



A MATTER OF COONS

The statistics are harrowing. A recent Centers for Disease Control and Prevention survey found that 50 percent of women report experiencing an incident of sexual violence between ages 18 and 24—the exact years that many women spend on college campuses. The convergence of factors—young people living together for the first time, removing parental supervision, and adding alcohol—makes it easy to conclude that bad things are bound to happen, right? Not necessarily. On the heels of several high-profile assault cases from Vanderbilt to Virginia, colleges, including Carleton, are heightening their efforts to prevent sexual violence from occurring and to have clear protocols in place if it does.

BY THOMAS ROZWADOWSKI • PHOTOS BY SARA RUBINSTEIN '98



FENT

IN 2014

Emma Sulkowicz, then a senior at Columbia University, carried her dorm room mattress around campus as part of an art project. She took it everywhere—even across the stage at her graduation ceremony—in order to call attention to the university’s refusal to expel the student she claimed raped her during her sophomore year. Of her project, titled “Carry That Weight,” the *New York Times* wrote:

It is so simple: A woman with a mattress, refusing to keep her violation private, carrying with her a stark reminder of where it took place. The work is strict and lean, yet inclusive and open ended, symbolically laden yet drastically physical. All of this determines its striking quality as art, which in turn contributes substantially to its effectiveness as protest.

The past 30 years shouldn’t feel like the dark ages when it comes to sexual assault awareness on college campuses. After all, female students are far more empowered to speak their minds compared to the ’50s and ’60s era of curfews and separate dorms for women. Yet Laura Williams ’88 often looks at the evolution of her career as an exercise in extreme patience. Simply put: Talking about sexual assault in the ’80s, ’90s—even the 2000s—didn’t evoke the same level of empathy and understanding that it does today.

“Something has changed in the past five years,” says Williams, an independent consultant in St. Paul who has spent much of her career working with the

Minnesota Coalition Against Sexual Assault. “I was passionate about this work in the ’80s, and even I couldn’t have imagined what the conversation would be like today.”

As a student at Carleton, Williams was active in Student Movement Against Sexual Harassment (SMASH), a group that conducted a mock date rape trial on campus. For an independent video project at Carleton about sexual assault, she interviewed students at colleges in Minnesota and Wisconsin and visited rape crisis centers.

After graduation, Williams worked with police, prosecutors, judges, and sexual assault survivors on community enforcement protocols that identified response gaps to ensure “victim cases wouldn’t fall through the cracks,” she says. She also began to understand why colleges adopted a framework that was focused more on risk management than on survivor support.

“In the previous environment of risk management, legal counsel had a lot of influence,” says Williams. “You didn’t find a lot of colleges willing to say, ‘Hey, let’s do something different.’”

“In almost any major social movement, it’s not unusual to see a paradigm shift only after someone from the outside gets involved. For colleges, the Clery Act and Title IX changed how everyone approached the issue.”

The U.S. Department of Education’s “Dear Colleague” letter, issued in 2011, gave colleges a “significant guidance document” to address sexual violence on campuses, says Williams. The trigger: President Obama’s decision to use federal funding (or the withholding of same) as a means of enforcement. His administration’s policies focused on civil rights protections through Title IX, an existing federal law more prominently known as a means to grant female students equal access to sports. The Clery Act, signed in 1990, already required colleges that participate in federal financial aid programs to compile, publish, and distribute statistics concerning certain campus crimes in annual security reports. But in 2013 Obama signed the Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act (VAWA), which further required schools to collect and release crime statistics on newly named offenses (dating violence and stalking, crimes based on gender identity, for example) annually under Clery. Colleges also had to present prevention programs like bystander intervention to incoming students and new employees.

The overall message—as summarized in a July 2016 *Washington Post* article about Obama’s Title IX enforcement legacy—was clear: “Colleges, you’re not doing enough.”

“It’s not like there wasn’t a dialogue before, but the ‘Dear Colleague’ letter was a game changer,” says Laura Haave, director of Carleton’s Gender and Sexuality Center (GSC). “The expectation on campuses, the ongoing discussions, the

training, the experts—before, it used to be, ‘Okay, who is on campus already? Oh, you. You’ll be the Title IX coordinator.’ Now there’s an entire career field for campus-based survivor advocates and for Title IX coordinators. Campuses are finally bringing in people with substantial experience to fill these positions.”

That matters, because it shows a tacit understanding among educational institutions that a major foundational shift had to occur, says Angela Hattery ’88, a sociologist and head of the women and gender studies program at George Mason University.

