

## FACULTY AGENDA ITEM NO 16-6

Date: February 1, 2016

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SUBJECT: Statement of Support for Washburn University to provide Victim Advocate Services at Washburn and Washburn Tech

Description: We ask the faculty senate and general faculty to petition the administration:

- A) to create a confidential victim advocate position capable of providing Victim Advocacy Services for students and employees at Washburn University and Washburn Tech.
- B) to request that faculty and staff with expertise in victim advocacy be significantly represented in the hiring process to select a person(s) for the provision of victim advocate services
- C) to request that faculty be given a prominent voice in the determination of how confidential victim advocacy services will fit within the institutional structure complying with federal reporting policy and best practice in victim advocacy on college campuses. At this time, faculty requests of this position include, but are not limited to, the following:
  - We request that the confidential victim advocate be an entity distinct and independent from the Title IX Coordinator/EEOC officer.
  - We request that the confidential victim advocate be specially designated and trained to fulfill the roles outlined above, with a demonstrated ability to effectively provide confidential sexual assault victim/survivor services, as recommended by the Association of Title IX Administrators (ATIXA), the nation's leading providing of Title IX training and certification.
  - It is our position that members of the faculty cannot adequately provide victim advocate services, as faculty members' job descriptions include evaluation of student performance. The roles of evaluation and advocacy will directly contradict one another in some cases. Moreover, faculty who are licensed helping professionals and who are requested to engage in dual relationships that go against their profession's code of ethics are putting their licenses in jeopardy. Finally, the advocacy support a student may need is likely to exceed the capacity of a faculty member.

- It is our position that the victim advocate must be a confidential resource on campus.
- We request that the advocate offset Title IX restrictions pertaining to reporting for faculty.

Rationale: It is our position that Washburn University should begin to provide victim advocacy services to students and employees of Washburn and Washburn Tech immediately.

A confidential victim's advocate would be available to assist victims/survivors in understanding and navigating university policies and procedures related to victimization and promote their academic and professional success and personal wellness. This professional position requires knowledge and competence in providing confidential, victim-centered, trauma-informed services in order to meet best-practice standards in responding to victims/survivors of sexual violence and harassment as well as all types of victimization.<sup>1</sup> A confidential victim advocate is knowledgeable in crisis management, community referral services, and the criminal justice system. No other position on campus, including the Sexual Assault Education and Prevention Project Coordinator, currently provides these services, or has this cross-discipline professional development and competency. A confidential victim's advocate would further be available to collaboratively develop (e.g., with Sexual Assault Education and Prevention Coordinator, WU Police, WU counseling, Multi-Cultural Affairs, etc.) and continuously implement and update training to prevent victimization at Washburn, especially sexual assault, in an effort to ensure the University remains Title IX compliant even after the conclusion of the Office on Violence Against Women grant in 2018.

Recent federal regulations regarding the reporting of students who experience incidents of sexual assault and harassment have intensified discussions at Washburn regarding appropriate responses to victims/survivors of sexual discrimination and abuse. Providing confidential victim-advocate services to students and employees who have experienced such victimization, as well as to those who have experienced other types of discrimination, including racial and ethnic bias, is not only organizationally ethical, it may also positively affect

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<sup>1</sup> "ATIXA Position Statement on the Need for Victim Advocates on College Campuses." Available at <https://atixa.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2012/01/2015-ATIXA-Victim-Advocates-Position-Statement-FINAL.pdf>

admissions and retention. In addition, this position would strengthen the effectiveness of the Title IX officer at Washburn, and assist Washburn in living up to both its mission as an open-admission, municipally funded university and its legacy as Lincoln College. Finally, providing victim-advocate services would help to protect the University in the event of an U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights (OCR) investigation.

Failure to provide confidential advocacy resources as an early step in the reporting process increases risk to students and to the University. Students who begin the reporting process without fully understanding the limitations to confidentiality are at risk of feeling disempowered by having personal information shared against their will. To the extent that personal information becomes public, they may be at risk of emotional, social, and/or practical harm should their peer group, family, home community, or professional network respond negatively to the information. This is particularly important in light of Washburn's active efforts to recruit students from diverse global communities, where reports of sexual victimization may have especially devastating effects. A confidential advocate can fully explain the limits of confidentiality at each step of the reporting process, allowing students to make informed decisions and reducing the likelihood that a student will regret seeking help.

Please see attachment for further explanation of rationale.

Financial Implications: salary in the range of \$40,000 + benefits for full-time staff person

Proposed Effective Date: As soon as possible.

Request for Action: Approval by Faculty Senate/General Faculty

Approved by: AAC on date

FAC on date

Faculty Senate on March 7, 2016

Attachments Yes  No