

# An Update from the President's Council Action Team

June 2015

INCLUSIVE SAFETY  
**CONSENT**  
RESPECT SOCIAL CHANGE EDUCATION  
**DIVERSITY**  
BYSTANDER



**SAINT MARY'S**  
UNIVERSITY SINCE 1802

One University. One World. Yours.



## Message from the President

On behalf of Saint Mary's University, I am pleased to provide this update on the implementation of the President's Council report, "Promoting a Culture of Safety, Respect, and Consent at Saint Mary's and Beyond."

The Action Team, led by Dr. Esther E. Enns, is charged with driving and monitoring the progress of implementing the recommendations of the President's Council Report. The Action Team is responsible for reporting its progress to all stakeholder groups in June and December for each year of its three-year mandate.

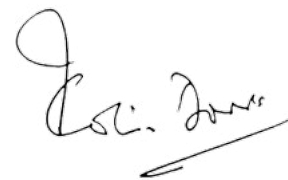
The work of the Action Team in creating cultural change will continue well beyond its three-year term. This foundational work will become embedded in our institution. It will require ongoing commitment as well as the support from all members of the University community.

I want to thank and commend the Action Team for its work. A great deal has been accomplished

in effecting change on our campus through the development of initiatives that will inform future programming here at Saint Mary's University.

Saint Mary's University strives for a community where individual growth of all members is advanced through the cultivation of mutual respect in an atmosphere of academic freedom.

We have a responsibility to respect the rights of all members of the University community, and we will nurture a climate of safety and respect.



J. Colin Dodds, Ph.D.  
President and Vice Chancellor,  
Saint Mary's University

## Introduction

Saint Mary's University continues to take significant steps in the prevention of sexualized violence and the promotion of a safe and respectful environment for students, faculty, and staff.

In response to a chant at Orientation 2013, Dr. J. Colin Dodds, President of Saint Mary's University, established the President's Council, a task force that examined the situation and provided a series of recommendations to foster cultural change.

In December of 2013, the President's Council released a report entitled 'Promoting a Culture of Safety, Respect, and Consent at Saint Mary's University and Beyond.' The Action Team was formed to drive and monitor progress of the implementation of the recommendations presented in the President's Council Report.

In previous reports we described elements of the recommendations that were emerging as part of this multi-dimensional initiative.

The Action Team is in the second year of its three-year mandate, and is working on the development phase of institutional programming that will carry forward into the third-year of our mandate and beyond. We continue our work to promote a safe and respectful environment for all members of the

University. The term of the Action Team will reach its conclusion within the next eighteen months and therefore we now focus our attention on ensuring that all of the recommendations are well entrenched within University programming. Looking to the future, the University must strive to keep this momentum and ensure there are systems in place for reporting and accountability. The goal is to establish an integrated program based on a firm foundation for the continuing process of supporting a culture of safety and respect at Saint Mary's University.

The Action Team is pleased to provide an update on its continuing progress and plans for program development in the coming 2015-2016 academic year.

## Welcome Week

The first week of September for students who are new to Saint Mary's University is a continuing focus of the Action Team's work. Plans for Welcome Week 2015 are well advanced, and have been developed with a view to establishing a template to be used for the Safe and Respectful Saint Mary's programming in future years. The goals and content of Welcome Week 2015 are based on the work of 2014, and significant new developments are in the areas of roles, responsibilities and governance of the University's orientation program.





## Background

The origin of the President's Council Report was an incident that occurred during Orientation Week 2013. As a result, many of the recommendations were related to the University's approach to orientation, and in particular Recommendation Five to "Reclaim and Redesign Orientation." Since then, members of the University community have given considerable emphasis to the design of Welcome Week and the year-long orientation process. In the face of many significant challenges, this redesign process has been shaped by extensive reflection and analysis.



## 2014-2015 Experience and Lessons Learned

For the 2014-2015 academic year, orientation was planned and managed by an Orientation Steering Committee which was co-chaired by the Dean of Science, Steven Smith and the Assistant Director of Student Services, Sarah Morris. Appointed by the Action Team, the committee's role was to oversee the development and delivery of first-year student orientation at Saint Mary's University, a special focus being the first week of September. Particular emphasis was placed on education around the key values of the University: respect, safety, and community. Another feature of Welcome Week was the combining of orientation activities for both international and domestic students. A full-time orientation coordinator was hired to take operational responsibility for coordinating events and educational initiatives brought forward through the Orientation Steering Committee.

From the outset, the Action Team had adopted the view that 'orientation' at Saint Mary's needs to be an ongoing process extending beyond the first week of September. As such, it conveyed to the Orientation Steering Committee the mandate to include activities throughout the year that support the students' transition into the University. This approach was grounded in the 2006 Senate Report on Student Success.