As roommates and campus activists, Hattery and Williams worked side by side on a lot of early Carleton initiatives that shone a spotlight on sexual assault. Hattery’s current research at George Mason is focused on gender-based violence in social institutions, including the military, prisons, the Catholic Church, fraternities, and sports. She wrote a book, *Gender, Power, and Violence*, due this summer, that examines the tension between victims and the institutions they believed would protect them—or at least have their backs.

“These are institutions that have deeply entrenched internal systems of justice. As we’ve seen, there are a lot of negatives to those systems,” Hattery says. “Basically, you had college campuses, the military, and the Catholic Church trying to figure out how to adjudicate felonies. That’s not what they’re trained to do.”


In 2015 Carleton reported 20 sexual assaults on campus. Following an initial investigation, 8 required a disciplinary action greater than a warning and 4 were referred for a full investigation and adjudication through Carleton’s formal disciplinary process. Even with the transparency required through Title IX, however, statistics tell an incomplete story. As inconsistencies in national sexual assault data demonstrate, the full scope of sexual violence can never be accurately documented since so many incidents go unreported. And even if an incident is reported, not every case will move forward if a complainant decides against a full investigation—whether due to personal reticence or lack of trust in the system itself.

Yet, in 2017 zero tolerance on college campuses (including Carleton’s) is expected, important conversations about sexual assault are being initiated, and greater avenues for openness, advocacy, and advanced training are encouraged. But a united front reinforced by good intentions and bold declarations cannot mitigate what still feels agonizingly like an unsolvable problem. How are colleges supposed to protect their students from becoming victims of sexual violence? Is what’s required by the Department of Education good enough? Or can we do better?



“For colleges, the Clery Act and Title IX changed how everyone approached the issue.”

Laura Williams '88



“We do not tolerate people who violate our safety. There is no place for sexual violence here.”

Carolyn Livingston

ESTABLISHING VALUES

The cover of “#CarlTalk: Consent, Healthy Sexuality, and Relationships” features two penguins having this conversation: “Can I kiss you?” “Nah, I’m good.” “Oh okay, that’s chill!”

But don’t be fooled by the lighthearted introduction: the 32-page booklet produced by Carleton’s Gender and Sexuality Center is unflinching in its directness. Both the booklet and the two-hour companion talk—presented during New Student Week—feature Carls reflecting honestly about consent, be it flirting with a crush, a first kiss, or having or avoiding sex. Emotions fluctuate between righteous indignation (“Call out problematic shit, because that ain’t cute”) to solemn regret (“I wish I had known that just because someone wants to have sex with me does not mean I have to have sex with them”) to confident reassurance (“There will be plenty of other students who have yet to share their firsts, and that’s okay. Awkward people mate here”).

But this isn’t the first or only chapter in the Carleton playbook. Even before freshmen arrive on campus, they are required to complete several online courses, including Haven, a sexual misconduct prevention program adopted during the 2015–16 academic year, AlcoholEdu, and Marijuana-Wise. Both drugs and alcohol have been cited as factors that contribute to sexual violence at colleges. Even as first-years are unpacking their plastic bins and getting to know their roommates, the college is sending a clear message: You are part of the Carleton community now. Embrace our values.

“We have unique opportunities to educate young people in ways that other communities don’t,” says Carolyn Livingston, vice president for student life and dean of students. “In other communities, you might only get to educate after the violence has been done. At Carleton, we say, ‘Let’s educate you before you even consider being violent or become a victim of violence.’ And if you’ve done something in the past that doesn’t fit our values, we’re going to give you the tools to hit the reset button on that way of thinking.

“We do not tolerate people who violate our safety,” Livingston adds emphatically. “There is no place for sexual violence here.”

Sexual assault is a societal problem, a human one that affects all genders. Yet despite progress on multiple education fronts, the land mines planted within a residential college ecosystem make 18- to 22-year-olds particularly susceptible. In *Guyland*, a book about the sociological factors that condition young men, author Michael Kimmel writes that “a college student today will never again be in a place where there are so many sexually active unmarried people.” Women are most at risk. According to the Department of Education, from 1995 to 2013 females between the ages of 18 and 24 were more likely to experience rape and sexual assault than females in all other age groups.

Carleton is also attuned to sexual violence in LGBTQA+ populations, an oft-neglected demographic in the national conversation. The college’s 2015 sexual assault/campus

climate survey—an optional survey of anonymous responses implemented by the Higher Education Data Sharing Consortium—showed that half the students (20 of 40) who reported experiencing an assault were nonheterosexual. The 2016 U.S. Department of Justice Campus Climate Survey Validation Study—conducted with more than 23,000 participants from nine schools—also cited that females, young students, and LGBTQA+ students were the most vulnerable groups on campus. Transgender students, in particular, experienced a 28 percent prevalence rate for sexual assault, according to the report.

