5 Steps to Continually Improving Campus Prevention Efforts: Part 2
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Where does teaching consent to students leave educators, professors, counselors, and law enforcement? What are, if you will, the core ideas to be taught to our students, and how might we best ensure the seeds of these teachings find some fertile soil in their hearts and experiences? Think of the following list as a template to lay over your existing prevention efforts and consider areas where you may look to improve.

Continued from previous week, to view Part 1, please click here.

1. **Teach students about coercion and pressure.** Consent cannot be obtained freely if the person giving consent is under pressure or being coerced. Repeatedly asking someone for sex until you hear a “yes,” is not consent; it’s coercion. The trouble here is that much of our popular media and culture exudes the virtues of pursuing someone, even to the point of absurdity, as a romantic virtue. We grew up watching Pepe Le Pew chase that poor cat in Warner Brother’s *Looney Tunes* series. We watch Disney movies like *Beauty and the Beast*, where there is the unmistakable message, “I have taken your father and locked him in my dungeon until you consent to be with me.” Where is the line between romantic pursuit and coercion?

These scenarios present an excellent opportunity to raise this very question with the students you are teaching about consent. It becomes less important to have a clear line spelled out for them and more important to teach them how to think about this. In most cases, it is about how to think about their partners’ agency and choice, how they feel being pursued. This issue frequently comes up for international students new to the United States’ use of subtle social cues. Issues such as personal touch, flirting, dress, and expectations around buying meals and drinks create many opportunities for misunderstandings and miscommunications. In the end, good consent educators engage students around these issues prior to occurrence, allowing them to think more critically about their choices in a framework of harm reduction and risk management.

2. **Address the hook-up culture.** In this fast-paced age, our students tend to move more quickly into sexually active relationships and hook-ups. While we refrain from making any judgments about the morality of this or opining about larger societal issues around this practice, there is the unmistakable problem of simply not knowing those with whom they are spending time. For students, we stress this point to encourage critical thinking and risk-management awareness. If you don’t know the person you are with well, the risk of misreading that individual, doing something the person isn’t necessarily okay with, and generally having less open communication, are concerns. While these are all obstacles that can be overcome, when you add the lack of experiences of many younger students and start to mix in alcohol, most see why this becomes a perfect storm for miscommunication (and worse).
3. **Use scenario-based training.** One of the best training methods is the use of scenarios that allow students to consider situations (either read to them, acted out live at an orientation event, or viewed in a video). These role-plays allow students to think about the issues of alcohol consumption, consent, and sexual communication, while providing an opportunity to see how others approach similar challenges. Concrete examples help students consider various circumstances and the consequences of their choices while providing an opportunity to brainstorm solutions. The group setting makes it difficult to get genuine and direct answers, so we recommend the use of technology such as survey clickers or phone apps to gather information from the group. Alternatively, index cards could be passed around the room before a talk as a way to gather questions that some students might be too shy to ask.

4. **Build from research and assess what you are doing:** It is important that education efforts be based on sound research to reduce the risk factors for gender-based sexual violence. Luckily, we have spent the heart of this book discussing the literature and research related to these risk factors. This should serve as a foundational framework for future educational programs and targeted prevention efforts. Additionally, it is important to spend some time assessing the effectiveness and efficacy of efforts made. This can be done more broadly through a climate survey or through individual surveys given before or after events. The key to assessment is using the information gathered to directly improve future programming and educational efforts. It may be helpful to see assessment as being akin to the dashboard lights on a car. The utility of this process lies in the real-time feedback used to make decisions about future steps, in the same way a low gas gauge indicates the importance of stopping to fill up at the gas station.

5. **Embrace the prevention year, not the prevention month:** One temptation on college campuses is to view prevention efforts as the one and done thing. With so many competing needs, there is a temptation to complete one task (such as eating disorder awareness, a depression screening, or domestic violence walk) and then move on to the next thing. However, programs work best when they have the proper dosage of frequency. While it may be convenient for an institution to offer a consent-based orientation program during the week when new students arrive at school (and there are some valid reasons to do this, given the heightened risk for new students as they come to campus), this type of program should be seen as necessary, but not sufficient. Student may or may not digest the information during this program, and there are the larger concerns about whether a single program will change behavior and, if so, the length of time for which that behavioral change might last. The best approach to educational prevention efforts is to offer booster programs in various modalities (e.g., during orientation groups, with resident advisors, passive advertising campaigns in the dining hall and bathroom stalls, in first year seminar classes, etc.) to reinforce the message.