

**Year 2 Public Description of Work for  
Action Collaborative on Preventing Sexual Harassment in Higher Education**

**Fort Lewis College**

**Trauma Fatigue Recognition and Prevention**

**Relevant Rubric Area(s):** Prevention: Civility or Respect Promotion Programs

**Description of work:** Fort Lewis College held multiple training sessions to support FLC (Fort Lewis College) employees and students in recognizing trauma fatigue and supporting themselves in preventing or addressing it.

*Background:* The 2018 NASEM report found that gender-based harassment flourishes when there is a lack of respect and civility. A positive social climate is vital in academia. However, COVID-19 brought many unique challenges to the staff and faculty of Fort Lewis College. Stress from the pandemic brought a widespread reaction to the population at the college. Before COVID sexual assault, domestic violence, marginalization all contributed to trauma to many, but COVID 19 brought the understanding that we all had experienced some sort of trauma and we were also experiencing empathetic trauma from our connections of the experiences of others. We needed to understand trauma and how to be resilient in the face of our new world. Our focus of course was on our students and meeting their emotional, academic, and physical health concerns. We found that this brought an increased burden to our staff and faculty's emotional health also. We wanted to provide support to faculty, staff and students that would address this issue and reinforce a civil and respectful culture at Fort Lewis College. We were interested in promoting student and employee engagement, satisfaction, and retention. Individuals who are skilled in grounding themselves, in leaving work in the workplace, in having healthy boundaries with individuals who are in trauma, in building their own resilience and the resilience of others, are better able to bring their most respectful selves to the college. Norming self-care at our institution and giving individuals tools for checking in with themselves should ultimately, in concert with other anti-harassment work, reduce harassment in our workplace.

**Project Development:**

- Our first effort involved students. We planned and implemented a "Trauma Stewardship" Book Giveaway and book discussion during 2021 Sexual Assault Awareness Month. We advertised to students that they could receive a free copy of the 2009 book, Trauma Stewardship: An Everyday Guide to Caring for Self While Caring for Others by Laura van Dernoot Lipsky. Three entities, the Sexual Assault Services Organization of Durango, the FLC Reed Library, and the FLC Title 9 office joined forces to plan and implement a short book discussion group using the book mentioned above. We used exercises from the book to frame our discussion of compassion during trauma response from others. van Dernoot Lipsky speaks of "vicarious trauma" that is cyclical in nature and ways to self-care when others trauma affects you. She talks about being in

the present moment, choosing your attitude as well as engagement levels and increasing creativity that provides an environment that reflects your personal style and persona.

- Our next efforts were directed at staff and faculty working at Fort Lewis College. Student Affairs, Human Resources, Teaching and Learning Services and our Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Council organized a series of three workshops between August of 2020 and June of 2021 that helped us understand the definition of trauma, its prevalence, impact, basic concepts of trauma-informed approaches, ways to support resilience and how to lead your team through times of disruption, as well as how to create an individual resilience plan to help sustain personal and professional well-being. Our presenter was Doty Shepard who is the Founder and Executive Director of Resilient Colorado. Doty utilizes ACEs Science and Resiliency Science in her interactive training workshops and shares best practices and practical tools for those in an organizational workplace as well as schools, and non-profits in the Southwest Colorado region. Each of these workshops was advertised to FLC employees and most of them filled at high rates. Though formal evaluation was not done, informally employees were clear in their appreciation for the workshops and expressed a wish that they could continue.

**Next Steps:** Recommendation 1(c) of the 2018 report, “Sexual Harassment of Women” states that academic institutions should combine anti-harassment efforts with civility-promoting programs. Moving forward, we recommend that FLC do so by continuing trauma fatigue-oriented programs and being intentional about offering them in combination with anti-harassment programs, such as those led by the FLC Diversity Collaborative. This includes further book studies, short workshops for faculty and staff that focus content on inclusion and civility, wellness activities that are geared towards trauma fatigue prevention and recognition. FLC will formalize assessment for workshops that it conducts to ensure that they are meeting student and employee needs. This will partly be facilitated through FLC’s newly hired Training Coordinator.

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