GSC director Laura Haave lives with those statistics every day. On the wall of her office is a makeshift visioning board filled with inspirational quotes, idea maps, and bright pink Post-it notes that serve as a daily reminder of all the work that lies ahead. Haave says she is always adding new Post-its.

“For me, the work isn’t about compliance with protocols. It’s about holding ourselves accountable and creating a community here that feels empowered to hold the college accountable,” says Haave. “We might make mistakes, but we’re also able to correct them. I genuinely believe that Carleton is good at listening when people tell us to do better. We *want* to do better.”

An educator, survivor advocate, and LGBTQA+ activist for more than 15 years, Haave speaks passionately about everything from consent conversations and early childhood curriculum development to bystander intervention and building healthy relationships. She is at her most affirmative when she talks about students: We must trust students who come forward to report sexual assaults.

“My number-one role is to be someone students can trust to be on their side,” Haave says. “I can’t ever break that trust.”

Although she is one of the most outspoken voices on campus, Haave is not a rogue crusader. She collaborates with overlapping student, faculty, and staff groups, such as Gender and Sexuality Center Associates, Title IX Lead Team, Green Dot steering committee, Carleton Student Association, and Campus Advocates Against Sexual Harassment and Assault, all of which work to prevent violence on campus. Together, they are building a framework that complies with federally mandated Title IX regulations and allows Carleton to stay ahead of an ever-changing tide of activism and awareness initiatives.

At the forefront of those efforts is providing more education about consent. Carleton defines consent as the “mutual understanding of words or actions freely and actively given by two informed people, which a reasonable person would interpret as a willingness to participate in mutually agreed upon sexual activity.” No physical force, intimidation, or coercion. No incapacitation. Silence and noncommunication do not qualify as consent. The

“#CarlTalk” presentation and booklet are an attempt to deliver these messages with the kind of candor needed to establish firm ground rules, but Carleton faces an ongoing challenge.

“We share with our students the preventive pieces, but then we say, ‘Now you’re accountable. Abide by it.’ And it’s tough for them,” Livingston says. “There are a lot of dots to connect, and with this age group, those connections aren’t always easy to make. Consent is a major part of the discussion, but where do healthy relationships fit in? What are the different scenarios for sex that students don’t actively think about? How do we talk about the role that alcohol and drugs play? We have to build the complete picture.”

PUTTING THE PIECES TOGETHER

Mary Dunnewold finds the full picture frustratingly elusive. As Carleton’s sexual misconduct investigator since 2013, Dunnewold is responsible for enforcing policies, interviewing parties, and working with adjudicators to resolve complaints. The majority of Carleton cases, which are submitted as “community concern” forms, reveal an inherent cloudiness in the notion of consent as practiced reality, not just proposed theory.

“We are not effectively educating our young people about consent before they arrive at college,” says Dunnewold. “If we don’t teach them the skills to talk about sex, all they have to go on are the ambiguous signals that can cloud an actual encounter.”

“Campus sexual assault almost never happens the way people imagine it, with clear predatory behavior. That’s why there have to be additional layers to the consent conversation. We need to address the lack of communication that takes place somewhere in between. That’s not to say there aren’t times when someone says no, and the other person proceeds anyway, but it’s just not what I see in the majority of cases.”

For example, two freshman students—a male and a female—have sex with each other a few times while they’re both sober. Consent is granted in each instance of sexual activity. They might even label themselves as “in a relationship,” says Dunnewold. One Friday night, however, the female student gets intoxicated at a party and ends up back in the room of the male student she has previously been intimate with. He has sex with her while she’s incapacitated, without her consent. He has violated Carleton policy.

A text exchange between two students could reveal a conversation in which a woman says, “Let’s hook up tomorrow night,” and the man agrees, but it can be hours or days before they actually see each other. Without reaffirming consent “in the moment,” Dunnewold says, the man may believe that the pair’s previous text exchange—and the

absence of a clear “no”—serve as permission for him to engage in sexual activity with the woman. What does “hook up” in text form imply or even mean? Doesn’t matter. He has violated Carleton policy.

In another example, a female student tells a male student that she doesn’t want to go back to his room or have sex. Hours later, however, she goes to his room with him. Now there’s ambiguity when a sexual act occurs, Dunnewold says: Did she change her mind and go willingly? Was she coerced? Was she too drunk to make a decision or to hold to a decision that she’d already made?

