

Senate Higher Education Committee
Legislative Hearing on Campus Sexual Assaults

December 12, 2016

Testimony on behalf of Ramapo College of New Jersey c/o:
Melissa Van Der Wall, M.P.A., Dean of Students & Deputy Title IX Coordinator

Thank you Madam Chair and Senators for inviting Ramapo College here today.

Introducing and implementing change is challenging within any organization and it bears mention that, while Ramapo is not unique in this respect, its efforts to critique, change, and enhance its programs, policies and services benefit greatly from unwavering support at the very top of the institution, inclusive of the Board of Trustees, the President, the senior administration, the Faculty Assembly Executive Council, and the Student Government Association.

On the topic of Sexual Assault and Bystander Intervention, we have accomplished this education through a 3-part training program for all new students. The students are first exposed to sexual assault and bystander intervention education through a two-part on-line educational module entitled, Haven: Understanding Sexual Assault. Next, students are engaged through in-person education by the Students Challenging Realities and Educating Against Myths program; otherwise known as SCREAM Theater. This Rutgers supported peer-to-peer theater presentation is mandated for new students to attend during Welcome Week. Students experience messaging connected to education about sexual assault and bystander intervention in a live theater interactive format. Finally, students receive Affirmative Consent training through their First Year Seminar Courses, which is facilitated by our off campus partners healingSpace, a sexual assault support and advocacy center in Bergen County.

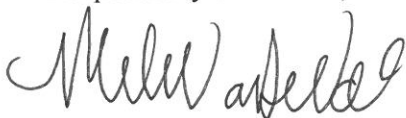
In addition to new students, the College offers education and awareness programs to continuing students. We ensure that voices are heard on the topics of sexual assault by engaging the community in well-attended town-hall forums connected to Title IX and our own college policies. We continue to educate student leader groups such as Resident Assistants and Peer Facilitators, on the role that they play in supporting students.

Ramapo College joined the national *It's On Us* campaign by creating our own video that featured faculty, staff, students, as well as myself and President Mercer. Our Student-Athletes and Coaches crafted their own *It's On Us* video that was widely shared on campus. We offer programming through the Rape Aggression Defense Systems, education during Violence Prevention Week in October such as the Clothesline Project and featuring nationally known keynote speakers, and awareness events during Sexual Assault Awareness Month in April such as the Vagina Monologues, Take Back the Night, Denim Day, the Day to End Rape Culture, and Affirmative Consent peer-to-peer promotion. The College also administered a campus-wide sexual assault climate survey. The information collected therein helps us assess what types of policies, programs, and services will best support our students moving forward.

Finally, our sexual misconduct policy was reviewed and drafted by a consultant and revisions were instituted in January 2016. The Sexual Misconduct Policy Governing students makes it clear to the victim or survivor what their rights are for reporting options in easy to read language. The revised policy eliminated the traditionally known student conduct hearing for cases of this nature and replaced it with a complete, fair, and impartial investigation process with an administrator issuing a decision. I am pleased to report that Ramapo's Debriefing Meetings cultivate a climate whereby key administrators are engaged in a constant feedback loop pertaining to policies, procedures and enforcement. This has established a platform for colleagues to voice feedback and leverage enhancements to the College's critical incident management. This model has proven to be a constructive approach to assessing all types of on-campus incidents so that student safety and support are continuously enhanced.

With that, I thank you all for your attention and I join President Mercer in welcoming the Committee's comments and questions.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Melissa Van Der Wall', written in a cursive style.

Melissa Van Der Wall, M.P.A.

Dean of Students, Deputy Title IX Coordinator