

**Year 3 Public Description of Work for
Action Collaborative on Preventing Sexual Harassment in Higher Education**

Whatcom Community College

Know the Line Programming

Relevant Rubric Area(s):

Identifying and Clarifying Community Values; Addressing Gender Harassment and Other Harmful Behaviors

Description of Work:

As the college began the process of returning the majority of classes to campus, a group of staff and faculty was gathered to examine current sexual discrimination prevention programming. An early topic this group focused on was current anti-discrimination posters and other public-facing resources for all members of the campus and broader community. Previous posters and bathroom signage was black and white, referenced specific people, and did not focus on norms and community values at all, only offering where to report sexual assault. The work on these posters began in August of 2021, and posters went up in April of 2022.

The process for this effort began with a lot of research into how other campuses, as well as governments from across the world were working to address sex-based discrimination. Information was pulled from the NASEM Repository of Work, as well as through Google searches, and reaching out to peer institutions. Through this work a few themes became clear; a focus on low-level discriminatory behavior was needed to drive change, audience specific communication and design was critical, and bold design would aid in audience retention of information.

A Focus on Low-Level Discriminatory Behavior

Previous public information campaigns had focused on resources and support for those who have experience sexual assault on campus. While these are still folks we want to support and provide resources for, Whatcom Community College acknowledges that they do not represent the majority of sex-based discrimination occurring on our campus. As such, and in reference to the NASEM 2018 Report, this campaign aimed to focus on more common and “low-level” discriminatory behavior. That is meant by “low-level” behavior is the gender harassing behavior that permeates society, rather than violent behavior that is often the focus of Title IX trainings. The posters take on three topics, electronic communication, compliments, and appropriate personal communication. Examples can be found in the link at the bottom of this description.

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In an effort to reinforce that these behaviors should not be accepted at the college, a campaign focused on community values was determined to be important to the committee members, as well as in alignment with the Rubric. Given both of these the committee took inspiration from the Know the Line campaign that had seen success in Australia. Focusing on the potential source of discrimination rather than the target of this behavior was important to the group to reduce potential harm to those who had been the target of this type of behavior in the past.

Audience-Specific Language

Beyond the language focused on the potential source of discrimination, this campaign was also designed to focus on the lived experiences of campus community members. Members of the committee offered their own stories of experiencing discrimination on campus, as well as stories of colleagues and students. From these shared experiences the committee settled on the lines that would appear on the posters. These lines would offer an example of potentially discriminatory language or behavior, and then an alternative that would create a more comfortable and accepting campus community.

This set-up, of discriminatory action and inclusive alternative was similar to the Know the Line campaign, but both were informed by the college's policies as well as values; both the colleges anti-harassment policy and the college's published Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion statements. The language was kept as gender neutral as possible; not to minimize the reality that women, trans, and non-binary folx experience discrimination at higher rates, but rather to show an example of how to create impactful, gender-inclusive programming.

Bold Design

In an effort to make visually striking posters, this campaign used bold, primary colors on a black background to draw the eye. This was determined not just to be eye-catching, but also could serve as a template for future printed media providing a common design language for addressing these issues on campus. It also allowed for the use of simple design elements to communicate importance. So, on each of the posters, in a circle, was a short website URL with all of the resources the college and broader community can offer those targeted or witnessing discrimination. It also allowed for color cues around the undesirable language and the inclusive alternatives.

The final step was implementing these posters throughout campus. As a small school with few dedicated anti-discrimination staff, there is often resistance and concern when these types of efforts are introduced. Working with the President and Vice Presidents of the college this committee was able to coalition-build to ensure these posters were distributed as wide-spread as possible throughout the physical campus, as well as through email with encouragement for all employees to post in their assigned spaces.

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Website for further information (if applicable): [Know the Line Posters](#)

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