These are the evasive pieces that must be thoroughly examined by the college, explains Dunnewold. Administrators face the daunting challenge of adequately supporting victims even as they implement a thorough investigative process that can feel intrusive. Finding a balance between empathy for complainants and due process for the accused has been and remains fraught with tension. Carleton is not immune. Last year, a former student sued the college, claiming it did not properly respond to two incidents of alleged sexual misconduct. The lawsuit is in the early stages and no significant decisions are expected until late 2018.

In investigating sexual assault, Carleton relies on the same standard of evidence required in civil trials—“a preponderance of evidence”—for the burden of proof. There is nothing inherently wrong with that threshold, writes Jon Krakauer in his best-selling book *Missoula*, which examines several rape cases at the University of Montana. Krakauer argues that “despite the deeply flawed ways that many universities investigate and adjudicate rape allegations, it’s important that they not be allowed to abdicate their institutional responsibility and simply turn over sexual assault cases to law enforcement agencies. . . . Criminal investigations of students accused of rape should be undertaken *in addition* to universities’ disciplinary proceedings, not in lieu of them.”

Detractors of Obama’s Title IX enforcement policies disagree, citing the need to protect the rights of the accused as well as the accuser. They argue that colleges cannot ensure due process in their investigations because they are not equipped to arbitrate what, essentially, amounts to a criminal prosecution. If both the accuser and the accused are students at the same institution, they should have the same rights. So what are the accused’s means of defense?

“We have to have a fundamentally fair process, one that the respondent also gets to participate in,” says Dunnewold. “We can’t proceed on hearsay or rumor. But if a student tells us that she or he wants another student suspended for a sexual assault, the conversation has to include ‘Here’s how that could potentially happen.’”

Because multiple interviews are required of all parties and potential witnesses, an investigation typically consumes an entire academic term, says Dunnewold. Time alone can be a major deterrent to moving forward for a complainant. The final decision on sanctions or consequences for an accused student lies with the Community Board on Sexual Misconduct, which is made up of Carleton students and faculty and staff members. If a complainant opts against a hearing, there are nonadjudicated options, such as changes in classes or class schedules, or moving students from a residence hall or dining hall.

EDUCATION AND EXPECTATION GAPS

When her son—a Carleton alumnus—was three or four years old, Dunnewold had a conversation with him about a doctor’s visit. “Good touch, bad touch,” she says. It was very clear. It felt comfortable. The basis was medical, not sexual.

As her son grew older, Dunnewold did a “terrible job” of talking about sex with him, she says. “I had been a sexuality educator with Planned Parenthood, and I didn’t do it. And now I think about all the people who are less comfortable talking about sex than I am. That weighs on me.”

Dunnewold’s work with Carleton students has made her realize how parents and educators do a disservice to children when they fail to address sexuality and consent during their formative years. For adults in long-term relationships, gaps in verbal consent aren’t as prevalent because of familiarity and heightened assurance between partners. Those comfort levels are largely nonexistent for young people, Dunnewold says, which “makes it hard for adults who know what consent means to relate to a campus hookup, or a new relationship, or a situation where you’re not confident enough to ask, ‘Do you want to do this?’” Add alcohol into the mix—as is commonly the case in assault cases—and ambiguity, misinterpretation, or wanton disregard reign among sexual newcomers.

“When we’re uncertain, we turn to what we know. And on a college campus, there’s a lot of uncertainty,” says Drew Weis, a clinical psychologist with Student Health and Counseling. “When students get here, they find themselves in situations where they don’t know how to respond. If they admit to those uncertainties, they can start to overcome the vulnerabilities of less-informed ways of thinking and acting.”

Freshmen arrive on campus with vast disparities in their sexual education, says Haave. Some have a decent understanding of reproduction and sexually transmitted diseases. Others may have had comprehensive sex education thanks to a progressive school, church, or community program, possibly an adult influence. Another group might adhere to an abstinence-only model. Pulling back the curtain on consent starts with acknowledging those differences of preparedness among students, helping them confront tough



Laura Haave

questions, and—perhaps most importantly—guarding against shame, says Haave.

“I’ve been a sexuality educator for kids as young as five, which always blows people’s minds,” she says. “They’ll say, ‘What could you possibly teach in those classes?’ Well, for starters, we teach them that their bodies aren’t shameful and they have a right to set their own boundaries.

“If we reduce shame and stigma around sexuality and gender, we allow people to be their authentic selves. That leads to less tolerance for sexuality that is coercive or harmful. Also, society’s normative gender roles—men are the aggressors, women are supposed to say no—have set up a scenario for sexual assault and shame. Once violence happens, women are told that they must have done something to encourage it or that they should have been able to stop it. So a lot of women stay silent. They’re told, ‘You’re supposed to control men’s sexuality.’”

