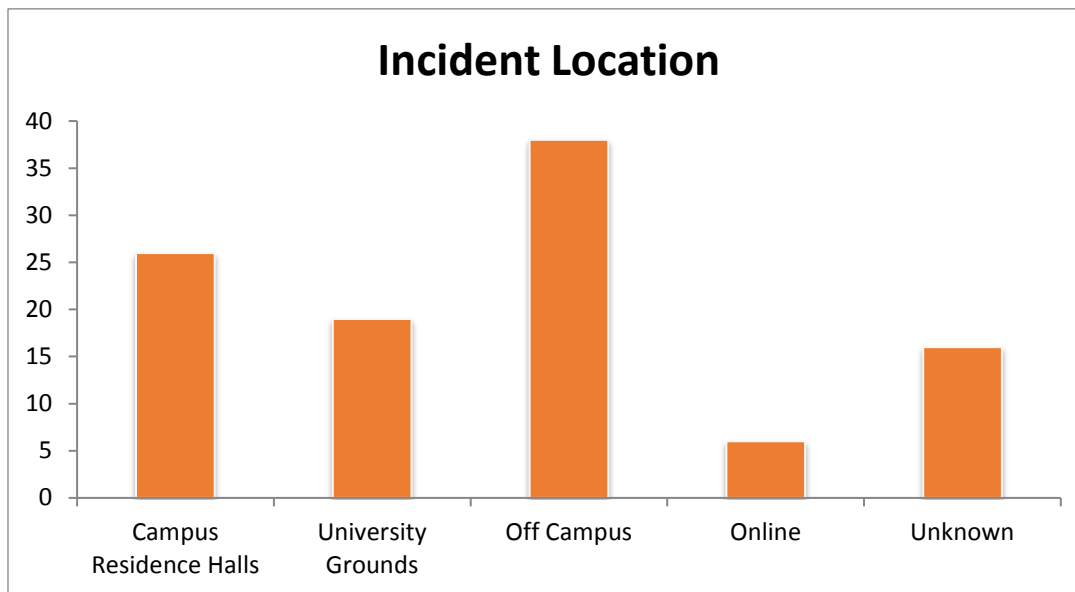


Almost one half of all reports were sexual assaults, which includes any physical sexual contact without consent. Female complainants made up for **85%** of our reports, while males were complainants in **12%** of all reports. Violence against transgender people is reflected in our reports, though the numbers are quite low.

Of note were reports of intimate partner violence and stalking, which increased over the last year. Compared to the 2014-15 academic year, reports of intimate partner violence increased by 300% (from five reports to 15) and reports of stalking increased **275%** (from four reports to 11). Like the overall increase in reports, these increases may be a reflection of new university-wide training efforts and reporting requirements.

### Incident Location

Most of the reported incidents took place on-campus, with 26 occurring in residence halls, and 19 on university grounds.



### Investigations

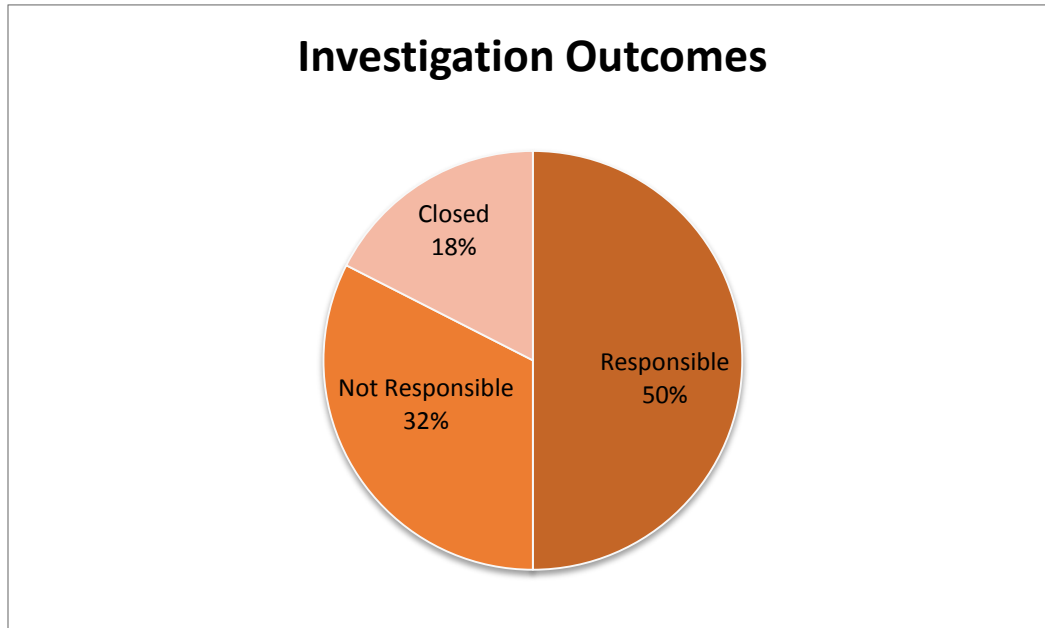
Thirty-nine reports, or **34%**, of reports received full investigations. In most cases, over **80%**, investigations did not move forward based on the complainant's decision to not proceed or share information. The decision to proceed with a full investigation is a multifaceted one. In cases where a complainant wants to proceed, investigations moved forward promptly. More difficult decisions come when a survivor does not want to move forward. In those cases we strive to strike a balance between the personal wellbeing of the complainant, their safety, and the safety of the Virginia Tech community.

