

Year 1 Public Description of Work for
Action Collaborative on Preventing Sexual Harassment in Higher Education

The University of New Mexico

**Counseling and Advocacy for
Health and Professional Students**

This Action Applies to Rubric Item(s):

Items 3, 12, 13, and 17.

Description of Work:

In August 2018, the Women's Resource Center – UNM's primary locus of on-campus sexual assault advocacy, counseling, and programming for women students, staff and faculty -- met with HSC and Law leadership to explore expanding WRC services on UNM's North Campus, which includes the Health Sciences Center (Medicine, Nursing, Pharmacy) and School of Law. Although the Law School offers onsite wellness and mental health support for its students, the HSC identified the following needs and goals that could be addressed by creating and staffing a service annex of the WRC on North Campus:

- Increase Education for Faculty and Staff related to Title IX (report to support)
- Trauma-informed Safe Space with Advocacy on North Campus
- Responsive programming and support services related to overcoming gender barriers (from systemic to individual)
- Increased Mental Health Support

As a result of these conversations, and with support from the HSC administration, the Vassar House Advocacy center opened January 2020, providing over 700 hours of long-term and emergency counseling to about 50 medical students and interns in the Spring semester alone. The School of Law Counselor also refers clients as appropriate. Its services interrupted by the Covid-19 pandemic, ongoing efforts have focused on North Campus outreach, including Advocates' presentation to the incoming medical school class and ongoing work with a medical student group on a trauma informed care training. The Advocacy Center will be fully staffed for the Fall semester (with social distancing) with one Campus Advocate, one Accommodations Specialist and three counseling interns.

This initiative is consistent with the findings and recommendations of the 2018 NASEM report, in particular: leadership training and skill development (3); bystander intervention programs (4); trauma-informed response and education programs (12); providing anonymous and non-mandatory reporting resources and tools (13); and increased or enhanced confidential resources and support services (17).

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The Vassar House Advocacy Center is at once new to UNM and innovative for higher education. This new space allowed WRC to expand its counseling program and provide specific mental health services and support to HSC students and medical learners, on site and in an accessible fashion. This is first time that UNM's Health Sciences Center has partnered with WRC, focused on student advocacy, and committed significant space and staff funding to these services. The HSC's investment, and its partnership with UNM's longest-standing advocacy center, are innovative because it breaks down the usual barrier that separates services for undergraduates and professional students.

The Vassar House Advocacy Center currently tracks only numbers of clients and services utilized, but is currently planning evaluative measures, including data collected by a WRC intern conducting outreach with north campus student groups, as well as a CCRT student group that provides feedback on prevention education, direct services and overall strategy. Campus stakeholders partnering with WRC in this initiative include the HSC working group and the School of Medicine's offices of Professional Well Being and Learning Environment. Plans currently under development include: increase awareness on North Campus of the availability of local confidential services; continue work to assess specific needs of HSC students, particularly with respect to programming; develop and deliver bystander intervention training appropriate to HSC students and faculty; link Vassar Annex development to OVW grant extension to meet needs of north campus faculty, staff, and professional students.

Website for further information (if applicable):

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