
A Message from Ruta Shah-Gordon, Wagner College Title IX Deputy Coordinator

1 message

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Dear Campus Community,

Many of you have heard about or seen the story in a local paper on Monday that highlights sexual assault on college campuses. This is an issue we take very seriously. Wagner College is committed to stopping sexual assault and sexual discrimination on our campus. We'd like to take this opportunity to discuss [Wagner's policies and procedures](#) on sexual assault and sexual discrimination, and to fill in information missing or misstated in the article.

First, you should know that when we receive a report of a sex discrimination and/or sexual violence, our first concern is the student's health and safety and we offer immediate medical care and counseling. We have partnered with the Staten Island Family Justice Center who provide a holistic approach for services. We also encourage the student to move forward with two processes, one through our own campus judicial system and the other with the NY police department. In both cases, we provide support and assist the student in working through each process. I also want to emphasize that we support the decision a student makes on whether or not to move forward. So, that means complaints may be addressed through our own campus judiciary, investigated by the NYPD, or both, or neither, depending upon the wishes of the student. That is the most important part to us: what the student wants.

Here's a complete list of the options that we discuss with a student at the time of a report:

- Seeing a counselor (on or off campus)
- Going to the hospital
- Getting a medical exam (on or off campus)
- Getting tested for STIs, HIV and/or pregnancy (on or off campus)
- Request that a no communication order be issued by the College
- File a formal report at Wagner College so that the incident can be adjudicated through the College's conduct process
- File a report with the New York Police Department
- Pursue an "Order of Protection" through the NYPD
- Contact the NYC Office of Victim Services or Staten Island Family Justice Center
- Move residence halls or rooms
- Change class schedules
- Have Dean's office communicate with professors

- Along with any other option that might make sense given the situation

A student making a report can decide not to proceed and then later decide to move forward on previously declined options, and we will and do support these decisions.

In our experience, many of the cases which come forward to the College include someone that the student knows. If we do believe there is an imminent threat, we will send a community notice. If there is no such threat, then we do not. **I can also tell you that our own campus investigations, when a student has decided to move forward with campus hearings, have resulted in the suspensions and expulsions, as well as other sanctions, of those who we have found responsible, though I am barred from providing specific detail by law.**

An important point is that, no matter what the immediate action, whether a report is investigated on campus, by the police department, or not, it is contained in our own report to various government agencies, the most prominent of which is the Clery Report, as well as New York's own "Enough is Enough" law. So, even though a student may not want to report such an incident to police, and that is his or her decision to make, a committee made up of the Director of Human Resources/Title IX officer, Director of Public Safety, Dean of Campus Life, Vice President of Campus Life, and Vice President of Administration meet twice monthly to review all cases that may have anything to do with Title IX to ensure compliance and continued support for our students. We report all cases brought to the attention of the College to state and federal agencies and post on our website. We send notice of this to all students, staff, and faculty once per year with a link to the website [here](#).

In addition to responding to issues of sexual assault through policies and practice, the College has also committed itself to engaging in thoughtful educational initiatives such as Haven and Alcohol EDU. For several years, Wagner College has partnered with EverFi, whose mission is to help students address critical life skills such as alcohol abuse prevention, sexual assault prevention, and financial literacy in higher education institutions across the country. Historically, students involved in alcohol-related matters were referred to this online course as a sanction. Over the last two years, new students were required to participate in both Alcohol EDU and Haven, EverFi's sexual assault module, prior to arriving to campus, with a follow-up module 45 days later.

Many offices throughout campus (including: Co-Curricular Programs, Health and Wellness, Residential Education, Athletics, Intercultural Advancement, the Center for Religion and Spirituality, the Dean of Campus Life's Office and the Student Government) have hosted speakers and sponsored programs to educate the community about sexual assault prevention.

I am disturbed and saddened that the story may have conveyed something other than our commitment to stopping sex discrimination and sexual violence on our campus. We work with all members of the Wagner community to create policies that can be understood by all and we review these policies on a yearly basis to meet NY state law, federal regulations, and best practices. I would like to invite students to a couple of open forums in the next few weeks so we can clarify our policies and ways to enhance education and move forward together to create a safer, inclusive climate for all.

Sincerely,

Dr. Ruta Shah-Gordon

Vice President, Internationalization, Intercultural Affairs, and Campus Life

Deputy Title IX Officer