

TO: Sen. Renee S. Unterman

FROM: Susanna L. Baxter

DATE: December 7, 2015

RE: GICA Member Commitment to Campus Safety

The 26 members of the Georgia Independent College Association (GICA) work diligently to provide safe environments in which more than 78,000 students learn. This work includes many facets, but for purposes of addressing your concerns, I will focus specifically on campus sexual assault. There are three major federal laws that govern activity in sexual assault prevention, education, support and adjudication. They are as follows: 1) Title IX; 2) Violence Against Women Act (VAWA); and 3) Clery Act. The laws and regulations are very prescriptive, thus there is a large degree of uniformity across campuses. These laws inform content in student handbooks, investigation procedures, educational requirements, support services and reporting requirements of sexual assault cases, to name only a few of the areas they cover. Furthermore, the White House's April 2014 "Not Alone: The First Report of the White House Task Force to Protect Students From Sexual Assault" provides additional clarity as to recommended courses of action.

In October 2014, GICA hosted a two-day Title IX and VAWA training with national training leaders from Pepper Hamilton Law presenting information on requirements of the applicable laws and investigator training. At the request of the Chancellor, representatives from all USG institutions joined us for this important training. The University System of Georgia (USG) invited GICA members to join their institutions in an extensive Clery Act training event in the spring of 2015. GICA staff have also participated in USG's study committees on campus safety and alcohol and other drug prevention. GICA collaboration with state partners goes beyond training and study committees.

In June 2015, GICA and USG signed a joint agreement for an on-line best-in-breed sexual assault prevention/training system for faculty, staff and students. By working together, we were able to significantly reduce the cost and more importantly, ensure that there is uniformity of training content across USG, GICA members and TCSG (they were previously under contract). With the close proximity and cross-campus social opportunities/dating that occurs, this commonality of language and content is exceptionally important. Understanding the link between alcohol and sexual assault, GICA and USG added an additional product which focuses on alcohol use/abuse prevention. Tens of thousands of Georgia students have taken these online courses this fall. Additionally, GICA and USG have included in our contract a campus climate survey that is to be administered in Spring 2016. Campus climate surveys can be an effective way to measure whether the steps taken to ensure student safety and understanding of sexual assault, including support services involved when an incident occurs, have positively contributed to a climate where persons feel safe to report. Implementation of the campus climate survey is a step that institutions are voluntarily doing this spring as it is not yet a federal requirement.

GICA members are heavily involved in prevention efforts. Attached is a copy of prevention efforts detailed in a report created at the request of Sen. Johnny Isakson last fall.

In addition to prevention, GICA members have both formal and informal arrangements for campus- and community-based support providers and law enforcement. Where a rape crisis center is available, students learn of the Center's services through training (virtual and in-person), student handbooks, health and counseling services offices, survivor advocates and in a cornucopia of creative methods (flyers, bathroom stall posters, door hangers, etc.). GICA members also invite representatives from these crisis centers to provide educational programming on campus. A sampling of the agencies GICA members partner with to support students include:

Criminal Justice Coordinating Council - Victim Services
Crisis Line and Safe House of Central Georgia
Day League Georgia Network to End Sexual Assault
DeKalb Rape Crisis Center
Emory Hospital
Georgia Office of Victim Assistance Georgia Sexual Assault Center of Rome
HODAC, Georgia Victim's Assistance
It's On Us
Local Sexual Assault Services Program (YMCA of NW GA)
Local Victim Witness Program (housed in Prosecutor's Office)
Northside Hospital – Cherokee (Canton)
Partnership for Families, Children and Adults, Chattanooga
Piedmont Mountainside Hospital (Jasper)
Rape, Abuse, & Incest National Network (RAINN)
Rape Response Inc., Gainesville

GICA members also have partnerships with GBI and/or local law enforcement. Federal law strongly encourages colleges and universities to respect a victim's request for confidentiality. However, at the same time institutions are required to clearly outline for the victim the way that the crime can be reported to the police and assist the student in doing so if they desire. There is a legitimate concern that victims will be deterred in coming forward to report sexual violence if they know that a case will automatically be turned over to the police. GICA member campuses report that the majority of students decline police involvement and because the circumstances of most cases do not meet the federal over-ride tipping point regarding a victim's request for confidentiality, the college cannot go against the victim's request. This should not be construed as indicating that law enforcement is never involved, quite to the contrary. Some GICA members report more than 50% of sexual assault violations are reported to the authorities. It is important to note, the campus has a federally mandated requirement to investigate and adjudicate allegations that comply with federal laws. Regardless of whether law enforcement is brought in, the campus must investigate and adjudicate within a specified period of time.

In conclusion, GICA members go to great lengths to keep students safe and to comply with the various federal laws. There has been such a great demand for education and training to assist campuses with efforts in this area that GICA has created a new position to work with campuses to ensure compliance to these and other federal laws. GICA members have the privilege to educate more than 78,000 students and embrace the responsibilities associated with that privilege.

If you have any questions or wish to engage in further dialogue, I may be reached at 404-233-5433 ext. 21 or sbaxter@georgiacolleges.org.