Welcome Week focused on a combination of academic and social integration, and in this way created diverse opportunities for incoming first-year students. It attracted positive feedback from both members of the University community and

external communities, and was featured extensively in the media. An internal report on Welcome Week identified strengths and weaknesses of the event, and these observations have informed the planning process for Orientation 2015-2016.

The Action Team has built on the strong foundation established for Welcome Week 2014 as it continues to work on developing the University's approach to orientation.

## Challenges

To further develop the University's new vision to Welcome Week, the Action Team recognized a need to bring added focus to two aspects for the coming year. The concept of orientation as a year-long transition process rather than as a week-long experience should be given more extensive attention for this academic year. We also recognized a need to define the roles and responsibilities needed for the design and delivery of orientation, and then to identify



offices and staff members to assume those duties for the future.

In December of 2014, the Action Team engaged the services of an outside consultant with expertise in policy development. The purpose was to help the Action Team come to agreement on roles and responsibilities relating to the implementation of the Council's recommendations for making orientation a year-long process. Specifically, the consultant was asked to help to achieve a workable and achievable consensus for positive collaboration on the implementation of these recommendations between the University and the Saint Mary's University Student's Association (SMUSA).

A key finding was that all parties to the collaboration will work towards achievement of the same, clearly understood, objectives. Further, all parties would have to be mutually committed to pursuing those objectives while being guided by shared principles, values and standards. In this way, the collaboration needed for transforming orientation as envisaged in the President's Council Report would be achieved.



## Plans for 2015-2016

Within the broad parameters set out in the agreement, the University acknowledges there is opportunity for SMUSA to make significant contributions to orientation. These contributions relate to SMUSA's established role within the University, and are meaningful in helping to ensure that orientation is successful both socially and academically, and that it promotes the culture of safety, respect and consent called for by the President's Council.

Key features of the agreement for how Saint Mary's University should approach orientation include the following:

- Orientation to be shifted to portfolio of the Vice-President Academic and Research
- Design and delivery of orientation as a joint venture among multiple sectors of the University: academic units, Student Services and SMUSA
- Written commitment to shared objectives, principle, values, and standards
- Agreement on content of orientation
- Agreement on specified offices and staff to assume lead roles for various elements of orientation
- Mechanisms and processes for ensuring accountability
- Coordination
- Risk Identification, assessment, and management
- Responsibility of the University to intervene
- Evaluation

In terms of defining roles and responsibilities for those involved in the design and delivery of orientation, we are adopting an approach that brings the academic faculties, Student Services and SMUSA into a collaborative working relationship, with staff members from those areas assuming particular roles for planning, organizing and delivering orientation – both Welcome Week and the year-long experience. To start this process, we have developed a Welcome Week and First Year Experience advisory committee with representation from Student Services, the academic faculties, and SMUSA.

The University will create a new position known as the Student Success Associate to support the first-year experience model. The first-year experience model will aim to support new students in becoming successful university learners, learning foundational skills for university success and developing relationships with the campus resource community. The Student Success Associate will be a member of the Welcome Week and First-Year Experience advisory committee and will be the key liaison to deans, program chairs, faculty, and other campus community partners as related to the first-year transition. This position will be in place by fall 2015.

The University and its Student Union have drafted an MOU that reflects this collaborative approach and presents clearly defined roles and responsibilities. The MOU has been accepted in principle and will be formalized in early summer.

## Increase the Understanding of Consent

The President's Council Report stated that the University has a responsibility to ensure all members of our community understand healthy sexuality and the meaning of consent.

Research reports continue to show that consent is not well understood on the part of both women and men. In the past year, this topic has been a key area of focus for the broader community. As a University, our members have contemplated and discussed the best approach to ensure a deeper understanding of consent. We need to further investigate how we work with students and provide them with the tools to develop and understand healthy relationships. These tools will help individuals be thoughtful about their actions and how they affect others.

To this end, the following initiatives are underway:

- The University will introduce safety training workshops during Welcome Week which incoming students are required to attend
- The University will have educational programs around consent and healthy sexuality as part of Welcome Week and throughout the first year experience
- Consent is incorporated as a significant component of all bystander training
- The University, in conjunction with its Student Union, will utilize the 'More than Yes' campaign developed by Students NS during Welcome Week and throughout first year
- The Centre for Housing and Residence Life conducts educational sessions during Welcome Week and throughout first year on the topic of consent
- Customized programming is required for varsity athletes
- Training requirement for student leaders





## Campus Safety Survey

The President's Council Report highlighted that members of the University community wanted to understand the scope of the problem around sexualized violence. The report recommended that the University conduct a survey to better understand the climate on campus.

