

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

Whatcom Community College

**Sexual Assault Prevention Efforts at Whatcom Community
College**

Relevant Rubric Area(s):

1. **Prevention:** Prevention Program or Toolkits
2. **Response:** Describe options for reporting/handling an experience of harassment
3. **Remediation:** Increased or Enhanced Confidential Resources and Support Services

Description of Work:

1. The description of work outlines the college's efforts to bring awareness to, address, and prevent sexual assault on campus. In April of 2024, the college collaborated across divisions to host a variety of activities during Sexual Assault Awareness Month (SAAM) in April 2024. The series of events provided students with resources to build their personal toolkits for preventing and responding to sexual assault. This included encouraging open dialogue about the issue and introducing them to the network of support services available on campus and within the community.

2. To raise awareness and equip the community, the college hosted a series of interconnected events throughout April.

- The college hosted two free, self-defense training sessions for students and staff hosted by local martial arts expert JT Taylor.
 - The first session focused on teaching participants situational awareness and self-protection considerations, leaving them better equipped to identify threatening situations, develop decision-making skills, and build confidence. Emphasis was placed on strategy, avoidance, and survival.
 - The second session focused on teaching self-protection considerations and assault response. The presentation focused on controlling fear and selected assault responses. This included an interactive workshop focusing on “grabbing” escapes.
- A community services discussion panel on sexual assault was featured later in the month. The panel members participated in a moderated discussion, answered attendee questions and participated in tabling to share more about their organization. The panel included professionals from various campus and community resources.
 - Domestic Violence & Sexual Assault Services (DVSAS) provided insights into their array of services, covering intake procedures and the diverse support options available for survivors of domestic and sexual assault.

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- The Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (SANE) at PeaceHealth St. Joseph's Hospital detailed the comprehensive procedure of a sexual assault examination, guiding through every step from check-in to completion. Throughout, emphasis was placed on the paramount importance of patient consent.
- The Whatcom County Sheriff's Office and Bellingham Police Department explained the protocol following a 911 call, including the law enforcement response, anticipated questions, the referral process to organizations like DVSAS or SANE, and an overview of the initial stages of the legal proceedings.
- The Lummi Victims of Crime Attorney discussed the legal options accessible to survivors and offered valuable insights into available resources throughout the legal process.
- Whatcom Community College's Director for Community Standards & Residence Life discussed campus resources, the institution's response protocols, and detailed the Title IX processes and available options.
- The Simpson Intercultural Center hosted Transgender Day of Visibility – Talking Stories Event. This event focused on hearing the stories of our Transgender community to improve our understanding of some of the ongoing challenges, as well as spent time considering what more can be done to better support them.
- Residence Life hosted a vibrant event at our Cedar Hall residence called "Let's Taco 'bout Sex." Twenty-two students joined in, enjoying a taco bar while engaging in open and informative discussions on topics such as sex, consent, and safe practices. Our community partner, Planned Parenthood, set up a table where attendees could access valuable information, resources, and even some swag.

3. Renewed Initiative and Positive Response: After a hiatus, organizers successfully revitalized our SAAM programming in 2024, enabling us to introduce new and diverse experts into the discussions.

The 2024 programming has concluded with overwhelmingly positive feedback. Both students and staff found the self-defense training valuable, relevant, and engaging, particularly appreciating its interactive format. Many have expressed interest in similar offerings in the future. The sexual assault panel effectively brought together various community resources to inform attendees about relevant processes and dispel myths surrounding seeking support after a sexual assault. This event left attendees with a deeper understanding of the sexual assault community.

4.-6. Looking Forward: Planning for SAAM 2025 is already in progress. College event organizers intend to actively involve students by conducting polls to better grasp their needs, ensuring that events are tailored to meet student interests and expectations.

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Next year's plans involve fostering collaboration across various departments to broaden and diversify event offerings. This includes working closely with committees such as Campus Diversity and Professional Development, as well as partnering with student clubs like the Pride Alliance, the Student Union, and other groups across campus. These efforts aim to create a more inclusive and comprehensive SAAM experience for the entire college community.

Additional Resources:

For more information on Sexual Assault Awareness Month events at Whatcom Community College, please visit [Sexual Assault Awareness Month Event | Registration & Academic Calendar | Whatcom Community College](#)

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