

# **Executive Summary of Data and Findings from the Vassar College Campus Climate Survey regarding Sexual Assault and Misconduct, Dating Violence, Stalking, and Vassar’s Title IX Processes, Conducted Spring, 2015**

In April, 2015, Vassar College conducted a survey of all enrolled students concerning a broad array of topics related to sexual assault and misconduct, dating violence, and stalking on campus, and regarding student views of Vassar’s Title IX processes and outcomes. This document provides an executive overview of the primary findings from this survey. It focuses on the three survey sections likely to be of greatest interest and importance to the campus community:

- Incidence counts and rates of sexual assaults at Vassar, studied both for penetrative, and for non-penetrative events
- Details of such events (who, what, when, where, etc.)
- Student views of Vassar’s Title IX information, processes, and outcomes

The survey was designed by an ad hoc group composed of Vassar and 15 of our regional peer colleges<sup>1</sup> between August and November, 2014. The design group included both professionals in Title IX and sexual assault prevention and others from Institutional Research. Most colleges, including Vassar, added some survey questions/content in addition to the core sections designed collectively.

Full data on the primary findings from these topics, and the others explored on this survey, will be provided in a full report from Institutional Research within the next few weeks. At present, additional statistical analyses remain, on which work is currently still active.

## **Response Rates and Survey Samples**

- A total of 2,542 students were invited to participate in this survey representing all degree-seeking undergraduates enrolled at Vassar, spring semester, 2015, including those on JYA.
- A total of 1,171 students completed the survey:
  - 731 cis<sup>2</sup> women,
  - 380 cis<sup>2</sup> men,
  - 49 non-cis (including gender queer (44), trans (3), and/or other(s) (12)<sup>3</sup>, and,
  - 11 no response as to current gender identification.
- The response rate for women was about<sup>4</sup> 52%, and for men about<sup>4</sup> 36%. No response rate specific for any other gender identifications can be determined because no student records system data exist for this.
- The demographics of the respondent samples, both cis men and cis women, matched those in the respective full campus populations very well regarding characteristics such as class year and race/ethnic background, and matched reasonably well for “first generation in college.”
- Relative to other samples and data from other Vassar surveys, the 2015 survey samples reported on here appear to be slightly but consistently less heterosexual in orientation than the campus at large. However, no definitive conclusions can be drawn because no campus-wide data on orientation exist (only such data from respondent samples to other Vassar surveys).

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<sup>1</sup> Amherst, Bates, Bowdoin, Bryn Mawr, Colby, Colgate, Connecticut College, Hamilton, Middlebury, Mt. Holyoke, Smith, Trinity, Tufts, Wesleyan, and Williams

<sup>2</sup> Sex assigned at birth is also one’s gender identity today

<sup>3</sup> Sum is not equal to 49 due to multiple responses permitted for current gender identity

<sup>4</sup> Specifically, slightly greater than, if the 49 survey cases of non-cis identification, and the 11 cases of no gender identification, could be known as to women and men per Vassar’s internal student records system values

- This effect appears to be the case more for the cis men respondent sample than for cis women.
- Various internal consistency tests between various data collected via the survey were good.
- However, careful recent work suggests that it is likely that there is some level of over-representation in the survey sample of respondents who indicated having filed formal reports with Vassar, particularly among the cis women sample. As a result, at least some of the purely survey-based incident rates observed in the sample (those reported below) are likely (not proven) to be over-estimations of campus actual rates. There is neither statistical nor other evidence to suggest that the survey data provide under-estimations of campus incidence rates. However, we do not have a good way to be reasonably confident on how large the likely over-estimation may be.

