

## **Multi-department group (AVERT) sponsors sexual assault awareness events**

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The Saint Anselm Crier

Saint Anselm College's Assault & Violence Education & Reporting Team (AVERT) – a cross constituency group co-chaired by Dean of Students Alicia Finn and Vice President of Human Resources & Administration Pat Shuster – has continued work on their goal of “Providing ongoing prevention and awareness campaigns related to sexual assault” into the Spring 2015 Semester.

AVERT's other members are Destiny Brady (Nursing Department), Donald Davidson (Director of Campus Safety & Security), Neil Duval (Assistant Director of Athletics), Yemi Mahoney (Director of Multicultural Center), Maura Marshall (Director of Health Services), Kerstin Matthews Mead (Head Coach of Women's Ice Hockey), Michael Murphy (Area Coordinator for New Hall & Brady Hall), Professor Elaine Rizzo (Criminal Justice Department) and Kristina Wilson (Health Services – Counseling Services).

AVERT's membership also includes four students representatives, who are juniors Katlyn Delany & Karen Ejiofor and sophomores Briana Berge & Abigail Smith.

“As students on the committee, we try to give our perspective on how much information students know about sexual assault and the different ways to report, on campus, if sexually assaulted,” Ejiofor explained. “We serve as the student voice on what students will best respond to.”

The diversity of voices contributing to AVERT's programs are indicative of the Team's desire to ensure that all of the Campus' departments and organizations are properly trained to assist any affected student that is seeking assistance, which will now include training for Orientation Leaders that will take effect during the Orientation of the Class of 2019.

Sharing the situation of an affected student was the focus of AVERT's first official presentation to the College's Advisory Board, which includes the President's Cabinet, a faculty representative and various other administrators.

The meeting – which took place on Thursday February 19 – was described positively by Dean Finn, who shared that a valuable dialogue took place between AVERT and the Advisory Board which included valuable input from both sides.

In conjunction with the presentation of an affected student perspective, AVERT also presented an educational campaign to inform the Campus community about reporting options, campus resources, off-campus resources, the College's internal judicial process, sexual assault definitions & prevention and consent & bystander awareness.

A number of methods have been utilized by AVERT thus far this semester in order to accomplish the above, starting with Resident Assistant placement of a "Saint Anselm College Sexual Assault and Violence Awareness" pamphlet in all dorm rooms and refrigerator magnets reading "STOP; consent?" in all apartments.

The primary purpose of the pamphlet – as well as business cards to be placed in important Campus locations – is to not only provide pertinent information regarding sexual assault recognition, prevention and support, but also to ensure that students have access to emergency contact information for both on and off-campus assistance.

Additionally, the above resources will be broadcasted via a Campus poster campaign, with posters containing the aforementioned information being placed throughout Campus hubs and shifted around periodically so as to avoid Campus desensitization to them.

Information will be brought to students as well, with scheduled speakers similar to last semester's Don McPherson talk as well as resident hall programming.

Ejiofor and Smith also have a number of events planned for the month of March, including a "Walk a Mile in Their Shoes" event that will be taking place on March 13 from 3 to 4 in the Carr Center.

"Men are required to wear feminine-looking shoes and Females are required to wear masculine-looking shoes," Ejiofor explained of the event. "There will be different educational pieces that students will learn about sexual assault. There will also be gift cards to different shoe stores and companies for people with the best looking shoes."

A "Take a pin, Tweet a Fact" event will also be held by Ejiofor and Smith in Davison hall on Wednesday March 11th from 6 to 7, where they will be handing out sexual assault awareness pins and encouraging students to tweet a sexual assault fact that will be attached to the pin.

Another event planned for a later date in the semester is a Flag Campaign, which will include the placement of a white flag on the Quad for each reported case of sexual assault in 2014 – which was roughly 3,600.

The event's date is pending, as the flags' color would not be suited by this winter's abundance of snow.

Since AVERT's efforts have taken effect, reports of sexual assault have increased, which Dean Finn and Shuster explained is not indicative of a greater number of incidents, but rather, a sign that victims of sexual assault are now feeling more comfortable seeking the assistance that they need.

Dean Finn added that "Elevated clusters" of reports typically follow a push for more educational awareness, and stressed that College ownership needs to continue growing in order further mold a supportive Campus culture.

Reports have not exclusively concerned sexual assault, with Dean Finn sharing that students have also come forward to seek assistance with incidents of relationship violence and stalking.

Due to the dynamic and confidential nature of these cases, Campus statistics will not be available until the publishing of the Campus Crime Statistics Report – federally mandated by the Jeanne Clery Disclosure of Campus Security Policy and Campus Crime Statistics Act – this October.

In commenting on AVERT's efforts both past, present and future, Shuster shared that "These educational programs are having an impact. Students are feeling safer with reporting, because they are learning that we do not ignore this issue and take it very seriously."