

Presidential Advisory Committee on Sexual Assault Annual Report (2023-2024)

The Presidential Advisory Committee on Sexual Assault (PACSA) is one of several Columbia University initiatives to address gender-based misconduct and is charged with advising the president on issues related to the prevention of and response to gender-based misconduct, including sexual assault. The Committee was created in 2006 through a Senate resolution and works with partners and experts across the University to evaluate policies and procedures and solicit feedback from the Columbia community with the goal of eliminating sexual assault and other forms of gender-based misconduct from our community.

Membership

The President appoints all members of the committee. The 2023-2024 Committee comprises faculty, staff, and students from across Columbia's campuses. Claude Ann Mellins served as co-chair, with Joseph Greenwell serving in Dennis A. Mitchell's capacity as co-chair while Dr. Mitchell served as interim Provost. Committee members are appointed to two-year terms, which may be extended by the President. Ex-officio members have no terms limits.

Committee Members:

Chairs

- Claude Ann Mellins (Professor of Medical Psychology (in Psychiatry and Sociomedical Sciences) at CUIMC))
- Joseph Greenwell (Senior Vice President for Student Affairs, University Life)

Term-limited Members

- Jeanine D'Armiento (Chair, University Senate; Professor of Medicine (in Anesthesiology and Physiology and Cellular Biophysics))
- Richard J. Eichler (Associate Vice President, Counseling and Psychological Services, Columbia Health)
- Marcy Ferdschneider (Assistant Vice President, Student Health on Haven; Assistant Professor of Medicine at CUIMC)
- Marjory D. Fisher (Associate Vice President & Title IX Coordinator, Office of Institutional Equity)
- Taania Khan (Student, Graduate School of Business)
- Laura Kirschstein (Vice Provost, Office of Intuitional Equity)
- Rosalba Savage (Student, School of Social Work)
- Marni Sommer (Professor of Sociomedical Sciences, Mailman School of Public Health, CUIMC)
- Colleen Walsh (Senior Director of Title IX Investigations, Office of Intuitional Equity)
- Susan Witte (Professor of Social Work, School of Social Work)
- Ally Woodard (Student, School of General Studies)

Ex-officio Members

- Donna Fenn (Deputy General Counsel)

- La'Shawn Rivera (Senior Executive Director, Sexual Violence Response, Columbia Health)

Discussions

During the 2023-24 academic year, the committee met twice, and partners across the University briefed the Committee on updates to the Title IX Regulations, services and programs that support gender-based misconduct prevention, and the University's process for addressing incidents of gender-based misconduct. Specifically, the Committee discussed the following topics in the 2023-2024 academic year:

- The Lived Experiences and Needs of Students (LENS) Survey
- Title IX Updates - Including New Regulations, University Updates, and Trends
- Cyber Impact on Title IX on College Campuses, including Columbia

Details of these discussions are outlined below, as well as recommendations from the Committee as pathways forward.

The Lived Experiences and Needs of Students (LENS)

The Lived Experiences and Needs of Students (LENS) survey is a partnership between Columbia Health, Student Health on Haven, and University Life which combined two existing student surveys, the NCHA-ACHA and the Columbia Student Well-Being, into one. The purpose of the LENS survey is to understand how students are experiencing their time at Columbia, which includes information on sexual respect and gender-based misconduct. We are mandated by New York State's "Enough is Enough" (EIE) legislation to collect such data on this topic every 2 years and publicly post it. LENS survey questions specific to gender-based misconduct stem from the Administrative Researcher Campus Climate Collaborative (ARC3; <https://www.arc3survey.org/>) and The Associate of American Universities (AAU) questionnaire (<https://www.aau.edu/key-issues/campus-climate-and-safety/aau-campus-climate-survey-2019>) validated measures and were informed by the Title IX Coordinator, the Gender Based Misconduct Office, and Sexual Violence Response (SVR) at CU. The survey was launched in February 2024 for a six-week period, with data being available sometime in the 2024-2025 academic year.

Title IX Updates - Including New Regulations, University Updates, and Trends

The Title IX area was altered when the Trump Administration issued new regulations in 2020. In 2022, a notice of proposed rulemaking with new regulations came down from the Biden Administration. The University was anticipating these new regulations since May 2023, but the expectation was that they would be finalized in April/May 2024. As the Office for Civil Rights (OCR) in the Department of Education (DOE) has to respond to every comment on the proposed regulations, and the comments are in the thousands, rollout was delayed. When the final rules are announced, a Columbia advisory group will convene and rewrite the University's Gender Based Misconduct policy to be compliant with updated final regulations.

Cyber Impact on Title IX on College Campuses, including Columbia

Resources were shared that included common online behaviors and online abuse. There is an increasing national trend regarding online abuse. These include cyber stalking, sexual exploitation, and deep fakes. Unfortunately, given the nature of cyber-attacks, much of this is done anonymously in social media networks, including gaming communities. Students seek out support in how to deal with individuals violating community rules within online communities. SVR has been supporting students to help them feel empowered and take the right action steps, including encouraging them to report to police, online managers, and CU staff. SVR is educating students on what their rights and options are, so they can make the best possible decisions. We discussed lessons learned in 2023-2024 regarding doxing resource needs and how they may support students being harassed online.

Recommendations

The Committee recommends the following related to the discussions and work from the 2023-2024 academic year:

1. To continue exploring evidence-based interventions around reporting and preventing gender-based misconduct. This includes utilizing the LENS survey data when released in 2024-2025.
2. To establish a Public Safety liaison for students experiencing online stalking, serving as a support and liaison with law enforcement.
3. To review lessons learned from the Doxing Resource Group this past year and how similar resources might be used to address other forms of online harassment.
4. To consider training options for students as preventative measures to online stalking and harassment, understanding that this material may be overwhelming as part of usual orientation training.