Most often, reports that are fully investigated are referred to the Office of Student Conduct for a full hearing. Using a preponderance of the evidence standard, trained, professional hearing officers determine if a respondent is responsible for *Code of Student Conduct* violations. Those few cases that are investigated but do not move forward for adjudication often involve other forms of educational interventions with respondents to address concerning behavior. Cases may be closed after an

investigation when the identified respondent is not a student at Virginia Tech. In those cases investigators work to ensure that complainants have the support and resources that they need to maintain a safe learning and living environment.

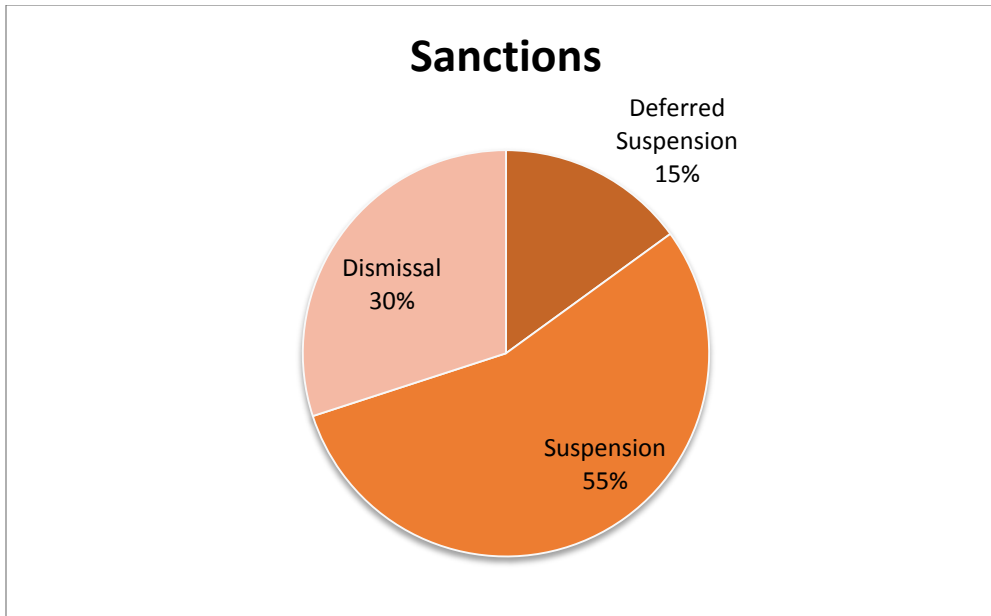
### Adjudication

Thirty-three cases received hearings through the Office of Student Conduct violations, resulting in 20 students determined responsible for *Code of Student Conduct* violations. Seven investigations were closed without a hearing. In these cases the incident reported did not constitute a *Code of Student Conduct* violation or the identified respondent was not a Virginia Tech student.



Students who are found responsible for conduct involving sexual harassment or violence are sanctioned appropriately. During the 2015-16 academic year, sanctions ranged from deferred suspension to dismissal, with students responsible for sexual violence being separated from the university. Those students eligible to return to the community also may receive education and counseling requirements before re-enrollment is possible.

For those students found responsible, six were dismissed from the university. Eleven were suspended, and three received deferred suspensions.