A research team consisting of faculty from Saint Mary's University Department of Psychology, the Department of Management, Sobey School of Business, and students from the PhD program in Industrial Organizational Psychology responded to the Report's call for research. Their project is the Saint Mary's University Campus Safety Survey.

The researchers developed an anonymous survey to assess the health and safety climate of the University community. The survey is modelled after the University of Montana's annual 'Safe Campus Survey.' The survey was distributed in the winter of 2015, and approximately 500 students completed the survey. Analysis of the results is complete, and

the report has been submitted to the Action Team for review and consideration.

Overall, the research shows that the majority of students feel safe on campus, and also in Halifax. The sense of safety on campus is somewhat stronger than the sense of safety in the city. The results suggest that experiences of sexual violence seem to be rare among Saint Mary's students. However, there also appears to be a lack of knowledge of the safety programs and policies that Saint Mary's offers, as well as a lack of knowledge about sexual violence and what students can do to prevent it.

The Action Team will be using the findings for future program development, including safety training sessions during Welcome Week. The research also establishes a baseline measure on matters relating to the campus climate, and will be used as a basis of comparison to assess culture change when future studies are carried out.

## Address Alcohol & Drug Use

The University has revised its Alcohol Policy, and this will come into effect in September 2015.

The University has an Alcohol Advisory Committee responsible for recommending University policy related to the provision of alcohol services on campus - it is comprised of representatives from Student Services, the academic faculties, SMUSA, Security, Residence, Health and Wellness, and Alumni.

The overarching goal of the alcohol policy is to promote the health and safety of all members of the Saint Mary's community by creating and maintaining a University environment which values, promotes, and reinforces the responsible use of alcohol. The University strives to create an environment in which those of legal age who choose to drink, do so safely and responsibly. The expectation is that those who choose not to drink, can make that choice without feeling pressure and prejudice from their peers.

A new addition to the Saint Mary's alcohol policy has been the Good Samaritan protocol which was adopted, with permission, from Acadia University's alcohol policy.

Programming efforts have been designed to promote and maintain the health and safety of Saint Mary's community members and to offer alternatives to alcohol use/abuse. The goal of all programs will be to promote responsible alcohol use and attempt to minimize some of the risk behaviours for use and overuse of alcohol. Programming will include:

- Alcohol-free Welcome Week events
- Factual alcohol and drug information materials in Frosh Packs
- Alcohol Awareness Week
- Mandatory server intervention programs
- Anti-drinking and driving campaign
- Alcohol free events
- Work with SMUSA to develop creative alcohol-free programs
- Promotion of alcohol-free beverages more visibly in student lounge
- Intensive education during September to help students combat peer pressure to consume alcohol
- Peer education programs
- Bi-monthly survey to better understand drinking patterns that will help inform program development
- Mandatory training for student athletes





## Empower the Bystanders

One of the recommendations of the President's Council Report challenges us to introduce education and awareness programs designed to increase the understanding of consent among all members of the University community, and to focus our efforts on peer-to-peer programs. The implication of this recommendation is that all members of the University community have a role to play in the prevention of sexualized violence and to help ensure the safety of everyone on campus. To this end, Bystander Training has become a key focus in the Safe and Respectful Saint Mary's initiative.

A review of best practices in the field enabled the Action Team to identify a prominent training program offered by the University of New Hampshire (UNH) known as 'Bringing in the Bystander.' This program was first introduced in Nova Scotia when St. Francis Xavier University invited UNH delegates to its campus in 2013. In July of 2014, when members of the UNH training team were visiting Nova Scotia under the auspices of Students NS and the Antigonish Women's Resource Centre, a number of delegates from Saint Mary's travelled to Antigonish to receive training from members of the UNH training team, with members of provincial organizations and other Nova Scotia universities attending as well. This enabled us to study the training program more closely, and led us to introduce it at Saint Mary's in 2014-2015.

The University of New Hampshire structures its training to allow those individuals who have received the training to return to their organizations

to deliver the workshop to members of the University community. In the case of Saint Mary's, the people who received the training in July came back to campus and formed a Bystander Training Committee.

There was significant support for the training initiative: students, faculty, and staff stepped forward to deliver the training across campus, and many members of the University community have conveyed their wish to receive the training. To date, over 300 people have attended 'Bringing in the Bystander' workshops and further workshops are being coordinated on an ongoing basis.

Saint Mary's engaged the University of New Hampshire to be on campus in the spring of 2015. On March 9, 2015, UNH delivered training to other members of the University with a view to having them become trainers for future workshops, and in particular, to be involved in training students to act as peer trainers with fellow students.