### Survey-Based Incidence Counts and Rates reported by students at Vassar

First, it is important to note that there is not one single incidence rate. There are a number of different rates, all of interest, and so all are important to understand, measure, and report here. These include survey-based:

- incidence counts and rates for what specific incidents? (The survey explores “non-consensual, or unwanted,” penetrative incidents, and “non-consensual, or unwanted,” non-penetrative sexual “contacts.”)
- counts/rates for each gender: cis women, cis men, and non-cis-identified (gender-specific rates are vital)
- counts/rates during a single year at Vassar: “annual rates”
- counts/rates experienced among students of all four classes at Vassar since having enrolled as freshmen: “cumulative rates”
- counts/rates, both annual and cumulative, for each class year
- from the latter, the cumulative rates found for seniors (i.e., those here for four years), i.e., the probability that, over the course of four years, an undergraduate student will experience one or more incidents of a given form of non-consensual or unwanted sexual assault

The absolute numbers of incidents reported in the survey data<sup>5</sup>, and the Vassar campus incidence rates measured in the survey samples, were<sup>6</sup>:

	<u>Penetrative Incidents</u>			<u>Non-Penetrative Incidents</u>		
	<u>Cis women</u>	<u>Cis men</u>	<u>Non-Cis</u>	<u>Cis women</u>	<u>Cis men</u>	<u>Non-Cis</u>
Annual <sup>7</sup> 4-classes	33, 4.5%	4, 1.1%	1, 2.1%	108, 15.0%	35, 9.2%	11, 22.9%
Cumulative since Matriculation 4-classes	109, 14.8%	20, 5.3%	9, 18.8%	270, 37.1%	66, 17.4%	22, 45.8%
1 or more incidents during four years <sup>8</sup>	75, 20.5%	15, 7.5%	7, 30.4%	154, 42.3%	47, 23.6%	14, 60.9%

- For cis women, survey data found highly consistent decline in the reported annual rates of penetrative sexual assault by class, from a high of about 7% for freshmen, down to about 4% among sophomores and juniors, to a low of about 3% for seniors.
- Similarly, the rates reported by cis women for non-penetrative sexual contacts also were highest for freshmen (27%), followed by 14%, 12% and 6% among sophomores through seniors.

<sup>5</sup> N.B.: Nearly all respondents to the survey provided full response data regarding non-consensual incidents of various forms of sexual assault/misconduct experienced at Vassar

<sup>6</sup> N.B.: These are the data from the survey samples. They are subject to the caveats noted about these samples detailed in the earlier section of this report on “Response Rates and Survey Samples.”

<sup>7</sup> Annual as measured in 2014-15, the year of the survey’s administration

<sup>8</sup> Actually based on juniors plus seniors; rates reported by juniors were slightly higher, and by seniors slightly lower

## Detailed Profiles of Incidents

About 200 survey respondents provided details of assault(s) experienced while attending Vassar.

**Profile of the accused and events**, by gender of victim and type of assault, covering:

- **Who are the accused?**: (e.g., Vassar student, faculty, other employee, alumnus, a stranger, etc.)
  - Within the survey samples of cis women, cis men and non-cis alike, nearly all were reported to have been other Vassar students
  - With some “unknown/not sure” among cis women only
- **Relationship to victim**: (e.g., Friend, acquaintance, stranger, romantic partner, etc.)
  - Typically friends and acquaintances; some “strangers” (cis women only)
  - Cis men (alone) reported “romantic partners.” This was the relationship most often mentioned.
- **Gender of the accused** (known or perceived)
  - For cis women: cis men, almost exclusively
  - For cis men: about evenly split between cis men and cis women
- **Where**: (i.e., the locations of incidents)
  - Campus locations almost exclusively
  - And by far predominantly within college-owned student housing

**Reporting:** Most victims do not file a formal report (sometimes termed a case, or complaint) with the college. The proportions who indicated having filed an “official report,” or “formal report,” all of which were to Vassar, none to local law enforcement, were as follows:

**10.3%** for cis women (14 of 136), **6.3%** for cis men (2 of 32), and **25.0%** of non-cis (2 of 8)

The following reasons were given for not having filed a report to Vassar by at least 50% of respondents, in order of highest to lowest mention:

- **Cis women**, for penetrative events: Not clear that harm was intended; lack of proof of the incident; wanted to forget it happened; and, felt partly at fault.
- **Cis men**, for penetrative events: Not serious enough to share ; not clear that harm was intended; did not recognize it as assault; and, did not think the perpetrator would be found guilty.
- **Across both genders**, for *non*-penetrative events: Not serious enough to share

### People Told and Talked With:

- 17% of cis women, 14% of cis men, and 30% of non-cis-identified students reported not having told or talked to anyone about their experience(s).
- The reasons most often indicated (given by 50% of respondents or more) for having talked with no one were quite similar to the reasons given for not having filed formal reports (listed in “Reporting,” above).
- Among survey respondents who did speak to/with others:  
**The first person(s) told** about any given incident of sexual assault were almost always indicated to have been:
  - friends (about 67%),
  - roommates (between about 20% and 30%), or
  - romantic partners (about 15%).
  - No other reached even five percent indication.

