

**HUSCH BLACKWELL**

# MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

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**ADDENDUM TO PHASE 2 PRELIMINARY REPORT**  
Review of Michigan State University's  
Title IX Program

DATE ISSUED  
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# Executive Summary

# Executive Summary

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In early fall of 2017, Michigan State University (“MSU” or “University”) engaged Husch Blackwell to conduct a two-phase Title IX review of the University’s efforts to address and prevent sexual misconduct. These reviews were informed by a significant amount of input and feedback provided by members of the MSU community who voluntarily participated in group discussion sessions in the fall of 2017 and the winter of 2018.

MSU published our phase 1 report and findings in November 2017.<sup>1</sup> Prior to the completion of our phase 2 report—but after concluding group discussion sessions in the winter of 2018—several members of the MSU community expressed interest in continuing conversations with us in order to provide additional relevant information. In response, the University asked us to produce our phase 2 report in preliminary form, and to schedule additional group discussion sessions to honor the requests for additional feedback opportunities. MSU published our preliminary phase 2 report in March 2018,<sup>2</sup> and we hosted additional discussion sessions with students, faculty and staff in late March and early April.

This addendum summarizes the comments we received from individuals who participated in the additional discussion sessions. The preliminary phase 2 report and this addendum serve as our complete and final phase 2 report and findings.

Notably, the input we received during these additional discussion sessions largely echoed the concerns, themes and recommendations captured in our preliminary phase 2 report. Although participants throughout the phase 1 and phase 2 reviews offered multiple viewpoints, as we reflect on the entirety of this review, there is one theme relating to MSU’s efforts to prevent and respond to sexual misconduct and gender discrimination that resounds from each segment of the MSU community: the MSU community must come together as a single, undivided unit, with a unified message regarding what MSU stands for and how it will live these values.

We are hopeful that our final phase 1 and phase 2 reports have provided MSU with a roadmap for meaningful improvements to support effective implementation of its existing policies and procedures, and improved training and communications about its efforts in this area. And we are encouraged that MSU has already taken a number of proactive measures in response to both of our published reports. Nonetheless, we remain concerned that MSU still struggles to communicate effectively and consistently about its values and goals, and that this weakness may irreparably undermine the University’s Title IX-related progress. As we conclude this review, we reiterate our earlier recommendation that MSU must develop an effective and consistent communications strategy that holds steadfast to its values while establishing fair and equitable services and accountability for all members of its community.

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<sup>1</sup> Our phase 1 report is available on MSU’s website at: [http://titleix.msu.edu/information-reports/msu\\_report\\_2017\\_external.pdf](http://titleix.msu.edu/information-reports/msu_report_2017_external.pdf).

<sup>2</sup> Our preliminary phase 2 report is available on MSU’s website at: <http://titleix.msu.edu/information-reports/Title%20IX%20External%20Review%20Phase%20I%20Report.pdf>

# Addendum Introduction

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In early fall of 2017, MSU engaged Husch Blackwell to conduct a two-phase Title IX review related to the University's efforts to address and prevent sexual misconduct. The first phase, completed in November 2017, consisted of a detailed review of MSU's Title IX-related policies and procedures to determine whether they meet current legal requirements. The second phase went beyond an evaluation of applicable legal requirements and concentrated on the effectiveness of MSU's: (a) education and prevention programs, (b) support services and resources, and (c) awareness, engagement and outreach efforts, as they relate to preventing and addressing sexual misconduct.

The phase 2 report was released in preliminary form in March 2018. While this report relied on significant feedback from MSU community members who participated in over four full-day discussion group sessions and two evening discussion sessions that took place in the fall of 2017 and winter of 2018, several students and faculty members requested additional time with us to provide further input intended to help shape the phase 2 report.

Accordingly, we returned to MSU for two additional group discussion sessions on March 25, 2018, and March 26, 2018. Following these sessions, MSU received requests from other MSU community members who were also interested in providing additional input. In response, we returned to campus on April 16, 2018, to host an additional group discussion session.

