

April 7, 2014

Dear fellow members of the Columbia community:

I am writing to offer an update on the progress we're making in addressing the issues involving sexual assault at the University. There are many complex problems to resolve, so this will not be the last letter or communication I (or others) will write on the subject. It seems better to provide periodic statements about what we're doing, which, besides showing that things are happening, brings the added benefit of supporting an ongoing discussion within the community.

I want to begin, as I tried to do in my letter earlier in the semester, with the clearest possible statement that we are just not going to tolerate sexual abuse and assault at Columbia. Everything we are doing and will do must be with the purpose of reducing this misconduct to zero.

So, here are the updates:

I am creating a new position in the administration entitled Executive Vice President for Student Affairs, reporting directly to me. There are numerous matters relating to students that call out for attention by an individual placed at the highest level of the University administration, and our organizational structure will benefit from the creation of this office. While we will continue to derive many benefits from the independence of each of our schools and colleges that collectively make up the institution, the University also needs to have people and structures responsible for attending to such areas of University-wide concern. The point at the moment, however, is that this new office will provide a primary place of contact for issues relating to sexual assault, something many have asked for. I will begin a search in the near future and hope to have someone identified to fill this position by the fall.

The University Senate adopted a resolution on Friday that will strengthen student representation on the President's Advisory Committee on Sexual Assault and provide more transparency with regard to the Committee's role.

Public forums provide a critically important means of educating ourselves about issues such as sexual assault and help to galvanize the community for taking action. These should continue, in a variety of forms and contexts. Our undergraduate deans will soon provide responses to the thoughts and comments raised during a forum held last month. This will include ideas for enhancing both the ways in which student orientation addresses the matter of sexual assault and ways to reinforce these messages throughout the year. Moreover, we will continue to improve the adjudication process and will be adopting measures to improve the consistency of outcomes.

Columbia and Barnard are committed to working through the concerns about access to the Rape Crisis/Anti-Violence Support Center. We will resolve the issue of confidentiality before the end of the semester and will further explore recommendations regarding the Center's location and hours of operation over the coming weeks. Given that incidents are often first reported by phone, we have upgraded the technology being used so that all services under Sexual Assault Response will be able to be accessed quickly and easily through the 4-HELP phone line. Finally, we will announce by the end of the term the specific manner in which aggregate data will be

released, a process that must preserve the confidentiality of all those involved.

We are at the beginning of Sexual Assault Awareness Month, during which there will be many valuable events held on the campus. Sexual assault is, of course, a national concern, one shared by all colleges and universities. But we must always keep our focus on our own community and our affiliated institutions, every single month of every year. At base this tests our own capacities as a community to respect and care for one another. And, on that, we must not be found wanting.

Sincerely,

Lee C. Bollinger