

2025 Sexual Misconduct Climate Survey Results: Westfield State University



Introduction

Westfield State University is committed to creating a safe and welcoming environment where all members of the University can learn, work, and succeed as a community. As part of this effort, and in compliance with Massachusetts law requiring that all public and private higher education institutions conduct a sexual misconduct climate survey at least once every four years, the university administered the Sexual Misconduct Climate Survey during the spring 2025 semester.

The survey consisted of a core set of items developed by a state-appointed task force and provided by the Massachusetts Department of Higher Education to assess student perceptions and experiences regarding sexual misconduct and domestic violence, institutional resources related to these areas, and awareness of available resources and support options. Institutions are also required to publish results of the survey on their website.

The survey was intended to address the following knowledge areas of interest:

- Prevalence of sexual misconduct, harassment and domestic violence experienced by students on campus
- Familiarity with reporting options
- Knowledge of available resources
- Identification of areas for institutional improvement

This report is designed to summarize the results of the data collected. For questions regarding the content of this summary report of the campus climate survey, please contact Matt Russo, Title IX Coordinator, at mrusso@westfield.ma.edu.

Survey Methods

The survey was created by the DHE and distributed to campuses as both a stand-alone document and a Qualtrics Survey File (QSF) that could be imported directly into the campus survey system. The survey was used largely in its original format, though the survey leadership team did make minor changes to some questions to customize them for Westfield State.

The survey was administered online via Qualtrics between February and March 2025, with an estimated completion time of approximately 20 minutes. Students were sent a link to the survey to their Westfield State University email accounts, and promotional materials around campus displayed a QR code that could be used to access the survey. To participate, students must have been 18 years of age or older and enrolled in a course of undergraduate or graduate study at Westfield State University.

Before beginning the survey, participants were presented with a consent form outlining the study's purpose, eligibility requirements, question format and content, potential risks and benefits, and how to access available campus resources. Individuals who felt participation might negatively impact their well-being had the option to decline by selecting an opt-out button (16 prospective survey-takers chose this).

Among the University's approximately 4,100 undergraduate and graduate students, roughly 300 participated in the survey. As an incentive, the team randomly selected 50 participants for receipt of \$50 Owl Bucks for use with campus dining and the bookstore.

Survey Respondents*

To be included in the survey analysis, respondents had to have answered at least one item beyond basic consent or opt-out. A total of 290 surveys met the criteria, an estimated response rate of 6.5% of the university’s eligible student population age 18 or older.

Item-level response counts varied due to skip logic as well as respondents exiting the survey before reaching the final questions, likely attributable to the survey’s length and sensitive subject matter.

Demographic characteristics of survey participants are shown below. These items were located at the end of the survey and therefore only completed by respondents who finished the entire questionnaire.

Differences in the profile of survey respondents relative to the university’s student population suggest that findings, while offering valuable insights, may not be generalizable to the broader population.

Table: Demographics of Westfield State University Enrolled Student Population and Survey Respondents

	Enrolled Students	Survey Respondents
Age	N = 4,447	N = 168
18-24	76.5%	81.5%
25+	23.5%	18.5%
Sex	N = 4,336	N = 168**
Male	42.0%	26.8%
Female	57.8%	63.7%
Race/Ethnicity	N = 4,228	N = 174
Black / African American	6.8%	6.3%
White / Caucasian	70.4%	66.1%
Asian or Asian American	2.5%	3.4%
Hispanic or Latino/a	15.6%	16.1%
International/US Non-Resident	1.3%	2.9%
Multiracial or other	3.5%	5.2%

	Enrolled Students	Survey Respondents
Class Year	N = 4,442	N = 174
First year undergraduate	25.4%	27.6%
Second year undergraduate	16.3%	17.8%
Third year undergraduate	20.0%	24.1%
Fourth year undergraduate	21.7%	17.8%
Fifth or more year undergraduate	1.6%	4.0%
Graduate / Professional	15.0%	8.6%
Living Arrangement	N = 4,438	N = 167
On-campus	40.9%	60.5%
Off-campus	59.1%	39.5%

*Data on enrolled students include only students age 18 or older at the time the survey was fielded (N=4,449). Only students for whom data on that attribute were available are included in N counts above. Responses of “prefer not to answer” are not included in total counts and percentages for survey respondents.