During these additional sessions, we met with a number of faculty, staff, undergraduate students, graduate students and student athletes. Their comments are summarized in this addendum. They reflect varying perspectives relating to MSU's Title IX program, and in our view, offer valuable insight as to how some members of the MSU community feel about specific components of MSU's Title IX program. However, given MSU's sheer size, we caution readers from attributing the feedback summarized here, which was offered by individuals who voluntarily participated in small discussion groups, as representative of the MSU community, as a whole.

# Summary of Additional Feedback

## Response to Interim Phase II Report

During our additional discussion sessions, participants overwhelmingly expressed support for the recommendations contained in our preliminary phase 2 report. Specifically, one administrator, who has been a part of the MSU community for decades, said, “I have had more faith in this report than I have had on these issues in the last ten years.” Faculty and students we spoke with also felt the preliminary phase 2 report captured necessary changes and improvements that must be addressed by MSU. One faculty member stated, “Administrators really need to hear the voices of the students... [I] hope they listen to your report. The recommendations are on target. The student voices are in there.”

Notwithstanding the positive response to the content and recommendations in the preliminary phase 2 report, a few participants raised concerns—and frustration—regarding the accessibility of the report to the MSU community. While several participants found the report to be “easy to read” and appreciated the presentation styling, Table of Contents, and headers, some participants worried that the sheer size of the report—50 pages—discouraged readership. Some participants suggested that this concern could be offset by including a one-page, bulleted summary of key themes and recommendations. We understand that as part of its efforts to improve communication, MSU plans to take efforts itself to share our analysis and findings over the coming weeks and months ahead.

Some students in our discussion sessions expressed frustration that MSU’s communications regarding the preliminary phase 2 report were “confusing” and that the report itself was not directly circulated to the student body. While we noted that the report was posted on the University’s Title IX webpage, some students recommended implementing a “3-click access” rule for the final report so it would be accessible by no more than 3-clicks from a link embedded in any communications about the that report. Other students suggested that MSU utilize a Listserv for those students who wish to receive updates on Title IX-related information.

## Education-Related Recommendations

### Freshman Seminar Course

Participants in all discussion groups continued to express significant interest in, and support for, adopting a freshman seminar course. Several participants focused their comments on the urgency for offering such a course. One administrator offered, “[t]here’s reams of data to support the need for this [a Freshman seminar course.]” Another stated, “[t]his is what we need, let’s stop talking about it and do it.”

Despite the course’s apparent popularity, that some within the University may

Some participants asserted that senior approaches in prior years, because such rigorous. Others asserted that there may that the topics covered in such a course may not be as important as the intellectual work being done by academics and researchers. One participant was concerned about whether a freshman seminar course would have support from upper administration, and stated that “I hope those in the administration can see the need for this kind of intervention.”

“This is what we need, let’s stop talking about it and do it.”

this suggestion was also met with concern push back against this recommendation. leaders within MSU have been against such courses are perceived to not be academically be a feeling within pockets of the University

In response to these concerns, some participants contended that the MSU community “needs to dispel the notion that these are common sense skills.” These individuals argued that interpersonal skills are just as important as traditional academics and should not be ignored. They asserted that bodies of research and literature would support a conclusion that the main impediments to academic success are interpersonal and mental health challenges, all of which could be addressed by such a course. These participants were encouraged that the concept of a freshman seminar course was raised in the preliminary phase 2 report, and that the perceived barriers to implementation were identified. Participants also echoed earlier feedback that any such barriers are not insurmountable.

Students in our discussion groups also expressed strong opinions regarding the pedagogy and staffing of a freshman seminar course. Specifically, they argued that for such a class to be successful, it must be taught in-person and be led by respected, full-time professors, rather than graduate assistants or adjunct professors. Overall, student, faculty and staff participants largely favored making such a course mandatory. On the other hand, some participants proposed what they called a “soft mandate,” by which a freshman seminar course would be required, but students could choose to take the course in lieu of other Title IX-related training requirements, or to complete those alternative training requirements. These participants speculated that allowing students to choose their path would bolster student “buy-in” for the course, and may entice them to enroll so they would not “get stuck” with less appealing training requirements.

As suggested in our preliminary phase 2 report, a freshman seminar course could be a useful way to prompt discussion among students and faculty about the challenging and practical issues that affect their daily lives, including issues that are Title IX-related, such as sexual misconduct, gender discrimination, and gender equity. A number of participants asserted that such a course would be a great way to start building a positive narrative on campus around “what it means to be a Spartan.” While participants understood and acknowledged the importance of an “academics first” approach to for-credit courses, participants were optimistic that faculty, staff, and students could design a freshman seminar course or courses that would be both academically rigorous and personally rewarding.