## PREVENTION AND EDUCATION

Virginia Tech remains committed to addressing the culture and climate that give rise to sexual violence. Through comprehensive prevention and education initiatives across campus, we work to engage students in conversation, raise awareness, build skills, and ask challenging questions that encourage students to think about their own attitudes and assumptions. We take a variety of approaches, based on best-practices, including the following:

- Primary prevention: efforts that address violence *before* it happens, such as students' attitudes and beliefs; and peer, community, and societal-level influences
- Bystander intervention: efforts to encourage students to intervene, either directly or indirectly, in problematic situations
- Risk reduction: efforts to increase students' knowledge, awareness, and self-defense skills to help them avoid harm

These programs and initiatives are offered through the collaborative efforts of units across campus, including the Division of Student Affairs, the Women's Center, Athletics, and the Virginia Tech Police Department. In 2015-2016, the university made strides to broaden prevention partnerships through the centralization of the Sexual Violence Prevention Council (SVPC), a multidisciplinary team of professionals and students from across the university and the New River Valley. This council provides coordination and assessment of a broad range of prevention efforts and promotes the important message that preventing and addressing sexual violence at Virginia Tech is a shared, community responsibility.

The following sections offer highlights of our prevention efforts from 2015-2016.

## Primary Prevention

### *First-year students*

In the summer of 2015, for the third year in a row, we started the dialogue about sexual violence with new students before they even set foot on campus. Each first-year student was asked to complete **Haven**, an interactive, web-based training tool that educates students about sexual violence, bystander strategies, and campus resources. Our partners in the Athletics Department also asked their first-year and sophomore students to take an additional online course, **myPlaybook**, offered through the NCAA and tailored for student athletes. These online resources offer students a foundation and a language for talking about the difficult but critical topics of sexual assault, dating violence, and stalking.

Upon moving to campus in August 2015, each student living on campus received a letter from Interim Title IX Coordinator Dr. Frank Shushok. This letter acknowledged the sexual assault crisis on campuses across the country, including Virginia Tech, and provided information about resources and reporting options.



*Haven Menu*

### *Men and Masculinities*

Best practices in gender-based violence prevention recommend that campuses engage men as allies in prevention efforts.<sup>2</sup> In 2015-2016, we sought to engage male-identified students through several programs. The Women's Center worked with the Virginia Tech Corps of Cadets (Echo Company) to support the **White Ribbon Campaign**—an annual effort that asks men at Virginia Tech to pledge to never commit, condone, or stay silent about violence against women and girls and to call on men to use their voices as part of positive and healthy masculinity.

The Division of Student Affairs also worked in spring 2016 to promote men's involvement through the **Men@VT Leadership Experience**. This pilot program, developed by Title IX, Housing and Residence Life, and Hokie Wellness, included a cohort of 15 male-identified undergraduates, who participated in a half-day retreat on masculinities and leadership.



*Cadets in Echo Company*

<sup>2</sup> The White House. (2014). *Not Alone: The First Report of the White House Task Force to Protect Students From Sexual Assault*. Washington.

During the retreat, students discussed gender socialization and pressures, as well as how they came to understand in their own lives what it means to “be a man” in our culture. The program took a wellness approach, as we believe that promoting healthy relationships and self-understanding among men is an essential component of preventing sexual violence. The event was a pilot for a larger program, which will be developed in 2016-2017.

### **Mentoring**

As we continue to raise awareness of sexual violence on the Virginia Tech campus, we remain mindful that talking about it can be difficult for our students and that peer and faculty/staff mentors offer an important resource for engagement. To help promote conversation among students in 2015-2016, the Women’s Center continued its successful peer-mentoring program: **Sexual Assault and Violence Education by Students (SAVES)**. This mentoring group facilitates interactive and educational programs that address sexual assault, healthy relationships, stalking, and the effects of media on gender-based violence. In 2015-2016, SAVES had 13 members, who participated in resource fairs and the Red Flag Campaign. They also created new presentation and program materials.

The Virginia Tech Athletics Department also embraced a mentoring approach to prevention in 2015-2016, through a pilot program that trained strength-and-conditioning coaches and sports-medicine professionals to facilitate informal conversations with student-athletes on sexual violence. Developed by a sports psychologist in Athletics, Dr. Gary Bennett, and since named **One Team**, the program focuses on the natural mentoring relationship that exists between student athletes and the people who attend to their physical development and health. It was quite a success, and Athletics will offer it to all sports teams in 2016-2017.