**The survey was developed prior to Executive Order 14168 and included options in addition to male and female. Percentages shown reflect those able to reported consistent with this order.

Perceptions of Campus

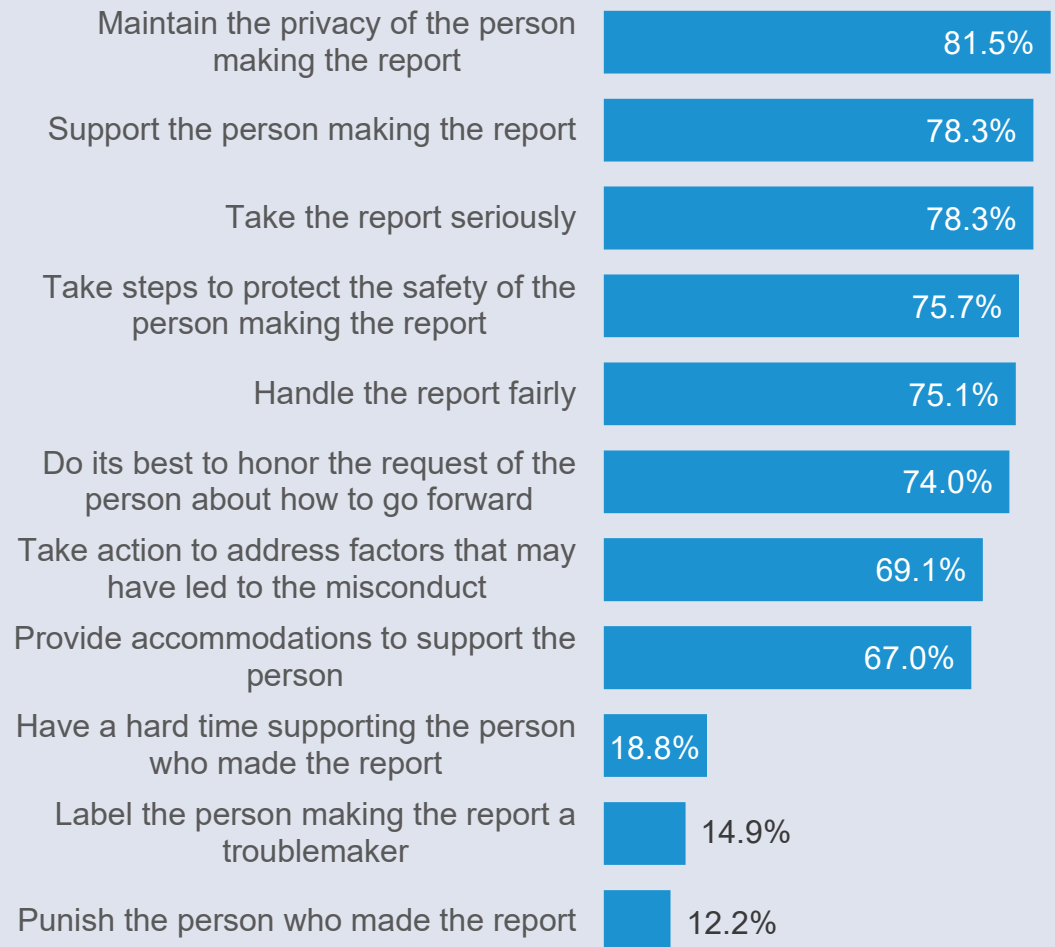
The survey assessed respondents' beliefs about how the university would handle a student's report of misconduct. Response options were presented on a five-point Likert scale ranging from very likely to very unlikely.

Most respondents indicated that the institution was likely or very likely to maintain the privacy of the reporting party (81.5%), provide support to the individual making the report (78.3%), and take the report seriously (78.3%).

In contrast, relatively few respondents believed the institution was likely or very likely to retaliate against the reporting party, either by punishing them (12.2%) or labeling them a troublemaker (14.9%).

The following statements describe how Westfield State might handle it if a student reported an incident of sexual misconduct. (The total number of response for these items ranged from 285 and 287.)

% Responding likely or very likely



Harassment by Fellow Students

The survey also included a series of items addressing experiences of harassment by other students, including verbal harassment, online harassment, and unwanted sexual advances.

