

To the University Community,

As you may recall, last summer, I formed the [President's Task Force on Civility and Campus Culture](#). Their charge included formulating "specific recommendations that are both effective and practical, which the University may implement to enhance and support a culture of civility and respect on its campuses."

Specifically, the task force was asked to "examine and recommend new or expanded programming and avenues of educating and communicating with students" on the full range of issues associated with civility and culture, including, "...ways to deter and address sexual violence of any kind, harassment, intimidation, bullying and incivility," among others.

When we at UConn say that we have "zero tolerance" for these behaviors, we mean it. University campuses are forever changing, meaning that issues of "civility and campus culture" are fluid – evolving from year to year, and even semester to semester. Because of this, our approach to ensuring we have the kind of campus community we all want for ourselves must evolve as well. We will always be prepared to find ways that we can do something more, something different or something better. This essential practice was at the root of this undertaking.

The task force worked throughout the fall and presented their report to me by their December 15 deadline. Following that, I asked our Vice President for Student Affairs, Michael Gilbert, to lead a group of senior administrators in reviewing the report and formulating the university's responses. Their first priority was to identify those recommendations they suggested be accepted and implemented in the near term.

After receiving the review of the recommendations from the working group, I have instructed that a number be implemented, beginning immediately. They include:

- The formation of an office that will, among other functions, serve as a central point of contact for students who are victims of crimes. Staff in this office will help victims navigate their way through various processes and guide them toward the resources and options that are available to them. It will include staff members who are specifically designated to work with victims of sexual assault as part of their duties. (Please note that such an office would not be an alternative to calling 911 in an emergency or reporting a crime to the police).
- Implementing a program of bystander training for all students, the planning for which is already underway.
- Offering student-oriented education programming on healthy relationships;
- Expanding and enhancing student-orientated educational programming on sexual violence prevention;

- Expanding educational programming on alcohol and drug abuse;
- Repeating mandatory education on sexual violence prevention at different points during the student experience;
- Better advertising self-defense programs for students.
- A student-led effort to change the odious “nickname” that is occasionally used to describe the Celeron Path, and the unfounded perceptions associated with this walkway.

Implementing these recommendations will begin immediately, and, as you will see, specific individuals and offices have been assigned to oversee their implementation within an appropriate timeframe.

These are only a few of the accepted recommendations; there are many others.

Also, as the review notes, there are other recommendations that require further study in order to determine how or if they could be successfully implemented, or because more information is needed before a well-informed decision can be made on whether or not move forward with a given recommendation.

I am very pleased to provide both of these documents to you today.

The full Task Force report can be found [here](#).

The review of the task force recommendations can be found [here](#).

My thanks to all the dedicated faculty, staff and students who made this process positive and productive; they have performed a valuable and lasting service to the university.

And yet we all know very well that our work is never truly finished, particularly when it comes to the issue of sexual violence on our campuses. Our policies, procedures, services and resources must be reviewed and *reimagined* on an ongoing basis. This will help ensure we are employing the best strategies to combat sexual violence and provide victims with the help they need.

This is not unique to UConn; it is a national issue that is highly relevant on every campus. Our goal is to remain at the forefront of the battle against sexual assault and harassment by doing all we can to mirror best practices nationally, and to be a leader in the field. Because we seek not only to emulate others, but also to be a model for other colleges and universities across the nation. Today, we take another step in that direction.

Sincerely,



Susan Herbst