

# *A Message from the Office of the President*



Dear Colleagues and Friends,

It saddens and angers me that today we had to share information about a sexual assault reported early this morning.

Earlier today many of you received this Timely Warning Notification:

**In the early morning hours of Tuesday, September 1, 2015 a female student reported to the Mahwah Police Department that she was the victim of a sexual assault on campus.**

**The victim reported that the sexual assault occurred in the Overlook Residence Hall. The suspect is a student resident of Overlook Hall who met the victim on campus.**

**The suspect has been identified, interim suspended, and removed from campus. The matter is presently under investigation.**

This incident is all the more troubling given the efforts the College has undertaken in implementing [Ramapo: Advance](#), the College's plan to enhance campus safety particularly around the subjects of sexual assault, consent, bystander intervention, and alcohol abuse. It is inclusive of recommendations from former New Jersey Attorney General Anne Milgram and Stafford and Associates, a prominent national campus safety firm. Much work has been done but more remains. As indicated in the Stafford Report, "It is not unreasonable ...that a spike (in reporting) will occur once the existing outreach program regarding reporting and response is strengthened..."

As part of Welcome Week, incoming students yesterday and today attended a bystander intervention training called Green Dot. The College devotes time and resources to Green Dot so that students and others are empowered to promote a safe environment for everyone. We are thankful that friends of last night's victim came forward and, following those Green Dot protocols, sought help on her behalf.

Rape is never the fault of the victim. Too many times, though, predators use alcohol as a weapon to overpower victims.

Distressingly, this morning the Mahwah Police Department was summoned to campus to respond to several instances of intoxicated students, all of whom turned out to be underage. We have been *exceedingly clear* in our expectations regarding alcohol use and abuse on this campus, and still it appears that some have utterly disregarded these messages.

As a result, today I:

- Met with Mahwah Police Chief James Batelli at my request. Beginning this evening, Mahwah Police officers will begin patrolling our campus with the express prospect of charging underage drinkers. This is a difficult step for me but one necessitated out of continued noncompliance by a reckless, relative few;
- Addressed the assault with first year and transfer students at Opening Convocation;
- Established an agreement with NJ Lead to augment our existing drug and alcohol education

programs;

- Reached out to the Student Government Association President to outline the content of a discussion I intend to have with student leaders tomorrow; and
- Met at length with the Chair of the Board of Trustees concerning these issues.

These initiatives, in addition to the ongoing implementation of *Ramapo: Advance* are our highest priority. As members of Ramapo College, we have a shared responsibility to foster a safe and supportive environment for everyone. As the parent of a son and a daughter, as your President, and also as a member of this community, I consider this responsibility to be preeminent.

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*Ramapo College urges anyone who believes he/she has been the victim of sexual assault to immediately report the incident. Students may report the offense to the Public Safety Department (including anonymous reporting), the Title IX Coordinator or the Mahwah Police Department.*

*All options available to students for reporting an incident are listed on [www.ramapo.edu/publicsafety/report-an-incident](http://www.ramapo.edu/publicsafety/report-an-incident). Any student in need of immediate assistance should call Counseling Services at 201-684-7522 during regular business hours (8:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m. Monday - Friday). After hours, please call Public Safety at 201-684-6666 to contact an emergency on-call counselor.*

Peter P. Mercer  
President



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