## Training Improvements and Alignment

In our additional discussion sessions regarding MSU’s Title IX training, students echoed earlier comments that the University’s trainings are typically geared towards what they believe to be “cut-and-dry” circumstances of sexual abuse. They expressed concern that many of their peers may lack an understanding of “middle-ground” issues relating to consent, and unwelcome versus welcome conduct. These students suggested that education efforts be more focused on the forms of sexual misconduct that fall short of clear instances of rape and forcible sexual assault, such as dating violence, stalking, and lewd comments that may create a hostile environment. Student participants also expressed interest in education on related topics, such as:

- What unhealthy relationship behaviors may lead to sexual assault or abuse.
- What to do when you feel pressured or experience unwelcome conduct by authority figures.
- How to handle partying/drinking-related sexual pressure.
- How to recognize if your significant other is emotionally manipulating you.

Student participants acknowledged that because undergraduate students are a transitional community, it can be hard for the University to engage and educate the student body about these issues. Many student participants agreed that the students who are well-educated about these issues are typically the few who are engaged in sexual misconduct prevention and awareness efforts and therefore need less training than the rest of the student population.

To combat these challenges, some student participants felt that MSU should hold students accountable for failing to participate in trainings and require their active engagement, but without the use of heavy-handed punishments. These students stated that MSU’s efforts should be about “winning hearts and minds.” One student mentioned that MSU is, “not going to win anyone over by scolding or shaming them into training.” Instead, students proposed short post-training quizzes that are more than simple, check-the-box answers. Some suggested delayed follow-up quizzes that arise every few months to encourage retention of information, and others suggested short follow-up training sessions that would be offered in “short-bursts.”

Faculty and staff participants were likewise against heavy-handed mandatory training, with some noting that the completion rate for mandatory trainings is comparable to the rate of completion for non-mandatory trainings. One administrator argued that a mandatory message for training may have been required by the Office for Civil Rights, but that this sends the wrong message to MSU’s community about why, as a community, training on these topics is important.

Some participants recommended that to increase community engagement, MSU should also move away from online trainings. Specifically, one participant maintained that real learning takes place when, “the tables go away, the iPads go away, the papers and legal pads go away; there is a vulnerability where it’s just your body, not your props, and you engage...”

Another participant cautioned MSU against utilizing a cadre of external consultants to conduct in-person trainings, which student participants seemed to strongly oppose at a time where MSU should “pull together.” These participants felt that expanding upon MSU’s University-led trainings would better foster team-work, mutual accountability, and “perpetuate the reality that we are all in this together.”

Throughout all of our discussions with members of the MSU community, we have heard repeatedly that Title IX-related training needs to be more hands-on, more sophisticated, and more diverse in offerings. At the same time, we have also heard that these trainings need to be time-conscious and not be imposed with a threat of punishment or penalty. These themes were echoed in our additional discussion sessions.

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## Special Populations

### Diversity and Inclusion in Leadership

A number of participants were pleased with MSU’s recent restructuring and expansion of its Title IX office and the Office of Institutional Equity (“OIE”). However, some expressed a desire for more diversity among the leaders working on these issues, indicating that many of the individuals engaged in Title IX-related work are white women. These participants were concerned that a lack of diversity among key leaders would be a “fatal flaw,” because, in their view, issues of sexual misconduct and gender discrimination play out differently among different groups of people, including men, minority groups, and members of the LGBTQ community, as well as individuals with disabilities. One participant quoted First Lady Rosalyn Carter, saying, “[a] leader takes people where they want to go. A great leader takes people where they don’t necessarily want to go, but ought to be.” This participant advocated for a more diverse leadership team, because that group would help MSU build a culture of tolerance, enhance the University’s credibility on these issues, and ultimately lead MSU in the direction it “ought to be.”