About one in four respondents (24.9%) reported being treated differently by another student on at least one occasion because of their sex. An equal proportion (24.9%) indicated that another student had made offensive sexist remarks toward them.

Additionally, about one in six respondents (15.8%) reported experiencing unwanted attempts by another student to initiate a romantic relationship, despite having made efforts to discourage such advances

Since you enrolled at Westfield State, have you been in a situation in which a student:

	Total # Responding	% indicating at least once
Treated you “differently” because of your sex (for example, mistreated, slighted, or ignored you)?	185	24.9%
Made offensive sexist remarks (for example, suggesting that people of your sex are not suited for the kind of work you do)?	185	24.9%
Put you down or was condescending to you because of your sex?	185	20.0%
Made unwelcome attempts to draw you into a discussion of sexual matters (for example, attempted to discuss or comment on your sex life)?	184	19.6%
Repeatedly told sexual stories or jokes that were offensive to you?	185	17.8%
Displayed, used, or distributed sexist or suggestive materials (for example, pictures, stories, or pornography which you found offensive)?	185	16.2%
Made unwanted attempts to establish a romantic sexual relationship with you despite your efforts to discourage it?	184	15.8%
Made gestures or used body language of a sexual nature which embarrassed or offended you?	185	15.1%
Continued to ask you for dates, drinks, dinner, etc., even though you said “No”?	185	13.0%
Sent or posted unwelcome sexual comments, jokes or pictures by text, email, social media, or other electronic means?	185	12.4%
Spread unwelcome sexual rumors about you by text, email, social media, or other electronic means?	183	11.5%

Harassment by Faculty and Staff

A similar set of items addressed behaviors exhibited by faculty, instructors, and staff.

Overall, 18.8% of respondents reported feeling as though they had been treated differently on at least one occasion because of their sex. Approximately one in six indicated they experienced what they perceived as offensive sexist remarks (15.7%).

Since you enrolled at Westfield State, have you been in a situation in which a faculty member, instructor or staff member:

	Total # Responding	% indicating at least once
Treated you “differently” because of your sex (for example, mistreated, slighted, or ignored you)?	197	18.8%
Made offensive sexist remarks (for example, suggesting that people of your sex are not suited for the kind of work you do)?	198	15.7%
Put you down or was condescending to you because of your sex?	198	13.6%
Made offensive remarks about your appearance, body, or sexual activities?	198	10.1%
Displayed, used, or distributed sexist or suggestive materials (for example, pictures, stories, or pornography which you found offensive)?	198	9.1%
Repeatedly told sexual stories or jokes that were offensive to you?	198	8.6%
Made gestures or used body language of a sexual nature which embarrassed or offended you?	198	7.1%
Made unwelcome attempts to draw you into a discussion of sexual matters (for example, attempted to discuss or comment on your sex life)?	197	5.6%
Touched you in a way that made you feel uncomfortable?	198	5.1%
Made unwanted attempts to stroke, fondle, or kiss you?	197	4.1%
Made unwanted attempts to establish a romantic sexual relationship with you despite your efforts to discourage it?	198	4.0%
Continued to ask you for dates, drinks, dinner, etc., even though you said “No”?	197	3.6%
Made you feel threatened with some sort of retaliation for not being sexually cooperative (for example, by mentioning an upcoming review)?	198	3.5%
Implied better treatment if you were sexually cooperative?	198	3.5%
Treated you badly for refusing to have sex?	197	3.0%
Made you feel like you were being bribed with some sort of reward or special treatment to engage in sexual behavior?	198	3.0%

Stalking

The survey also included items focused on stalking behaviors experienced by respondents. Students were asked to report on their experiences regardless of whether the incident occurred on campus or involved someone affiliated with the institution.

Overall, 14.9% of respondents reported experiencing rude or mean comments online. A similar proportion indicated they received unwanted emails, instant messages, or messages through social media platforms (14.8%) and/or had rumors spread about them online (14.8%).

How many times have one or more people done the following things to you since you enrolled at Westfield State?