Through her work at a number of colleges, including George Mason, Hattery has seen a growing rejection of traditional male-dominant norms among female students. But even if college-age women are more confident now than in the past, confusion about consent still dominates. When Hattery talks with students about potential sexual assaults, 9 times out of 10 they’ll refer to an unnamed “thing” that bothers them. Women often talk about not “feeling right physically” later. On one occasion, a student told Hattery that she and her boyfriend were making out and he later held her head down while she performed oral sex even though she didn’t want to. Then she asked, “Is that wrong?”

“Women often ask me, ‘What do *you* think about that?’ I find that interesting because it speaks to these blurred lines,” says Hattery. “Students aren’t clear about what is required

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for consent. And so the people who are victimized come to me or someone else looking for reassurance. While I don’t think it’s my job to put a label on something they haven’t labeled, they’re obviously upset about this thing that happened. It’s why we need more training and education on consent.”

There are two primary schools of thought about consent in sexuality education circles, says Haave. One proposes that educating about consent will effectively minimize the number of assaults. If men—who have been socialized to be sexually aggressive and to tie their masculinity to coercive tactics—are taught to acknowledge the unhealthy dynamic their behavior creates, they could learn to ask for consent. Another view posits that most acts of sexual violence are committed by a small number of repeat perpetrators. Those violent offenders don’t care about consent, Haave says, so education can’t penetrate the psychological profile of a man who feels entitled to assault for misogynistic reasons, a man who thinks “women deserve this.”

“Whether education about consent stops sexual assault is hotly debated, and there are valid arguments on both sides,” Haave says. “I strongly believe that consent education allows survivors to identify what happened as nonconsensual and come forward. They are allowed to see that an assault was not their fault. It’s also critical for bystanders and people who are friends of survivors to identify behavior that is nonconsensual.

There's a collective understanding: 'This is dangerous.' We need consent policies and education in place for that reason."

SUPPORTING SURVIVORS

Tacked inside the stalls of every Carleton bathroom are blue signs that contain contact information for Campus Advocates Against Sexual Harassment and Assault (CAASHA). The peer-based support group, established in the early '90s, acts as a confidential first line of defense in the fight against sexual assault at Carleton.

Sarah Magid '18 (Englewood, Colo.) and 11 other CAASHA mentors counsel students through phone, e-mail, or in-person consultations. First and foremost, they are trained to provide nonjudgmental listening and support. They are not obligated to report assaults to anyone else, which is why, in many cases, students contact a CAASHA member first. Filing a community concern form, reporting an assault to police, or talking to a professional counselor can feel too official or intimidating.

"The first thing I do is thank them for trusting me, because seeking someone out is not easy," says Magid, a psychology major with a women's and gender studies concentration. "They can share as much or as little as they like. We're mainly here to listen."

"Looking back at high school . . . consent never even came up, so how was I supposed to know that it's important?"

Sarah Magid '18



Three years at Carleton have transformed Magid. She expresses deep disappointment, even contempt, for her approach to consent and relationships as a teenager: Who was this person who couldn't identify her own emotional needs, who didn't understand her sexuality, and who didn't feel like she deserved to feel safe, comfortable, and respected?

"The first time I heard the word *consent* used in the context of sexual intimacy was at New Student Week," says Magid. "Looking back at high school and the early days of college, I had a different view of myself and my body. I did not voice what I wanted, because that was always secondary to my partner's needs. Consent never even came up, so how was I supposed to know that it's important?"

Magid has continued to struggle with her personal awakening. At Carleton, she's experienced the good—"The first time someone at Carleton asked if he could kiss me, I was giddy"—and the ugly—"I was assaulted. I am a survivor." She didn't report her sexual assault at Carleton, but instead plunged into an emotional abyss that affected her social life and schoolwork. She eventually found help through CAASHA. "That's how I got involved with them. I was directly affected," Magid says.

Koehler Powell '17 (Pittsburgh) is also a survivor. She didn't fully come to terms with her assault, which happened in high school, until she heard other survivors share their stories at a GSC "Speak Up" event her freshman year. Instead, Powell blamed herself,

"thinking the problem was me instead of the person actually responsible, and then I had to go through the trauma again once it hit me," she says.

