

Letter from Lisa MacFarlane



Feb. 26, 2016

Dear Parents,

I know how eager you must be for spring break and the chance to be with your Exonians. I hope you enjoy that special time together, and we look forward to welcoming everyone back for the spring term.

As we near the end of the academic year, I want to update you on our ongoing work to support and educate our students about sexual decision-making, consent, harassment, assault and identity. Encouraging healthy relationships and sustaining a community formed around respect and empathy for individuals is the very core of our mission. The examples I share with you now, in addition to the required health course for preps and other initiatives I outlined for you in the fall, reflect our continued refinement and expansion of that mission.

We have begun working with the Prevention Innovations Research Center at the University of New Hampshire — a program recognized and praised by the White House Task Force to Protect Students from Sexual Assault. During the next academic year, students will participate in a survey that will inform and shape a bystander training program. At the conclusion of PIRC's data collection, it will build a customized program for students that will demonstrate how to safely intervene in situations where others may be at risk. Simultaneously, we will launch a campuswide social marketing campaign to reinforce the responsibility each community member has to protect our students and speak out on their behalf.

A new, required health seminar geared specifically for seniors is also being offered this year. "Crossroads: Your Future, Your Health" will meet once a week during the spring term. Discussions will be guided by relevant health data and any questions or concerns students may have as they begin to imagine life after Exeter.

Dialogue, though it can be difficult and sometimes awkward, is of course the key to informed, healthy decision-making, and we know that peer-to-peer conversations in particular can have a powerful effect on student behavior. Connie Morse, one of our school counselors, provides training on sexual pressures and assault to more than 70 Student Listeners each year. [There is a recent web profile](#) about this wonderful group, which I encourage you to read if you haven't already. Similarly, dorm proctors receive annual training from Dean of Residential Life AJ Cosgrove on healthy relationships and mental health issues. Student leaders serve as valuable resources to their peers and can facilitate conversations with

adults on campus when necessary. *The Exeter Bulletin* highlighted the impact and importance of proctor-prep relationships in its winter 2015 issue.

In January, H4, a peer education health club, hosted the inaugural event in a series of dinners designed to facilitate conversation around important issues, the first of which was “Sex and Sensibility: A Discussion About Culture at Exeter.” In discussions led by H4’s peer educators, students spoke first with each other and then with faculty members about relationships and the culture of sexuality in our campus community.

I’ll continue to keep you informed about our ongoing efforts to ensure a safe and supportive community — one where students are equipped to navigate the complexities of decision-making about sexuality within the boundaries of healthy and respectful relationships. As always, we value your partnership in this endeavor and are here to address any of your questions or concerns. You can always reach out to me, Dean of Students Melissa Mischke or any of our health center professionals.

With warm regards,

Lisa MacFarlane P’09, P’13
Principal Instructor and Instructor in English