

Summary: The Student and Presidential Committee on Sexual Assault (SPCSA)<sup>1</sup> strongly recommends that Dartmouth College implement a mandatory, in-person faculty training on responses to student disclosures of sexual violence. We recommend that the training comprehensively address the following:

- Faculty members' reporting responsibilities
- Trauma's impact on survivors' academic experience
- Tools that enable supportive, informed responses to disclosures
- Resources that faculty can recommend to survivors

SPCSA urgently recommends the implementation of mandatory faculty training related to sexual violence disclosures. Our position is rooted in our collective experiences: enduring the trauma of sexual violence, listening to survivors' concerns, and advocating for a safer campus. Each of us cherishes the close relationships that we have built with faculty members, and we recognize that these relationships hold great meaning for faculty as well. As such, we believe that this training is vital for all of us, as it will equip faculty members to meet students' pressing need for support.

Due to the frightening prevalence of sexual violence on campus, every Dartmouth professor will teach a survivor.<sup>2</sup> Given our professors' passion for mentoring undergraduates, survivors are especially likely to seek support from faculty members. Further, if a survivor requires academic accommodations, disclosure often becomes a necessity. We understand that these are difficult moments for the student and the faculty member. The stigma surrounding sexual violence deters open dialogue, which means that many people have never received guidance about how to support survivors. As a result, a well-intentioned faculty member could easily find themselves without tools to respond to a student's disclosure or understand their requests for accommodations. Professors must be equipped to overcome these difficulties and support survivors. Trauma resulting from sexual violence can significantly impact our health, wellbeing, and academic performance; inadequate support makes these difficult situations much harder.<sup>3</sup>

The training objectives above address the critical need for appropriate and supportive faculty responses to sexual violence disclosures. We recommend that any training on this subject clarify faculty members' reporting responsibilities, thus ensuring that survivors receive the support they are legally entitled to under Title IX. Further, faculty members need to understand how trauma impacts survivors in order to contextualize their requests for accommodations. This would involve focusing on how trauma affects survivors' behaviors, thoughts, and feelings, and how these effects might influence their academic experience. The training should also discuss how faculty members can express support in ways that are conducive to survivors' recovery. This would involve describing relevant interpersonal skills, clarifying common misconceptions about sexual violence, and discussing how survivors' identities (race, sexuality, etc.) might impact their experience of trauma. Finally, the training should identify resources available to survivors, empowering professors to make essential referrals.

Though some aspects of this training can be conveyed through an online module, others must be delivered in-person. Describing the effects of trauma and appropriate expressions of support involves complex discussions about human psychology and social interactions. This information is too nuanced to be conveyed online, just as a recorded lecture can't reproduce the learning experience that comes from listening in person. Further, professors would only gain a deep understanding of these concepts if they were able to ask questions in real time, learn from each other's contributions, and engage in role-play scenarios. Although an optional, online training might be easier to implement, we strongly believe that this training merits the coordination required – student well-being is at stake. The College has also shown that it can overcome these logistical difficulties, as it has for other faculty training programs.

In sum, student-faculty relationships are integral to life at Dartmouth. As a result, many students look to their professors for support after they experience trauma. To ensure all faculty members are equipped to support survivors, mandatory training is a necessary step. We implore the faculty to take it.

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<sup>1</sup> The purpose of SPCSA is to serve as an intermediary between students and the larger Dartmouth College community including the administration, faculty, and alumni of the college. Our website: <https://dartmouthspcsa.wordpress.com/>

<sup>2</sup> In 2017, there were 25 reports of rape, 14 reports of fondling, and 6 reports of domestic violence (2018 Dartmouth College Annual Security and Fire Safety Report). 34% percent of female undergraduates reported that they had experienced sexual violence since entering college (2017 Sexual Misconduct Survey).

<sup>3</sup> As a result of non-consensual sexual contact, 24.2% of female undergraduates reported at least a moderate loss of interest in daily activities or feelings of hopelessness; 12% reported at least a moderate increase in high-risk or self-harming behaviors; 28.9% reported at least a moderate difficulty concentrating on academics (2017 Sexual Misconduct Survey).