Both Magid and Powell are advocates for affirmative consent: explicit, informed, and voluntary agreement to participate in every sexual act before it begins. They're also realistic. Verbal consent at every step of a sexual encounter can feel stilted and be a mood-breaker. However, in *Yes Means Yes!*—a series of essays about sexual violence and rape myths—Rachel Kramer Bussel writes, "The kind of consent I'm talking about isn't concerned just with whether your partner wants to have sex, but what kind of sex and why. . . . Getting more comfortable talking about sex in and out of the heat of the moment means there'll be fewer of those awkward silences and less chance of one person thinking they had the best sex in the world while the other wishes it had never happened."

On the surface, Carleton would appear to have built-in advantages compared to larger universities that wrestle with multimillion-dollar athletic programs or dominant Greek and party cultures.

Both factors have contributed to recent high-profile sexual assault cases throughout the country, and often influence a broader campus culture of entitlement and predatory behavior. Yet talking about sex in a meaningful, honest way with peers—even on a small, intimate campus like Carleton’s—is still at odds with reality, says Powell.

For starters, on a campus of roughly 2,000 students, people either know each other personally or quickly hear the day’s hot gossip. There’s also a perception that Carls are characteristically awkward, Powell says, “and the more awkward you feel, the more difficult it is to talk about sex.”

Conversations about sex and sexual assault do happen among some students on campus, say Powell and Magid. Yet if they try to extend those conversations beyond certain circles, they’re often met with eye rolls and objections of “not this speech again”—reactions that may feed into a general insecurity among students who want desperately to fit in and measure up. In college, you’re *supposed to* be having sex, right?

A 2011 study by Amanda Holman, then a University of Nebraska graduate student, found that even the term “hook up” has “strategically ambiguous” meaning for college students. Of the 274 students from a large public university who were interviewed, more than half said a hookup involves sex, while those who most frequently participated in hookup culture defined it as “unplanned, inebriated sex.” Nine percent, however, said hooking up only meant fooling around and kissing.

“It’s a common misconception that everyone at Carleton is having sex, in a relationship, or hooking up, but no one really wants to talk about that. You don’t want to be the outsider,” Powell says. “Instead, you get stuck comparing yourself to everyone and thinking that you’re missing out on something. There’s a big emphasis on ‘the college experience’: It’s your only time to get wild! You’ll never be able to do these things again!”

MOVING FORWARD

When Livingston sent a campuswide e-mail from the Dean of Students Office in August announcing that Carleton was hiring a full-time Title IX coordinator, Powell read it and cried. “This is what a lot of us have been asking for,” says Powell, who serves on the Title IX Student Visioning Team, a group that provides Carleton with feedback about sexual assault policies, campus climate surveys, and support systems.

It’s more than symbolic. Carleton is demonstrating its commitment and putting resources into combating sexual assault on campus, Livingston says. While some students and alumni have pointed out that hiring a full-time Title IX coordinator is overdue, Haave says the move is in step with the college’s holistic view toward improving the overall response infrastructure at Carleton. Having more staff members with

expertise and understanding about these issues will make a difference for programs and reach a wider population, says Haave. There can never be too many trusted advocates available to students.

After all, Haave only needs to look at the Post-its on her office wall: “Collect more data to inform prevention platforms. More media campaigns and online programs. Continued prevention education for sophomores, juniors, and seniors. Men’s engagement initiatives.” It’s a running tally of the work a new Title IX coordinator is likely to undertake.

A strong, progressive foundation is in place thanks to Green Dot, a nationally recognized bystander intervention curriculum that focuses on how small choices can reduce harm in the community. Beginning in 2015, staff members have been training students and faculty and staff members to speak up or seek help when they see behavior that feels off or dangerous. Haave and Dunnewold see safety in numbers as another bedrock of Carleton values. Since Green Dot began, 231 students have completed the six-hour bystander intervention training.

“Green Dot fits with educating students about consent. It further establishes what the rules are at Carleton,” Haave says. “It’s about speaking up and not being afraid to stand out. A lot of students ask, ‘Well, who am I to say what’s right or wrong?’ But if we can establish what’s expected here, you won’t be as likely to ignore something.”

It’s unclear how a new presidential administration and the Department of Education under Betsy DeVos will affect Title IX protections or influence a national conversation about sexual assault on college campuses. Dunnewold says Carleton “will continue to do the right thing for our campus” and won’t roll back its commitment to bringing awareness to sexual assault issues and advocating for survivors.

Real change means going beyond the expected pathways to bring together all corners of campus, says Laura Williams. And Carleton has been a national leader in this arena before. In 1983 the college was one of the first in the country to establish a comprehensive policy against sexual harassment. While Williams is encouraged by how Green Dot and GSC “Speak Up” events establish consistent patterns that carry through a student’s four years, Carleton “can’t be afraid to take the lead and try new things” again, she says. Colleges must protect the vulnerable.

