

July 19, 2016

Since last March, the leadership of Exeter and our entire community have been struggling with the painful reality of faculty sexual misconduct in our past. Even before those incidents came to light, we were taking steps to better prevent and address sexual harassment or assault of current or future students, whether by fellow students or faculty. Exeter's handling of a recent allegation of sexual assault, reported in the Boston Globe, is a disturbing reminder that we still have much work to do. We know many of you are profoundly disappointed. We are as well. Without question, the situation could and should have been handled in a better way.

We have explicit protocols in place for dealing with accusations of sexual misconduct at any level, and it is essential that these protocols be followed. In the last two years we have added programming that encourages victims to step forward, since all too often these incidents remain hidden because victims fear the consequences of revealing them. And, while policies and programming are important, we know that changes in culture, climate, and behavior must take hold for them to be effective.

Although there have been requests for Exeter to publicly discuss the specifics of the incident, we believe it would not be right to do so. Our commitment to transparency cannot displace our respect for the privacy of two young Exonians whose lives are at the center of this dispute. The matter is in the hands of law enforcement; charges have been filed and will be resolved through the legal system. In addition, the Exeter Police Department is investigating whether the school's reporting of the incident to police was sufficiently timely. We will take concrete action as warranted, such as employee disciplinary action, changes in protocols, or other steps.

Importantly, we also are moving forward with the following actions, the planning of which began some months ago, to improve our ability to prevent, address, and appropriately resolve sexual misconduct issues and incidents:

1. The Trustees have approved, and strongly support, the principal and the senior administration in the hiring of a director for student well-being. We will charge this person with oversight of all matters regarding student safety, including and especially those involving sexual misconduct, harassment, and assault. We will recruit an individual whose demonstrated expertise includes deep experience in preventing and handling instances of sexual misconduct. The director will oversee assistance and support for victims; provide leadership in the redesign of our practices, policies, and training for all adults in these areas; provide comprehensive oversight of each case; ensure that each student is holistically supported through the entire process by ensuring close coordination with all parties involved; and collaborate on education and programming for students where appropriate. We will direct this person to manage the reporting of all cases to the proper authorities, including directly to the president of the Trustees. Together the Trustees, the principal, the senior administration, the faculty, and the staff are firm in their commitment to student safety.
2. The new position will allow our Dean of Students Office to focus on the crucial, daily support of all students. We will provide that office with additional resources, such as increased staffing, external expertise, and oversight to provide the capacity they need to create a stronger student residential experience.

3. In December 2015, we commissioned a review of our campus climate, administrative structure, and training in sexual harassment and assault from Prevention Innovations Research Center at the University of New Hampshire. We await the recommendations arising from that review. We also asked them to design a new sexual and relationship violence and stalking prevention program for Exeter.
4. In April 2016, we commissioned legal experts to conduct a broader review of our current policies and procedures. This review will inform additional next steps. Changes will be in place for the new school year.
5. All year, we expanded programming: formal and informal; curricular and co-curricular; student-generated and faculty-driven. We intended to prompt conversation and the frank exchange of views. We know these topics are difficult to talk about, but we intend to persist in the coming years.

These changes and the additional resources that attend them will ensure that our students have the support they need and deserve. The new position will also bring deeper and more specialized expertise and experience to the complexity, sensitivity, and human dimensions of these issues. Together, these advance our commitment to student well-being: We place the quality of our campus lives at the center of our community.

For more information on our current policies, procedures, and initiatives related to sexual misconduct or harassment, please visit our [website](#) or be in touch with Assistant Principal Ron Kim at 603-777-3403 or either one of us at any time.

You have made it clear that we have much to do to regain your trust. We believe a culture of openness is a precondition for change. We have urged students and alumni to speak with candor about campus culture, to step forward with their stories, and to collaborate with us with their ideas, expertise, and passion. When they do speak up, especially to report an incident, we must ensure that they are treated with respect, empathy, and professionalism. It is our sincere belief and hope that together we can build a more open, trusting, and healthy campus culture — one deserving of all Exonians. We will need your continued help and guidance as we move forward.

Sincerely,

Nicie Panetta '84  
President of the Trustees  
[epanetta@exeter.edu](mailto:epanetta@exeter.edu)

Lisa MacFarlane P'09, P'13  
Principal Instructor and Instructor in English  
[Exeter Special Message Principal@exeter.edu](#)  
603-777-3401