	Total # Responding	% indicating at least once
Made rude or mean comments to you online?	181	14.9%
Sent you unwanted emails, instant messages, or sent messages through social media apps?	182	14.8%
Spread rumors about you online, whether they were true or not?	182	14.8%
Approached you or showed up in places, such as your home, workplace, or school when you didn't want them to be there?	182	13.7%
Left you unwanted messages (including text or voice messages)?	182	13.2%
Made unwanted phone calls to you (including hang up calls)?	182	11.0%
Watched or followed you from a distance, or spied on you with a listening device, camera, or GPS [global positioning system]?	182	8.8%
Left strange or potentially threatening items for you to find?	182	2.2%
Sneaked into your home or car and did things to scare you by letting you know they had been there?	182	1.1%
Left you cards, letters, flowers, or presents when they knew you didn't want them to?	182	1.1%

Dating and Sexual Violence

The survey also included a series of items asking respondents whether they experienced violence since enrolling in Westfield State University:

- Overall, 15.0% of respondents indicated they experienced at least one incidence of violence from a hook-up, partner, or spouse. Most incidences occurred somewhere other than on campus.
- An estimated 23.9% of respondents indicated they experienced unwanted sexual contact or attempted unwanted sexual contact at least one time.
- About 7.8% of respondents indicated they had experienced violence from someone other than a partner, hook-up or spouse that they felt was based on gender or sexual orientation but that was NOT sexual in nature.

Bystander Intervention

Another topic addressed by the survey was the frequency of bystander intervention in situations involving potential misconduct. Respondents were asked whether they always, most of the time, sometimes, rarely or never engaged in specific bystander actions when the situation arose.

Half of respondents (50.4%) indicate they ask someone who looks very upset at a party if they are okay or need help sometimes, most of the time, or always.

About 46% of respondents walked a friend who was intoxicated home from a party or social event at least sometimes, and a similar percentage talked to friends of a person who was intoxicated to make sure they were not left behind (44.4%).

When the following situations arose at Westfield State, how often did you do any of the following? (Excludes respondents indicating N/A)

	# Responding	% Indicating Always, Most, or Sometimes
Ask someone who looks very upset at a party if they are okay or need help.	123	50.4%
Walked a friend who has had too much to drink or is very high home from a party, bar, or other social event.	126	46.0%
Talked to the friends of a drunk or high person to make sure they don't leave him/her/them behind at a party, bar, or other social event.	124	44.4%
Spoke up against sexist jokes.	126	42.9%
Intervene with a friend who was being verbally abusive to another person.	112	37.5%
Intervene with a friend who was being physically abusive to another person.	102	29.4%
Tried to distract someone who was trying to take a drunk or high person to another room or trying to get them to do something sexual.	103	26.2%

Policy and Procedure Awareness

The survey assessed respondents' awareness of reporting options both on and off campus.

Overall, 78.5% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they understood they could initiate a formal complaint process at the university, and 72.6% reported being aware that they could speak confidentially to someone on campus and knew how to access those resources.

Respondents were slightly more likely to agree they knew where to go to get information and support on campus (68.7%) than off campus (61.6%) if they or a friend experienced misconduct.

About 61.4% of respondents indicated they would know where to go to make a report of sexual misconduct.

Using the scale provided, please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements.

	Total # Responding	% Strongly Agree or Agree
I understand that I can choose to initiate a formal complaint process at Westfield State in connection with an incident that happened to me.	242	78.5%
I understand that I can speak about an incident in confidence to an individual (or office/resource) on campus and know who and where these confidential resources are.	242	72.6%
If a friend or I experienced sexual misconduct, I know where to go to get information, support and help ON campus.	242	68.7%
I would know where to go off-campus (in the community) to make a report of sexual misconduct.	242	66.1%
I understand what options a student has for reporting a claim of sexual misconduct at Westfield State.	242	61.7%
If a friend or I experienced sexual misconduct, I know where to go to get information, support and help OFF-campus.	242	61.6%
I would know where to go to make a report of sexual misconduct.	242	61.4%

Training

Respondents were also asked whether they had received information from Westfield State regarding institutional policies, prevention, and resources related to sexual misconduct.

The highest percentage of students (70.4%) indicated they had received information about Title IX protections, followed by information about how to prevent misconduct (68.7%) and the definitions of the types of misconduct (68.7%).

Similar percentages of students recalled receiving information about how to report an incidence of misconduct (64.8%), the student code of conduct (62.6%), or where to go to get help if someone they know experiences misconduct (62.6%).

Since coming to Westfield State, have you received written (e.g., brochures, emails) or verbal information (e.g., presentations, training) from anyone at Westfield State about the following? (The total number of responses for these items was 179.)