“I am always struck by the generosity of people who have been harmed, who are survivors,” says Williams. “They somehow say, ‘What happened to me was horrible, and I don’t want it to happen to anyone else.’ Then they get outside of their personal pain to seek justice and truth telling, and align themselves with others who have been and will be harmed. They simply expect that our institutions do the same.”

Let's Begin Again

For years, colleges nationwide have focused their efforts to prevent sexual assault by educating women about certain high-risk behaviors that emphasize self-protection and restraint. In some ways, this makes sense because women still comprise the vast majority of victims. Yet, a woman-focused approach feels misguided and out of date. Today, women are demanding that men be brought into the conversation and, although many men are willing, they are often unsure where to begin.

To that end, we organized a discussion with a group of Carleton men about their role in acknowledging and preventing sexual violence.

During the two hours that six male Carleton students were discussing gender dynamics, perceptions of masculinity, and factors that lead to sexual assault, the phrase “it’s difficult” popped up 12 times. This is difficult stuff. And while there were long pauses and moments of uncertainty, the conversation also featured thoughtful reflection on topics men often struggle to discuss. “Boys definitely don’t talk about this growing up,” said one participant.

The discussion took place in a locker room at Laird Stadium. It’s a positive environment for some, an ill-fitting one for others. Historically, phrases like “locker room talk” and “boys will be boys” have been used to explain or excuse male posturing, lewd talk and behavior, and sexual harassment—all cited as major factors in perpetuating rape culture. And that’s where our conversation began.

Recent incidents and allegations involving high-profile male celebrities have spurred a national conversation about attitudes toward sexual assault—most notably, how men encourage and protect other men, often through social conditioning. In particular, the phrase “locker room talk” became a flashpoint in the 2016 presidential campaign. What does that phrase mean to you?

Quinn Johnson '19, chemistry (Roseville, Minn.): I’ve never been in a locker room where someone talked about sexual assault. At the same time, I understood how it was being used as a potential defense for men and how they might talk behind closed doors: the implication that a guy would go out with a girl one night, and the next day at practice tell his friends what happened. In a sense, that could be “locker room talk.” But for how it came up during the election, the phrase was grossly misused.

Suhail Thandi '17, cinema and media studies and political science/international relations (New Delhi, India): I have never been part of locker room culture, but I know that sexual assault is often linked to athletes. I didn’t know if that was true or a stereotype. Some of my friends are athletes, and I know they wouldn’t condone that behavior.

Christian Zaytoun '19, mathematics and statistics (Raleigh, N.C.): I view a locker room as one of the most important parts of sports and becoming a team. For camaraderie and rhythm to develop between teammates, you have to have an intimate setting where even coaches don’t make their presence felt. It’s just you and the guys who are going to be on the field or court with you. So, to me, the locker room reflects a special place where you don’t have to sugarcoat anything, and you can expect some level of privacy for what you say. It’s not a perfect application for how the phrase is used as a defense by men, but I understand “locker room talk” to mean that your conversation is for whoever else is in that room. Now, I don’t think it means you can say whatever you want. Being inappropriate is not cool.

James Harren '19, environmental studies (Oak Park, Ill.):

There is a difference between gossiping about your sex life and gross inappropriateness. I understand that some things are

meant to be private, and that what you say to your teammates—especially if it’s about your sex life—shouldn’t leave that space if you’re confiding in someone you trust. But sharing private details is much different from saying truly terrible things.

Chris Lee '19, political science/international relations (Rolling Meadows, Ill.):

I’ve never understood that about locker rooms. In my experience, whenever a guy would talk about his romantic life, another guy would have to step in and outshine him. Talking about women always turned into a competition. That said, the majority of time I spent in a locker room, whether as a tennis player or a wrestler, was very positive. But I also had negative experiences, because I was not openly gay in high school. So a locker room—filled with hypermasculine, usually cisgender straight guys in singlets, all slapping each other’s asses with towels—was not the most comfortable space when you’re trying to figure out who you are.

Zaytoun: I’ve played sports my entire life. I went to an all-boys boarding school for high school in the middle of Virginia farm country, 20 miles away from the nearest town. So I was in class with my guy friends, in the locker room with them, and then we’d go out to dinner together. In one sense, I never left the locker room. That was my environment for four years, and I loved it. I made some of the best friends I’ll ever make, guys who would do anything for me. Other than in the military, I don’t know where else you make bonds like that.

What expectations and pressures have you faced growing up as men? What has changed for you at Carleton?

Lee: Carleton has a confrontational culture to it and, whether you like it or not, your beliefs and opinions are going to be questioned here. I do a lot more calling out here, but it’s also because I’m much more confident about myself. In high school, I never spoke up.