- Concerning **all individuals** talked to about a given incident of assault/misconduct:
  - **the same top three listed** for first person(s) talked to predominated strongly above all others
  - Other contacts and resources used included:
    - Parent/guardian (about 15%, both cis genders)
    - Student Fellow/Peer Advisor (cis women: 13%; cis men: 3%)
    - Vassar counselor/Counseling Services (genders as above: 11%, 7%)
    - Non-Vassar counselor/ Service (as above: 9%, 3%)
    - Vassar SART/ SAVP (as above: 8%, 7%)
    - Vassar faculty/administrator/staff (6%, 3%)
    - Vassar CARES (3%, 10%)

## Perceptions of Vassar’s Title IX Sexual Assault/Misconduct Procedures, Outcomes, and Information

The survey requested levels of awareness/knowledge and ratings of satisfaction with Vassar’s Title IX information and its sources, ratings of confidence in its processes and outcomes, and degrees to which students felt that Vassar would take various formal reports “seriously.”

Both cis women’s and cis men’s views as to how seriously they felt that Vassar was likely to take a formal report of sexual assault varied based on who might have filed the report, and on who might be named as perpetrator. The primary finding:

- Greater likely seriousness was universally indicated for reports if filed by, and for those filed against, either faculty or higher administrators, than was expressed for reports if filed by, or against, students.

Confidence in Vassar’s Title IX processes (investigation, hearings, adjudication, etc.), outcomes of these processes (adjudication), and regarding sexual assault/misconduct on campus in general, was highest<sup>9</sup> in:

- keeping information confidential, limited to those who need to know
- taking a Title IX report or incident seriously,
- taking steps to assure the safety of those filing a complaint/report
- providing appropriate support, both for accusers and for accused, and,
- belief that “Vassar is working on measures to prevent sexual assault.”
- There were consistently lower confidence levels found among Vassar’s non-cis survey respondents.

Lower<sup>10</sup> confidence was expressed for belief that Vassar is working “to remedy underlying factors on campus that may lead to sexual assault,” as well as for each one of the critical Title IX process and outcome areas of:

- conducting thorough and unbiased hearings,
- thorough and unbiased investigations,
- accurately determining what actually occurred, and,
- taking appropriate action(s) against perpetrators found responsible.

Cis male-female differences in these latter items were prevalent, all in the direction that cis women respondents reported lower confidence levels for each of these Title IX process and outcome items.

Submitted by members of the Survey Oversight Group, January 26, 2016

**David Davis-Van Atta**, Director of Institutional Research and Assessment

**Rachel Pereira**, Director of Equal Opportunity & Affirmative Action/Title IX Coordinator

**Kelly Grab**, Assistant Director of Equal Opportunity & Affirmative Action/Title IX Investigator

**Charlotte Strauss Swanson**, Sexual Assault and Violence Prevention Coordinator

**Hannah Matsunaga** ‘16, VSA Vice President for Student Life (2014-15)

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<sup>9</sup> 50% or more of respondents having given positive ratings

<sup>10</sup> Less than 50% of respondents having given positive responses

With special thanks to former members and other contributors...

Renee Pabst, Director of Health Education

Julian Williams, former Director of Equal Opportunity & Affirmative Action/Title IX Officer

Claire Ashley '15, Post-Baccalaureate Fellow for the Office of Institutional Research

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And our greatest thanks go to the students of Vassar who voluntarily invested their time and efforts in responding to this survey. None of the information and new knowledge reported here could have been gathered or known without their investment in communicating it to us, and now to Vassar broadly. We thank you greatly. We have worked hard on the analyses conducted of the responses you provided, and on trying to report the findings accurately and comprehensively. We were inspired in this by, and in wishing to do well by, your efforts, ones given on behalf of having well-informed campus initiatives and programs aimed at making the best possible Vassar environment for all. We hope you feel that we have done work worthy of your investments.