	Total # Respondents	% Indicating Yes
Title IX protections against sexual misconduct	179	70.4%
How to help prevent sexual misconduct	179	68.7%
The definitions of types of sexual misconduct	179	68.7%
How to report an incident of sexual misconduct	179	64.8%
Student code of conduct or honor code	179	62.6%
Where to go to get help if someone you know experiences sexual misconduct	179	62.6%

Reporting Experience

Respondents who indicated some form of misconduct on the survey were asked a series of yes/no questions about their perception of the institution. For each statement, only those who indicated “yes” or “no” were included reported percentages; responses marked “NA” were excluded from analysis.

Among the small number of respondents for these items, the vast majority felt they were given a say in how their report was handled (91.7%), believed their needs for support and accommodations were met (87.5%), and felt the institution believed their report (81.8%). However, 27.3% felt that it was difficult to report the incident or experience.

A small number of students perceived bias or negative attitudes due to race (4.8%), sexual orientation (9.1%), or gender identity or expression (12.5%).

In thinking about the incidents of sexual misconduct described in the previous sections, did Westfield State play a role by...

	# Responding	# Yes
Allowing you to have a say in how your report was handled?	12	91.7%
Meeting your needs for support and accommodations?	16	87.5%
Believing your report?	11	81.8%
Actively supporting you with either formal or informal resources (e.g., counseling, academic services, meetings or phone calls)?	22	63.6%
Not doing enough to prevent this incident or type of experience?	19	36.8%
Responding inadequately to the incident(s) or experience(s), if reported?	16	31.3%
Making it difficult to report the incident(s) or experience(s)?	22	27.3%
Mishandling your case, if disciplinary action was requested?	13	23.1%
Expressing a biased or negative attitude towards you and/or the incident(s) and/or your experience(s) based on your gender identity or expression?	24	12.5%
Expressing a biased or negative attitude toward you and/or the incident/s and/or your experience/s based on your sexual orientation?	22	9.1%
Expressing a biased or negative attitude toward you and/or the incidents and/or the incident(s) and/or your experience(s) based on your race?	21	4.8%

Reasons for Not Reporting

On the survey, 27 respondents indicated they had experienced some form of misconduct that they did not report.

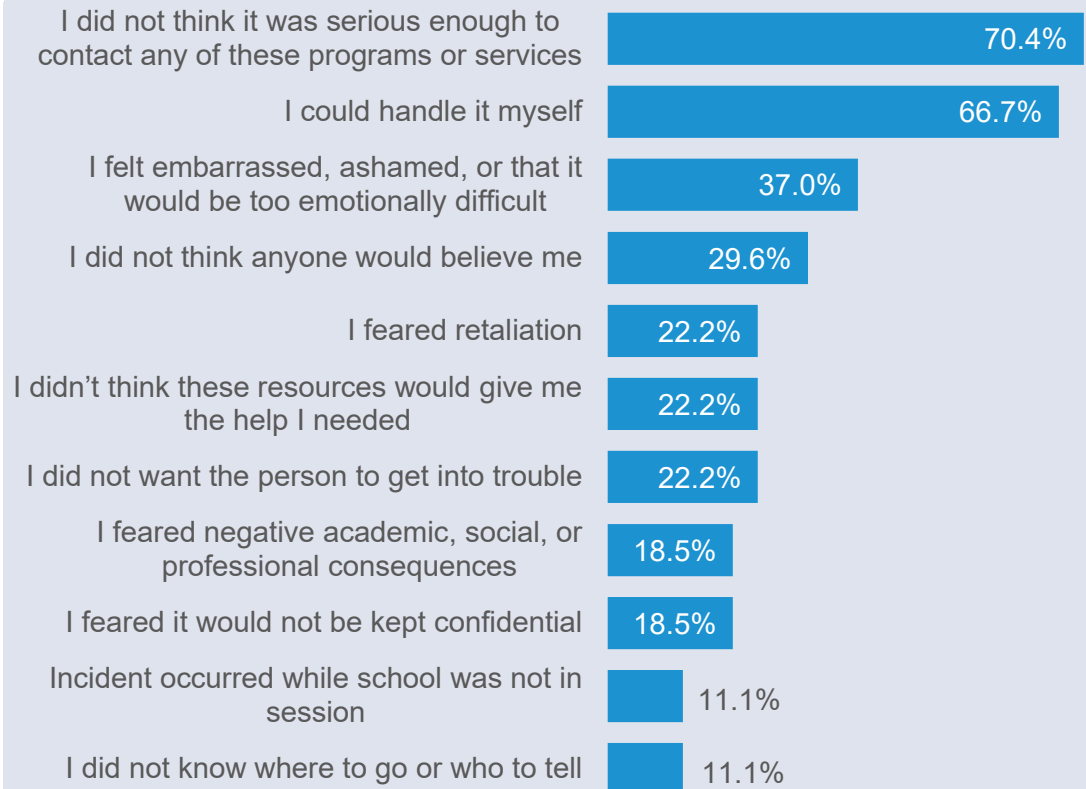
The most cited reason for not reporting was the belief that the incident was not serious enough to warrant doing so (70.4%), followed closely by the perception that they could handle the situation themselves (66.7%). Additionally, 37.0% of respondents indicated that feelings of embarrassment or shame contributed to their decision not to report.