### Graduate Students

In group discussion sessions in the fall of 2017 and winter of 2018, graduate students expressed interest in having a discussion forum exclusively for them. In response, we hosted an additional discussion session exclusively for graduate students. Participants in this meeting raised repeated concerns that Title IX-related training and awareness programs are too “undergrady,” meaning MSU’s focus for such programs is on sexual abuse stemming from a party-culture more prevalent among undergraduate student populations. These participants strongly advocated for the University to involve more graduate students in the development and planning of Title IX-related training and awareness programs to bridge what they characterized as a very wide gap between the University’s offerings in this area and the needs of graduate students.

Participants also expressed concern that the University has not been clear in explaining whether, and how, student and faculty policies apply to graduate students.

Of particular concern, many graduate students do not feel adequately trained to deal with sexual misconduct reports that may be brought to those graduate students serving in personnel roles such as teaching or research assistants. Participants also expressed concern that the University has not been clear in explaining whether, and how, student and faculty policies apply to graduate students. For example, graduate students warned that although many of them are subject to the University’s mandatory reporting requirement for incidents of sexual misconduct, they do not receive adequate training. Participants also argued that MSU’s sexual misconduct training needs to address how to respond to a disclosure “as a human being,” rather than merely impressing upon them

how to “hand-off” a report to the Title IX coordinator. While some graduate students acknowledged that handling and addressing a complaint of sexual misconduct may not be their responsibility, they felt that simply passing along a report to the Title IX Coordinator will not likely be the end of their involvement with an individual who felt comfortable coming to them to report such an allegation. These participants requested more robust training that not only helps ensure that MSU is fulfilling its legal obligations to survivors, but is also educating them as to how to provide appropriate support to individuals who come forward.

These comments are consistent with feedback offered by other members of the MSU community in earlier discussion sessions regarding MSU’s mandatory reporting requirement. Students, faculty, administrators and staff who participated have all reported feeling that merely “handing-off” a complaint is inadequate, and that MSU’s training should go farther to educate them about the human aspect of supporting survivors. Many participants expressed concern that after they make a report to OIE, they feel “left in the dark” and receive little to no follow-up information about OIE’s process. While some participants acknowledged that privacy concerns may drive some of this result, many others expressed confusion and frustration with OIE’s process and believe that MSU can do more to help mandatory reporters understand the process and support claimants.

Another issue raised by graduate students is a concern that there is a significant disconnect between MSU’s support services for graduate students and those students’ understanding of these services. For instance, some graduate students were not aware of MSU’s Employee Assistance Program (“EAP”), or that EAP is available to them. Participants also expressed frustration that while graduate students may have access to resources like the EAP and counseling services, that eligibility may be based on their employment and grant-funding statuses which vary frequently, including as often as each semester. With that variability, some graduate students warned that there can be a lack of continuity in the services they utilize. Further, with their employment and funding statuses often in flux, graduate students expressed concern that most of their peers may not know what resources they may be eligible for at any given time.

In sum, it appears some graduate students feel left out of the discussion with respect to Title IX concerns and services, and that their needs are not currently being addressed or represented. For this reason, the University may consider expanding engagement and inclusion of graduate students in their efforts to enhance their Title IX program. Further, MSU should evaluate how frequent changes in employment and funding statuses among graduate students may impact those students’ eligibility for support services, and whether it can streamline or harmonize eligibility for those services to provide more service continuity for the students who access them.

## Pregnant Students

Graduate students who participated in our discussion sessions also raised concerns that faculty, on occasion, may abuse their power in how they treat pregnant graduate students. Specifically, participants referenced instances where pregnant students were allegedly removed from certain projects on the basis of their pregnancy. These graduate students stated that MSU has not provided adequate training to faculty and staff regarding pregnancy discrimination, and has not provided information to students who are, or may become, pregnant about their rights and available support services. Although this concern falls somewhat beyond the scope of our charge in this review, because pregnancy discrimination is a form of gender discrimination prohibited by Title IX, we believe it is relevant to include these concerns in this addendum.

Under Title IX, MSU must ensure members of the MSU community are protected from such discrimination. Notably, MSU’s anti-discrimination policy does not specifically reference pregnancy, though pregnancy discrimination is prohibited by MSU as a form of gender discrimination. MSU’s Student Parent Resource Center provides resources for pregnant and parenting students. However, in light of graduate students’ specific concerns about this topic and lack of awareness of MSU’s resources in this area, MSU should consider expanding its training and awareness programming designed to protect pregnant students and employees from intentional, as well as unintentional, discriminatory practices, and to build awareness of the resources that exist on campus for pregnant and parenting students.

