



Sexual Violence Culture and Climate Work Group

In fall 2021, in response to increasing reports of sexual violence and student activism, President Tim Sands created the Sexual Violence Culture and Climate work group and charged it with creating a sustainable transformation to move Virginia Tech's culture toward one that protects against sexual violence. During its initial phase, the work group was asked to focus on undergraduate students and specifically the high-risk time for violence that occurs in the early weeks and months of the school year, a time period known as "the red zone." The group consisted of representatives from offices across the university and included professional faculty, academic faculty, and undergraduate and graduate student representatives.

To carry out the ambitious work, the work group formed subcommittees dedicated to each element of its charge. Key accomplishments in 2021-22 include:

- Identifying a framework for sustainable culture change.
 - The group identified opportunities to engage with residential undergraduate students to help shape a more protective culture. As a result, employees and student leaders within the Residential Well-being program received significant additional training focused on sexual assault prevention and addressing culture within in the residence halls.
 - An organizational model was identified that included establishing work groups and recurring events necessary to sustain the work of culture change and maintain awareness of sexual violence at Virginia Tech.
- Assessing prevention and culture change.
 - The group inventoried existing efforts and programming aimed at sexual violence prevention and developed a tool to assess those programs' reach and effectiveness.
- Carrying forward recommendations from the 2019 Task Force.
 - In addition to creating a new full-time position dedicated to sexual violence prevention (which was filled in February 2022), the Task Force made recommendations for improved communications about Title IX resources as well as implementing a university-wide prevention campaign. This year, SVCC created the new Safe at VT website, which provides useful information for students and

survivors in an approachable way. It also worked to create the foundations for a university-wide prevention campaign to increase awareness, including a logo linked to Safe at VT as well as a campaign plan, which launched during fall 2022.

- Increased transparency in how the university responds to sexual violence.
 - Based on feedback from community members and students, improvements were made to the ways the university provides information about sexual violence on campus. Timely warning emails were overhauled to provide more clarity and useful information about incidents and prevention.
 - Additionally, content was added to both the Safe at VT website and the Virginia Tech Police Department's website to provide more helpful information about how the university responds to reports.
- Encouraged community engagement.
 - In addition to the employees and students appointed to SVCC, subject-matter experts and students were invited to join the various subcommittees. In total, 32 university personnel and 57 students served on SVCC or one of its subcommittees.
 - A community engagement event, open to all students, was held to gather student feedback on the path of SVCC. Students provided feedback to each subcommittee and that feedback helped guide the work of SVCC.

The task of transforming culture is a large one and extends beyond a single year's work. The SVCC continues to work in the 2022-23 academic year. In addition to building on its goals, it has expanded its focus to other off-campus students, graduate and professional students, and employees. It is working on implementing the identified sustainable model, rolling out a university-wide prevention campaign containing educational and awareness messaging informed by the trends and patterns garnered from the Title IX work outlined above, and looking at ways to further increase transparency about sexual violence at Virginia Tech and how we respond. Finally, the group is embarking on new goals, including looking to leverage academic programs to influence culture related to sexual violence as well as exploring restorative justice and resolution concepts. Ongoing progress includes:

- Consistent Safe at VT prevention messaging on Virginia Tech social media sites and in locations across the university featuring students. Safe at VT messaging was featured on Cassel Stadium's jumbotron during the opening game of the NCAA women's basketball tournament.
- Developing recommendations for an alternative resolution process and engaging training and consultation on restorative justice practices.

- Hosting the first annual SVCC Summit, featuring Jennifer Hirsch and Shamus Kahn, authors of the book “Sexual Citizens: A Landmark Study of Sex, Power, and Assault on Campus.”