

Spring 2016: An assessment of the prevalence of nonconsensual sexual contact on the Champlain College campus and student perceptions of campus climate, College responsiveness, and bystander behaviors

Campus Climate Survey Executive Summary

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Executive Summary

The Campus Climate survey was conducted for multiple purposes that included assessing the prevalence of sexual violence on our campus and the campus climate around sexual violence in order to both understand our own setting and to develop appropriate educational programs for the campus.

All traditional undergraduate students over the age of 17, both full and part-time were invited to participate (n=2114). Of those, 351 students completed some portion of the survey and 280 completed a substantive portion or all of the survey (13% of invitations). A higher proportion of respondents were females (54%, versus 38% in the population).

How extensive is nonconsensual sexual contact? What do we know about those incidents?

These statistics are based on the 280 students who responded to most questions on the survey.

1. Nonconsensual sexual contact by physical force or threat of force: 5.0% (14 students)
2. Nonconsensual sexual contact by incapacitation: 7.5% (21 students, some overlapping with #1)
3. Overall estimate of likelihood of nonconsensual sexual contact: 10.8% (30 incidents reported)
4. An additional 1.1% (3 students) reported attempted, but unsuccessful, sexual contact by force or threat of force
5. A total of 42 “nonconsensual sexual acts or attempts” were reported by 33 different students.

Students who are students of color, identify as women, live off-campus and are LGBTQIA are more likely to report incidents of nonconsensual sexual contact than would be expected by their proportion in our population (or in the case of gender identity and sexual orientation their proportion in the survey respondents).

The vast majority of incidents (85%) involved individuals that students knew prior to the incident. [Thirteen students reported incidents that involved Champlain students, two of whom were also described as Champlain employees. Where the gender of the offender was indicated, 95% were reported to be men.]¹

While the vast majority (79%) of Champlain students who reported an incident of nonconsensual sexual violence told someone about the incident, only one student said they had used the College’s formal procedures for reporting and none said they spoke to a counselor, residential life, student life or campus public safety staff member. Those who didn’t tell anyone most commonly offered embarrassment, wanted to forget and not wanting to cause worry as the reasons. While students said they would know where to go to get help in a case of sexual assault, they were less confident about knowing how to use Champlain’s formal reporting procedures.

How do students feel about the Champlain campus climate generally and in relation to sexual misconduct? How likely are they to engage in preventative bystander behaviors?

Among the general campus climate questions, we were struck by the lower student satisfaction with the statement, “I seldom get the run-around” when seeking information on this campus. Students were

¹ In the report published on April 25, 2016, this section originally said: “Two of the 33 reported incidents involved Champlain College employees and 13 involved our students. Slightly more than half (58%) of reported offenders were men.” We believe the language above states this information more clearly and accurately.

generally quite positive about the College's response to crises and its attention to the safety and support of students. When specifically asked about how they expected the College would respond to a report of sexual assault, 87% believe the College would take the report seriously and 84% thought that it would limit institutional knowledge about the report. Students were the least positive (72% in agreement) that the College would appropriately address institutional factors that may have led to the assault. Our LGBTQIA students were generally less positive than their peers about how the institution would respond.

Students were generally less confident that their peers would engage in a range of bystander behaviors than they were in their own likelihood to participate. They believed that peers were most likely to report repeat offenders, be willing to serve as a witness in a sexual assault case and confront other students who make inappropriate gestures or comments. Nearly half believed that Champlain students would allow personal loyalties or fear of punishment to affect their reporting of sexual assaults.

We saw very few differences in student responses to campus climate or bystander behavior based on race and ethnicity and only a small number based on age or residential status. There were a larger number of differences for students who identify as women and LGBTQIA, where these two groups were generally less positive about climate and more likely to say they would engage in related bystander behaviors.

Next steps include planning for the communication of results across the campus and engaging the community, including students, in responding to the report.