Not knowing where to go or who to tell (11.1%) and the incident occurring while school was not in session (11.1%) were less frequently cited as reasons for not reporting.

Has someone engaged in sexual misconduct towards you while you have been enrolled at Westfield State that you did not report?

	Number	Percent
Yes	27	22%
No	97	78%
Total	124	100%

Why did you decide not to contact any of these programs or services? (Mark all that apply; total responses = 27)



Education, Awareness, and Discourse

A final set of survey items explored respondents' exposure to and engagement in education and discourse related to sexual misconduct.

The most commonly-reported form of engagement was through discussions with friends (61.6%), followed closely by having seen posters on campus (59.2%).

Over one-third reported attending an event or program focused on bystander intervention (36.5%), discussing the topic with a family member (34.1%), or engaging in classroom discussions about sexual misconduct or rape (33.6%).

Fewer respondents indicated they had taken a class specifically focused on sexual misconduct (11.4%), attended a rally or campus event on the topic (10.4%), or volunteered or interned with an organization addressing sexual misconduct (6.2%).

Since you came to Westfield State, which of the following have you done?
Please check all that apply.

	Total # Responding	% Indicating yes
Discussed the topic of sexual misconduct with friends	211	61.6%
Seen posters about sexual misconduct (e.g., raising awareness, preventing rape, defining sexual misconduct)	211	59.2%
Attended an event or program about what you can do as a bystander to stop sexual misconduct	211	36.5%
Discussed sexual misconduct with a family member	211	34.1%
Discussed sexual misconduct/rape in class	211	33.6%
Seen or heard about sexual misconduct in a student publication or media outlet	211	31.8%
Seen or heard campus administrators or staff address sexual misconduct	211	31.3%
Seen crime alerts about sexual misconduct	211	28.4%
Visited a Westfield State website with information on sexual misconduct	211	27.5%
Read a report about sexual violence rates at Westfield State	211	18.0%
Taken a class to learn more about sexual misconduct	211	11.4%
Attended a rally or other campus event about sexual misconduct or sexual assault	211	10.4%
Volunteered or interned at an organization that addresses sexual misconduct	211	6.2%

Conclusion and Recommendation

Westfield State is proud of its accomplishments around Title IX awareness and enforcement which position the institution to effectively address campus needs in this area. This includes:

1. Maintaining a team of Title IX officers who have worked as a prosecutor and police officer, giving them significant experience in addressing the types of incidents that occur related to Title IX.
2. Developing a standardized Title IX training for all new students, athletes and student leaders.
3. Fostering a campus culture that is actively and diligently addressing the realities of sexual misconduct. Students are aware of institutional reporting options and trust the institution to respond and provide support (based on survey results).

The University team plans to build on the above momentum by making such improvements as:

1. Developing a series of events and training programs designed to improve reporting and reduce incidents of sexual misconduct and domestic violence on campus through prevention, increased awareness of resources, provision of support and understanding of key concepts such as confidentiality, retaliation, and academic consequences.
2. Strengthening the collaborative efforts of campus partners such as the Counseling Center, Health Services, Human Resources, Campus Safety, and Student Affairs, among others, to create a united effort to address sexual misconduct and domestic violence on campus.

Together, we will continue working diligently to ensure every student feels safe and supported.