Nick Leeke '18, economics and French (Hopkins, Minn.): It’s still tricky for me. I’ve been in situations where I’d like to speak up when I hear something inappropriate, but there’s this added dimension of, “Well, if I do, will it turn ugly?” I’m more likely to say something now compared to when I was in high school, but even so, it can be hard to know *how* to do it.





Thandi: I grew up with people who valued logic and reason over emotion. There was a lot of conversation about what a man *shouldn't* be: any trait that would be identified as feminine. If something happened that upset me, my parents would say, "Grow thicker skin. Be a man." Okay, but I have these feelings and I need to validate them somehow! It wasn't helpful to just say, "Ignore them."

Harren: A lot of what you think being a man is, especially when you're younger, is based on an archetype: a big, macho man who plays sports and likes girls. You learn pretty early in middle school and high school how you're supposed to act. I came out [as gay] early, the summer after my freshman year of high school. It feels like a long time ago. At Carleton I feel much more comfortable with who I am and, because of that, I have more gay friends than girl friends. That's new for me.

Do men at Carleton struggle to talk about sexual assault?

Thandi: It's hard, because sexual assault is mostly gendered—which puts a lot of men in the position of not knowing what it means to be a survivor. So how does it affect us personally? It's not something we talk about or engage with until we are pulled in.

Lee: There's this sense of responsibility when you talk about sexual assault as a guy because the people you identify with are the ones who overwhelmingly commit these crimes. First you have to acknowledge that you belong to this group. Then you have to examine your own thoughts. "Have I ever said anything to contribute to this? Have I ever reacted this way? What have my friends said or done?" If the culture is to change, we need to change it.

Thandi: I was pulled in my freshman year. Fall term, I was oblivious to sexual assault at Carleton. I had just come from India, where there's a new rape headline pretty much every day. So, I didn't know if it was happening or not at Carleton, and if it was, I was pretty sure it didn't affect me. But I got a call from a friend at 3:00 a.m. She didn't know what to do. I didn't know what to do. Then I remembered, "Oh, there's CAASHA [Campus Advocates Against Sexual Harassment and Assault]," so I

went to the bathroom, saw the one name I recognized on the sheet, and called that person. The police had to come. It was a very serious situation. But I know I wouldn't be involved in thinking about sexual assault on campus if not for that incident.

Zaytoun: How do I empathize with a woman who has been sexually assaulted? It's very hard, mentally, to step into that position. It's absolutely important to do that, but there will always be a disconnect. You can't possibly understand what someone else is going through, and making assumptions is dangerous. So people slip up, and often they don't realize it until they're called on it.

Leeke: But men have to be willing to enter those conversations and be vulnerable. A lot of men see the value in that, but they aren't sure how to admit, "I don't know this."

Zaytoun: I learn something new every time I talk to my female friends. Usually, I learn how little I know. You could do something [sexually] with someone 100 times, and feel like you're doing it the exact same way on the 101st time, but it could be assault. Whether you had any intention of doing something wrong, any malicious intent at all, it could snap in an instant. That's eye-opening to me. It isn't *only* up to me to think it's normal. There has to be mutual agreement.

What can Carleton do better?

Zaytoun: If the college wants to hammer down on trying to stop as much miscommunication as possible about consent, I think a good and easy place to start would be to crack down on drinking. It's not fair to say that we want to work toward eliminating sexual assault and not pay attention to drinking. The two go side by side.

Thandi: When I drink, I don't have the inclination to sexually assault someone. So while I get that there is a correlation, I don't think that because people drink, sexual assault occurs. I think people who engage in sexual violence use drinking as an excuse.

Johnson: There's a lot of conversation on campus about believing survivors. It's hard being on the outside of that situation. Only the two people who were there actually know what happened. I don't know where to start with that.

Leeke: I feel like conversations got more active last year. [Carleton's bystander program] Green Dot definitely feels more active. It's becoming ingrained in campus culture. That's the right step to take. And hiring a full-time Title IX coordinator is a huge step. [Carleton is currently interviewing candidates for this position.] We need a person who has the students' trust and is at the center of a more robust platform for confronting sexual assault.

Lee: Students have to actively express what the expectations are. If you are not playing by the rules here, you need to know that not only will there be consequences from the administration, but your peers will look down on you. We have to own that responsibility. ♡

This conversation has been edited for length and clarity. Read more of the conversation and an interview with Carleton Men founder Alex Trautman '15 at go.carleton.edu/consent. For information on Carleton's policy and procedures, visit go.carleton.edu/title9.*