

2024 Public Description of Work for Action Collaborative on Preventing Sexual Harassment in Higher Education

Boston University

Cones for Consent

Relevant Rubric Area(s):

1. Prevention: Civility or Respect Promotion Program
2. Prevention: Identifying and Reinforcing Community Values

Description of Work:

Purpose & Goals

Cones for Consent is an original program of the Boston University (BU) Sexual Assault Response & Prevention Center and its Student Ambassadors. In 2023, it was adapted for undergraduate Orientation in partnership with Student Health Services, Student Activities Office, Orientation Office, and the University Committee on Sexual Assault & Harassment Prevention. This partnership formed with the shared understanding that promoting consent culture fosters healthy interpersonal norms and expectations throughout the BU community. The collaborative program served as a step toward the University's goals of preventing sexual assault and harassment at Boston University.

The goals of this program were to:

- Set a sex-positive tone toward the topics of consent and sexual decision making
- Communicate about consent culture and campus resources for sexual wellbeing
- Demonstrate BU's proactive engagement around students' sexual wellbeing and safety

What we did and how it was done

Cones for Consent is a multipronged program that uses free ice cream and creative messaging to memorably introduce education and campus resources related to consent culture. Specifically, the 2023 program included:

1. Peer-led engagement events with an ice cream truck;
Cones events were integrated into the Orientation schedule through a collaboration with Student Activities Office's evening social program, "Terriers Night Out." Incoming students had the opportunity to stop by the ice cream truck and connect with another BU student who was trained by Student Health Services to share a consent culture definition and how BU supports it.
2. Question prompt, "What does consent culture mean to you?";
Before receiving a free ice cream, incoming students were asked to answer a simple and singular prompt via an online questionnaire: What does consent culture mean to you?
3. Stickers, signage, and takeaway cards;
Each incoming student viewed signage with peer quotes and received a resource card with BU's consent culture definition and resources related to sexual wellbeing and safety (pictured below).

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4. Sex-positivity at Resource Fairs;
Incoming students had the option to engage with Student Health Services at Orientation Resource Fairs, where information was available on topics such as gender-affirming healthcare, sexual health services, safer sex supplies, and interpersonal violence prevention efforts. Sex-positive zines, buttons, and stickers were also freely available to students.
5. Social media posts featuring student quotes;
Student Health Services created Instagram posts that highlighted student responses to the question prompt and illustrated positive social norms related to consent. These posts were also re-shared by the Orientation Office.

How the work is new

Cones for Consent is an innovative approach to promoting healthy interpersonal norms, institutional values, and principles of sexual citizenship.

This was the first time that multiple University entities partnered to fund and execute a multipronged program on consent culture.

Current status of the work

Cones for Consent has been completed for the AY 2023-2024 Orientation cycle and is being updated for the 2024-25 year, including summer 2024 Orientation sessions, based on student and administrator feedback.

Plans for evaluating the success, effectiveness, and/or impact of the work

Nearly 1,500 students responded to the prompt, "What does consent culture mean to you?" Main themes among their answers included:

- Community vs. individual responsibility
- Safety
- Autonomy
- Respect

Example responses included:

- "Building a community that respects other people's things, bodies, and minds."
- "Respecting people's boundaries and listening to each other. It doesn't even have to be just sexual but with any boundaries."
- "Openness about sex and what it means to different people, breaking the stigma around sex and sex culture, easily accessible, good sex education, LGBTQ+ positivity, and allyship."
- "I'm not sure."

BU's Orientation Office also collected feedback from students and found the program to have positive regard.

Next Steps for the Work

Cones for Consent will expand to reach new segments of the BU population:

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- Graduate students will participate in events held on the Medical and Fenway campuses
- Parents and guardians of incoming undergraduate students will learn about the program through a digital resource
- All incoming students can opt into an email newsletter that highlights program goals, campus resources, and BU student written content
- All BU students will have the opportunity to engage with normative messages informed by the student responses to the 2024 question prompt
- BU community members will have the opportunity to hear how students engaged with the 2024 question prompt through social media (e.g. Student Health Services and BU Orientation Instagram accounts) and campus press (e.g. BU Today and the Hey BU Blog)
- The responses to the program's survey will inform a future campus-wide social norms campaign.

Cones for Consent Materials



Create Consent Culture

Consent culture creates an environment that respects a person's choices about their own body and sexual decisions.

Consent culture recognizes that each person is the best judge of their own wants and needs.

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BU supports consent culture with:

Condom Fairy

Free safer sex supplies for BU students, delivered to your on or off-campus mailbox.

- bu.edu/shs/condomfairy

BU Student Health Services

Confidential sexual and reproductive healthcare services for BU students.

- bu.edu/shs

BU Sexual Assault Response & Prevention Center

Free, confidential counseling and advocacy, and programs like "Yes! Consent".

- bu.edu/sarp

BU Student Groups

Learn more about student groups that support sexual health and wellness at BU.

- bu.edu/studentactivities

Website for further information (if applicable):

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