



We have come together today to write to you because we were deeply saddened to read in a commentary in the Huffington Post yesterday about the pain felt by one of our students, and to hear echoes of that pain from other community members. Some of you have reached out to us, and we are grateful that you have done so – we are here to listen and provide help and support. Federal law prevents us from sharing details that would allow individuals, and the community as a whole, to have a full understanding of any specific report. We understand that this is difficult, and we wish to provide some clarity while respecting our legal and ethical obligations to protect the privacy of our students.

To be clear: we stand against sexual misconduct. As individuals and as a University, we are committed to responding actively to reports and supporting our students. We are equally committed to education and prevention, including supporting peer programs such as Spiders for Spiders. Sexual misconduct is an issue that affects all campuses across the nation, and we are working to care for those affected and to reduce instances here at the University of Richmond, with the goal of eliminating sexual misconduct altogether. To do that, we need your continued help: we must all join together in embracing our shared values, our expectations for our community, and how we handle reports and support each other.

We wish to reiterate several fundamental points: all students should continue to report any instances of sexual misconduct; all community members should continue to support survivors and others affected, through their words and their actions; and all students can and should expect that reports of sexual misconduct will be investigated and adjudicated thoroughly, fairly, and equitably.

While we cannot address specifically the contentions in the recent Huffington Post commentary, given our commitment to student privacy, and we respect the right of all students to express their opinion and discuss their perspective, we think it is important for us to share that many of the assertions of fact are inaccurate and do not reflect the manner in which reports of sexual misconduct have been investigated and adjudicated at the University.

We would also like to make clear our activities regarding the Coordinator of Sexual Misconduct Education and Prevention position. We are in the process of filling the position for the remainder of the grant and expect to have someone in place next month. As a result of the grant, we have learned much and we plan to continue to integrate what we have learned into our staffing and programs, so that we support students, respond thoroughly to reports, and continue work to prevent all sexual misconduct on our campus.

This is important work. More than 30 staff and faculty members collaborate annually to educate about and prevent sexual misconduct through our investigative, adjudicative, and educational

initiatives. We are committed as individuals and as a community to accomplishing this work in a supportive, caring, and impartial manner. We are proud of our students, including our student leaders, Spiders for Spiders, and the many others who have united in these community efforts. Through this message we ask the whole campus to continue our work as a community.

Tomorrow evening the campus community will gather in the Alice Haynes Room at 6:30, for the annual *It Ends Now: A Culture of Shared Responsibility*. Representatives of several campus organizations will speak, and we will be there in support and solidarity. We hope to see you there. We will continue to alert you to other events we have planned, and also invite you to reach out to meet with us, to share other ideas, and to get involved. It is only through the shared efforts of our entire community, and open dialogue, that we can make a difference in our community.

Our sexual misconduct policy and standards of student conduct clearly define prohibited behaviors and community expectations, provide different ways to report violations and concerns, and explain the processes for investigation and disciplinary actions. You can find them at <http://richmond.edu/sexualmisconduct> and <http://studentdevelopment.richmond.edu/student-handbook/index.html>. Please don't hesitate to reach out to any of us, or any of the resources listed on these pages, with questions or concerns. We really want to hear from you, and we are here to help.

Sincerely,

Maura Smith
Title IX Coordinator and Director of Compliance

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