## Student Athletes

While a number of student athletes participated in our earlier discussion groups, during our additional sessions in the spring, we met with a group exclusively made up of student athletes. In talking about their concerns related to sexual misconduct issues

impacting MSU, the majority of these student athletes felt singled-out, stereotyped, and even villainized by other members of the MSU community and the media. The following statements seemed to resonate for the entire group of participants:

“If one of us fails at something, it’s easy for all of us to be generalized as failing as well.”

One person’s mistake gets reflected on the whole team.”

“Anything we are doing can make a good headline.”

“We hear the stereotypes at all schools . . . people view athletes as entitled and protected.”

Student athlete participants expressed a collective view that the vast majority of MSU student athletes are respectful towards others, but that they feel helpless to change a negative perception about their community when one person engages in bad behavior. Some participants said that they continually worry about another student athlete engaging in some form of sexual misconduct, and that any allegation against one person can cast a negative light on all of them.

Some participants reported being “trolled” online, by receiving unsolicited social media comments, emails, and other electronic communications that are threatening, unkind, or otherwise unpleasant, simply due to their status as a student athlete. Participants attributed some of these online attacks to the current atmosphere at MSU. One expressed a view that “everyone’s worried about someone engaging in bad behavior.”

Participants volunteered that offering positive messages to student athletes and encouraging good behavior can be more effective than shaming them for bad behavior. For example, a few athletes noted that one coach sends a weekly email to the team that they feel is especially empowering and impactful. This message asks the team to: *“Look after each other, make smart choices, never forget the past... Be a positive light in the community.”*

Some participants expressed support for another coach’s approach for raising awareness around sexual misconduct. This coach solicited anonymous questions and comments relating to sexual misconduct, as well as other important issues affecting student athletes, and brought in law enforcement officials to respond to those comments and engage in a meaningful and “real” discussion about issues raised by these questions. Participants gave glowing reviews about the coach’s strategy to solicit anonymous questions and bring in outside experts to respond. One participant stated that it was the “[m]ost honest, most frank discussion on sexual misconduct issues I’ve ever had.”

Other student athletes suggested increasing athletic department staff to enhance mental health and wellness support for student athletes; utilizing positive role models to reinforce messages about respectful behavior; and improving Title IX-related training initiatives. Specifically, some participants expressed concern regarding the quality and effectiveness of Title IX-related training on issues related to bystander intervention and healthy relationships. These participants recommended supplementing current training by bringing in powerful speakers, such as famous athletes, to talk about these issues.

“Look after each other, make smart choices, never forget the past... Be a positive light in the community.”

Others emphasized expanding initiatives currently available only to the football team to all athletic teams. In particular, members of the football team described a program called “Keeping it Real Mondays,” which brings the team together on a weekly basis to discuss issues specifically affecting team members. Keeping it Real Mondays utilizes open forums and round table discussions to address a wide range of issues, such as time management and financial planning, as well as sexual misconduct and healthy relationships, among other issues. In our discussion session with student athletes, football players who participated in Keeping it Real Mondays stated that they found the weekly program useful because, “[in] our generation, our parents did everything for us... but now we are on our own [and need] to balance our money, manage our time, and make good decisions.” Student athletes from other teams expressed that regular programming on these issues would be beneficial to their teams, as well, and advocated for more programming such as the Keeping it Real Mondays program.

## Greek Community

In our additional discussion sessions with faculty and staff, we heard repeated concerns regarding the perceived dominance of Greek life within the MSU community and the lack of University oversight over this particular community. A few participants expressed concern that a “code of silence” may exist within the Greek community, where individuals may feel either direct, or indirect, pressure to not bring forward reports of sexual misconduct that take place within the Greek system. We note that these concerns were not presented to us by members of the Greek community, but rather were a perception about this community from those outside the community.

Some participants explained that the perception around the Greek community as a “closed community” may be compounded by a lack of resources within MSU’s office of Student Affairs to work to engage and liaise with this community in an open and meaningful way. Several participants noted that MSU may have only one full-time student affairs staff member responsible for working with the entire Greek community. Some suggested that five or six dedicated staff members would be necessary to do an effective job engaging with this segment of the student population and opening its culture to University oversight.