There has been an outreach initiative as well; Saint Mary's hosted Bystander Training on March 10, 2015 for representatives from universities and colleges across the region. The session was well attended and had representation from members who will assume a leadership role in their respective institutions for bystander training.

Saint Mary's will continue the training across University sectors and is developing programming to ensure the sustainability of the Bystander Training program.

## Communicate Constantly and Purposefully About Expectations and Risks

The University will further enhance communications to ensure to all members of the University community are familiar with and understand policies as they relate to the prevention of sexualized violence and building a respectful environment at Saint Mary's.

The campus safety survey that was recently completed suggested there was a low awareness of the University's policies and safety programs that relate to the prevention of sexualized violence.

In the fall of 2014, Saint Mary's developed on-line safety training modules. Topics covered included: University policies and procedures, definition of consent and sexual assault, alcohol and drug use, how to be an effective bystander, and understanding response procedures in the event of an incident on or off campus.

A soft launch of the modules took place during the 2014-2015 academic year. Updates will be made over the summer to incorporate insights from the past year. The University will be hosting safety training sessions throughout Welcome Week 2015 and the finalized modules will be one component of this safety training.

A communications plan is being developed for Welcome Week and the First Year Experience to ensure that all students understand the importance of this safety training that will occur during Welcome Week and throughout the year. The University considers this safety training to be important, and will require all incoming students to attend one of the safety training sessions being offered throughout Welcome Week.





## Promote a Culture of Safety and Respect

The core values of Saint Mary's University reflect commitment to accessibility, diversity, and the provision of a positive and supportive learning environment.

On an annual basis, the University reports to its Senate and the Board of Governors on positive actions taken to improve the employment of women, aboriginal peoples, visible minorities, and people with disabilities.

The University has long been committed to providing opportunities that advance intercultural learning for both international and domestic students. The goal is for students to develop a deep understanding of cultural differences and underlying values.

The Action Team continues to collaborate with

stakeholders throughout the University who can play a supporting role in program development.

One prominent example of such collaboration involves the Centre for the Study of Sport and Health. The Centre will work with the Action Team to support initiatives throughout Welcome Week and the First Year Experience that will become part of institutional programming.

Building on the Saint Mary's University tradition of sporting excellence, the Centre supports interdisciplinary research on issues relating to sport, physical activity and healthful living. Its areas of focus for 2015/16 are complementary to the goals of the Action Team: to enhance communication between researchers and local and international

communities; to enhance the dissemination of research on sport and health through conferences and forums; to establish interdisciplinary undergraduate and graduate degree programming relating to sport, health and society.

Creating a safe and respectful campus and mentoring students for future careers is a part of the Centre's mandate, and also enhances the reach of the Action Team's work. As part of its research dissemination, the Centre offers a series of research studies and programs focused on developing mental resiliency in university students, student-athletes, youth-at-risk, workplace leaders, and employees in the community.

Over 200 students have engaged in the Centre's

intercultural programming and have learned to embrace cultural diversity in positive ways. These students, as well as other Saint Mary's University student leaders, will play an instrumental role in supporting initiatives throughout Welcome Week and the first year student experience.

The University is drawing significant benefit from the Centre's promotion of "cultural safety" - a concept that recognizes how safety encompasses spiritual, social, emotional and physical safety.

This important work will complement the goals and objectives of the President's Council and Action Team's mandate to foster a culture of safety and respect.





## Notes

<b>Build a Foundation for Cultural Change</b>	Completed	Underway and Ongoing
Communicate a Commitment to Action	✓	
Identify a University Lead and Create Action Team	✓	
Develop a University -Wide Code of Conduct	✓	
Gather Data and Shed Light on the Problem	✓	
Re-claim and Re-design Orientation Week	✓	
Revise the University's Sexual Assault Policy	✓	
Identify a Sexual Response Team and Improve Access to Resources and Training	✓	
Investigate and Discipline the Perpetrators	✓	
Clarify and Formalize the University's Relationship with Student Associations	✓	
Create the Right Structure, Clarify Roles, and Allocate Appropriate Resources		✓
Encourage and Create the Infrastructure for Teaching and Research Excellence in Areas Related to Sexualized Violence		✓
<b>Drive Cultural Change</b>	Completed	Underway and Ongoing
Increase the Understanding of Consent		✓
Address Alcohol and Drug Use		✓
Empower the Bystanders		✓
Communicate Constantly and Purposefully about Expectations and Risks		✓
Promote a Culture of Equity		✓
Improve Safety		✓
Continue to Engage the University and Broader Community		✓
Collaborate with Others		✓
<b>Demonstrate Accountability</b>	Completed	Underway and Ongoing
Evaluate Progress and be Accountable		✓





**SAINT MARY'S**  
UNIVERSITY SINCE 1802

One University. One World. Yours.