### **Bystander Intervention**

*Not Alone*<sup>2</sup>, the report by the White House Task Force to Protect Students from Sexual Assault, identifies bystander intervention as one of the most “promising” prevention strategies. This approach asks everyone to take responsibility for behavior that happens in front of them and to learn how to intervene in problematic situations. Virginia Tech embraces this strategy and offers robust bystander programming. In 2015-2016, the Women’s Center continued to coordinate the **Mentors in Violence Prevention (MVP)**

program, with facilitators from across campus offering 33 workshops for 736 students throughout the year. This national



*Red Flags with Relationship Warning Signs*

program, which has been in place at Virginia Tech for a number of

years, uses a bystander empowerment approach to preventing men’s violence against women. Instead of looking at participants as victims or perpetrators, the curriculum focuses on teaching participants concrete skills they can use as bystanders to intervene in potentially abusive situations. The Virginia Tech Corps of



Cadets and Athletics Department were strong partners in MVP last year, requiring workshops of their freshmen and junior cadets and student-athletes. The Women's Center also provided a three-day train-the-trainer event in spring 2016 for 23 new MVP facilitators (bringing the total number of facilitators to 74).

In addition to MVP, the Women's Center also sponsored the **Red Flag Campaign** again in October 2015. This campaign is a statewide public awareness effort aimed at stopping relationship violence on college campuses in Virginia. The goal of the campaign is to encourage students to speak up when they see red flags (or warning signs for potential abusive or unhealthy behaviors) in their friends' relationships.

### Risk Reduction

The Virginia Tech Police Department and Office of Emergency Management offer several important prevention initiatives focused on giving students tools and knowledge to reduce their risk of victimization. By focusing on individual skills and safety, these initiatives complement our primary prevention and bystander approaches, which seek to shift culture.



*A RAD Self-Defense Lesson*



*LiveSafe Menu*

One ongoing effort that saw continued success in 2015-2016 was **Rape Aggression Defense System (RAD)**.

The four-part course for female students, faculty, and staff begins with awareness, prevention, risk reduction and avoidance, and progresses to the basics of hands-on defense training. Participants learn self-defense tactics and techniques.

In 2015-2016, the Office of Emergency Management also provided **LiveSafe**, a mobile safety technology, to help students feel safe on campus. The app enables users to share information about suspicious activity or behavior, to invite others to "virtually escort" them on a real-time map, to navigate the Blacksburg campus via maps and directions, and to summon emergency help.

## RESOURCES FOR STUDENTS

If you have experienced sexual violence as a student at Virginia Tech, there are places you can go for help and people who will support you. The information below includes on campus and community resources.

### Confidential Resources

Confidential resources *cannot* share identifying information about you without your written consent. Exceptions can be made in response to court orders, when child or elder abuse is involved, or if there are serious threats to hurt one's self or others.

Private Resources

Private resources *are required* to report incidences to the Virginia Tech Title IX Coordinator. Other university departments may also be involved as a means to help survivors or protect the campus community. **Among Virginia Tech’s offices and departments, most offer privacy, NOT confidentiality,** to those who report abuse.

### Reporting Options

#### Interim Title IX Coordinator

Frank Shushok  
[fshushok@vt.edu](mailto:fshushok@vt.edu)  
 540-231-8064

#### Student Conduct

[www.studentconduct.vt.edu](http://www.studentconduct.vt.edu)  
 540-231-3790

#### Virginia Tech Police Department

[www.police.vt.edu](http://www.police.vt.edu)  
 540-231-6411 (911 for Emergencies)

#### Blacksburg Police Department

(community resource)  
[www.blacksburg.gov/police](http://www.blacksburg.gov/police)  
 540-961-1150 (911 for Emergencies)

### Advocacy & Support Resources (*confidential resources\**)

#### Women’s Center at Virginia Tech\*

[www.womenscenter.vt.edu](http://www.womenscenter.vt.edu)  
 540-231-7806

#### Cook Counseling Center\*

[www.ucc.vt.edu](http://www.ucc.vt.edu)  
 540-231-6557

#### Schiffert Health Center\*

[www.healthcenter.vt.edu](http://www.healthcenter.vt.edu)  
 540-231-6444

#### Women’s Resource Center of the New River

**Valley** \*(community resource)  
[www.wrcnr.vt.edu](http://www.wrcnr.vt.edu)  
 540-639-1123 (24 hour crisis hotline)

#### Dean of Students Office

[www.dos.vt.edu](http://www.dos.vt.edu)  
 540-231-3787

To learn more about Title IX and Virginia Tech’s commitment to working towards ending abuse and violence on campus, supporting the abused, and holding perpetrators accountable, visit

**[stopabuse.vt.edu](http://stopabuse.vt.edu)**