## International Students

During our additional discussion sessions, some faculty and staff participants reiterated the importance of providing adequate and meaningful Title IX training for international students. Participants noted that many international students may be less proficient in English, making clear and precise training essential for ensuring that this student population fully understands MSU’s conduct expectations, as well as the resources, services, and reporting options available to them. Some participants asserted that the University must account for the differences in perspective, culture, knowledge and experience within this student population, and how those differences may impact international students’ views and beliefs about sexual activity, sexual misconduct, and reporting. One participant expressed concern that international students may be significantly underserved by MSU’s mental health services, due to a lack of awareness of these services, as well as greater need for them among this student population. This participant asserted that MSU only employs one international counselor.

## Support Services and Resources

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### Increasing Mental Health Services

Participants reiterated the importance of increasing the accessibility of mental health services on campus. The themes on this subject, which were highlighted in our preliminary phase 2 report, were echoed in nearly all of our additional discussion sessions: (1) the wait times are too long for students “in crisis” who need access to immediate care; (2) the University needs to employ additional mental health professionals to keep up with demand; and (3) the University’s mental health initiatives are underfunded.

Based on our discussions, we believe some participants felt that MSU’s resource deficiency may be amplified by MSU’s decentralized organizational structure. These participants explained that they believed a number of MSU’s mental health resources are housed separately and are “siloed.” These participants asserted that a decentralized approach may also contribute to the perception that MSU has been unable to keep up with the increased demand for mental health services. Notably, MSU has already begun to expand and consolidate these resources on campus to allow for greater collaboration between its various mental health and wellness providers, and sharing among wellness professionals.

## MSU Police

A few participants expressed concern that students are unfamiliar with the resources and expertise within the MSU Police Department (“MSUPD”) and that MSUPD’s resources are underutilized. These participants noted that MSUPD is given less than

ten minutes in freshman orientation to connect with incoming students and discuss the services they provide. Participants also explained that there are few structured opportunities outside of orientation for MSUPD to meet and connect with students in a positive and preventative setting. As a result, participants felt that students may not know how to report crimes, including sexual assault, to MSUPD, and may misperceive MSUPD's role. Specifically, some participants felt that students may be afraid or reluctant to report crimes to MSUPD, instead of viewing them as a resource.

Participants also stated that the alleged limited interaction between MSUPD and students is not due to a lack of resources. To the contrary, participants, including members from within MSUPD, indicated that MSUPD has resources and interest to support more direct involvement with students, but has previously not been encouraged or supported in such activities. MSUPD officials explained that the Department is planning to initiate a community policing effort next year to help build a stronger relationship with students. Participants asserted that the more positive the interactions between MSUPD and students are, the more likely students will utilize them in a time of need. For that reason, several participants felt that the community policing effort would be a positive first step towards dispelling misperceptions around the role of MSUPD and promoting utilization of MSUPD on campus, but they advocated for additional opportunities for such interactions.

## Concentrated and Strategic Communications

Some participants noted that although the University's new leadership has attempted to keep students more informed regarding Title IX-related news and developments, the University's communication efforts may still be ineffective at reaching students. These participants believe that email messages to students may be too lengthy or may feel too manufactured, causing students to disregard the messages entirely. Other participants expressed appreciation for more regular updates, but asserted that the messages are still not resonating with students. Participants recommended communicating with students through short, conversational messages.

As an example, student participants referenced a communication strategy utilized at orientation, referred to as the "Spartan Six." It was explained to us that Spartan Six messaging follows a "less is more" mantra and endorses reducing larger bodies of information to six words that might resonate or "stick with" the targeted audience. Participants explained that reducing the size of the desired message eliminates clutter by cutting the information down to only the key "take-aways" and allows for increased retention. While not all communications on complex Title IX-related issues can be reduced to six words, participants suggested that following the Spartan Six concept wherever possible could result in students paying greater attention to any remaining longer messages.

