

DARTMOUTH COMMUNITY AGAINST GENDER HARASSMENT AND SEXUAL VIOLENCE

Dartmouth Alumni Council meeting, May 2019

DCGHSV is an advocacy group comprising a multi-generational coalition of alumni/ae, students, and faculty. We support Dartmouth community members who have been suppressed after experiencing gender harassment and/or sexual violence. Our growing grassroots organization came together in late 2018, when hundreds of concerned Dartmouth community members signed a letter [1] standing with the plaintiffs of *Rapuno et al* [2], the class-action lawsuit in which seven women reported that the College failed to take legally-required action to protect them from sexual harassment in the Psychology and Brain Sciences Department (PBS). For many of us, the culture highlighted in the PBS case is deeply reminiscent of dynamics we have experienced ourselves at Dartmouth. We work collaboratively toward ending gender harassment and sexual violence at Dartmouth-- by standing with survivors, speaking out against inaction, and calling for transparency, accountability, and the reparation of institutional betrayal. The following questions were drawn from suggestions submitted by DCGHSV members for Alumni Councilors to ask of Dartmouth leaders, students, and themselves:

- What mechanisms have been set up at Dartmouth, in the wake of the abhorrent and longstanding problematic behaviors exhibited in PBS, **to fast-track and respond to concerns surrounding sexual harassment, assault, and abusive power dynamics?** How has the PBS department specifically addressed its deeply-rooted culture of violence that sustained harm for so many years?
- Have members of the Alumni Council been given **transparent access** to the original legal filing [2] and Dartmouth's subsequent responses [3-6] in the case of *Rapuno et al*? In particular, have the Councilors reviewed the newest filing from May 1st, and the College's aggressive response, **which accuses the plaintiffs of using "publicity as a sword"** [5-6]?
- Dartmouth's official filings in response to *Rapuno et al* [3, 5-6] contain numerous instances of **problematic victim-blaming language**, thereby a) perpetuating a culture that blames those targeted by sexual harassment and discouraging reporting of legitimate complaints, b) contributing to the public perception that the administration will deflect all responsibility for past mistakes, and c) standing in direct opposition to Dartmouth's public claims to support and protect survivors. Will the College continue on this damaging path?
- Given the concerns that the PBS case raised about adequate reporting mechanisms, will Dartmouth College **revisit its decision not to employ an ombuds**? The position was originally vacated in July of 2017, and was left permanently unfilled in April of 2018 after an internal committee decided that the Title IX Office and other college resources were sufficient [7]. The extent of concerns surfacing from members of the community suggests that the problem may have stemmed more from the way the position was constructed at Dartmouth than with duplication of existing resources.
- In the wake of the PBS lawsuit, how are alumni/ae **kept apprised of current departmental investigations** or reviews, and the timelines and details thereof?
- How, for faculty, staff, and students, does Dartmouth **detect, dissuade, and prevent possible retaliation** when harassment is reported?

- What does Dartmouth do to **detect and mitigate bias** amongst faculty concerning the capabilities of women, people of color, and first-gen students?
- What kind of regular training about **community standards** and legal requirements supporting equity (Title VII, Title IX, etc.) are required of faculty members? Staff? Students? Is there **any evidence that existing required training is effective in preventing harassment** and other abuses of power given the known limitations of online training modules [8]?
- The College has fallen behind other Ivy League schools in the percentage of women that make up various departmental faculty. Recent efforts have not been particularly effective in advancing faculty diversity at Dartmouth: what will Dartmouth do *differently* -- beyond the Moving Dartmouth Forward initiative -- to **recruit, retain, and promote talented scholars** belonging to historically marginalized groups, including, but not limited to, women and people of color?
- Many experiences of harassment, assault and violence that occurred decades ago were not deemed “reportable” at the time, given the dated tolerance of misogyny (and racism, classism, and xenophobia). These incidents are now recognized as harassment and in violation of Title IX and/or Title VII. In working to make its culture equitable, inclusive, and no longer in violation of the law: will Dartmouth leverage **restorative justice** to address the historic behavior of some of its leaders, faculty, staff, and students?
- What deep and **meaningful** structural changes to Dartmouth can be pursued to make it a more supportive and nurturing environment to educate and train women and minorities without threat of gendered and/or racialized aggression, harassment, or discrimination?
- Alumni/ae, while “round the girdled Earth they roam,” represent a significant constituency -- their donations support Dartmouth’s academic and extracurricular offerings, while they themselves frequently advise College groups and individual students. How will Dartmouth take deliberate, transparent steps to **engage and educate alumni/ae** in its Campus Climate and Culture Initiative?
- Many Dartmouth community members have stories to tell about the multifaceted impact of Dartmouth misogynistic “traditions” on their lives – how can we **acknowledge and mobilize** these experiences in support of the College’s stated ambitions to be a leader in higher education?
- How will alumni groups across the country **unite to share concerns** about the PBS lawsuit and suggestions for ongoing action to overhaul a culture of misogyny, sexual violence and harassment, and silence? Can **alumni/ae support and encourage** the current administration and campus leadership during this era of raised awareness about ongoing sexual violence and misogyny?

We value your time and consideration in reviewing these questions. We hope that you will stand with us in supporting Dartmouth community members who have survived sexual violence and/or gender-based harassment, and echo our call upon Dartmouth leadership to do the same. If you are interested in contacting or joining DCGHSV, please visit the link included in our online source document.

Sincerely,

The Dartmouth Community Against Gender Harassment and Sexual Violence

FOR SOURCES, PLEASE SCAN THE QR CODE OR VISIT:

<http://bit.ly/DCGHSVAlumniCouncil>