## Addressing Retaliation

A few faculty and staff participants worried that MSU's prohibition against retaliation for reporting sexual misconduct and other workplace-related misconduct does not receive enough attention in training. These participants asserted that, as a whole, faculty and staff want to do the right thing, but that many members of the MSU community may be choosing not to report claims out of fear that they might lose their jobs or face other forms of retaliation. Some participants noted that reporting sexual misconduct, particularly sexual harassment, may also be deterred by dismissive responses from supervisors, such as "it's always been this way."

Such institutional barriers could be overcome by educating faculty and staff on MSU's prohibition against retaliation and the methods of reporting available to them. While retaliation is a topic that is addressed in MSU's training for faculty and staff, it is concerning that several members of the MSU community who participated in our discussion groups raised fear of reprisal and retaliation as a potential barrier for reporting.

Accordingly, these participants believe that in order to prevent sexual misconduct on college and university campuses like MSU, more holistic sexual education must be taught in secondary school. While participants acknowledged that this lack of education is not intrinsic only to MSU's college community, they expressed desire that MSU take steps to fill this gap within its broader community. Specifically, in support for the recommendation for the STEP high school program highlighted in the preliminary phase 2 report, one participant offered, "MSU needs to be a force for inward change, but also advocate for outward change." In response to participant feedback on this recommendation, MSU has begun working to develop sexual education programming for secondary students across the state.

## Step Program for Area High School Students

Some participants expressed frustration with the quality, and quantity, of sexual education in secondary schools and highlighted this as a compounding factor for sexual harassment and abuse that may occur on college campuses. These participants noted that many secondary schools educate students about safe sex, but that there may not be an emphasis on consensual sex. These participants felt that the concept of consent may therefore not be presented to many young adults until their freshman year in college. They observed that students who enter college without an understanding of healthy sexual relationships are likely contributors to the higher number of sexual assaults that occur in the first semester.

Accordingly, these participants believe that in order to prevent sexual misconduct on college and university campuses like MSU, more holistic sexual education must be taught in secondary school. While participants acknowledged that this lack of education is not intrinsic only to MSU's college community, they expressed desire that MSU take steps to fill this gap within its broader community. Specifically, in support for the recommendation for the STEP high school program highlighted in the preliminary phase 2 report, one participant offered, "MSU needs to be a force for inward change, but also advocate for outward change." In response to participant feedback on this recommendation, MSU has begun working to develop sexual education programming for secondary students across the state.

# Conclusion

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The input we received during the additional discussion sessions this spring largely echoed the concerns, themes and recommendations captured in our preliminary phase 2 report. Overwhelmingly, participants expressed support for the specific recommendations offered in that preliminary report and sought to use these additional sessions to ensure that our final phase 2 report expressed their view that MSU approach the implementation of these recommendations with a sense of urgency.

As we reflect on the entirety of this review, there is one theme relating to MSU's efforts to prevent and respond to sexual misconduct and gender discrimination that resounds from each segment of the MSU community: the MSU community must come together as a single, undivided unit, with a unified message regarding what MSU stands for and how it will live these values. One conversation that occurred during one of the additional discussion sessions illustrates this recurring theme. In discussing MSU's "Go Teal Campaign"<sup>3</sup>—a student-led movement to demonstrate support for survivors of sexual misconduct through teal posters, ribbons and shirts—participants began discussing how other members of the MSU community could support the campaign. Some were hopeful that faculty and staff would embrace the movement by wearing teal on a day that they organized. Other ideas included installing teal lightbulbs to line MSU's streets. While participants were excited about the ways they could outwardly demonstrate support, they turned their conversation to how the MSU community can move from **"wearing the teal, to living the teal."** These participants recognized that outward demonstrations of support, while meaningful, may not be as impactful as embedding within MSU's culture the critical concepts of healthy relationships, mutual respect, support for survivors, and knowledge of the University's values and processes.

We are hopeful that our observations and the feedback from MSU's own community that are captured in our phase 1 and phase 2 reports provide MSU with a roadmap for meaningful and impactful improvements that will help chart a path for one day becoming an exemplar for other institutions.

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<sup>3</sup> We understand that the Go Teal Campaign began with a poster that hangs at the Sciences building, which contains the names of survivors who testified at the Nassar hearing, each adorned with a teal ribbon. Since the poster went up, students have been wearing teal as a sign of solidarity for those survivors.