



ST. MARY'S

ACADEMY

Student Safety Task Force
Report to President Christina Friedhoff
January 30, 2019

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“St. Mary’s Academy, sponsored by the Sisters of the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary since 1859, is a Catholic high school for young women, providing a challenging college-preparatory education in a vibrant learning environment. Guided by the values and charism of the Sisters, St. Mary’s Academy fosters a diverse community, educates the whole person by nurturing spirituality, encouraging creativity, promoting justice and inspiring a sense of global interdependence to prepare students for service and leadership.” - St. Mary’s Academy Mission Statement

President Christina Friedhoff convened the Student Safety Task Force in July 2018 to help ensure that SMA adopts and implements best practices to ensure safety for all students.

Many individuals came together to contribute to the work of the SSTF. First and foremost, thank you to the SSTF members who volunteered their time and expertise. Your willingness to participate in challenging sessions and conversations, gently and safely receive and process varied stakeholder feedback, dig deeply into the multi-layered elements of safety and inclusively consider what it looks like from many lenses was pivotal to our work and recommendations.

Member	Relationship to SMA
Kate Alvord	SMA Administrative Support for SSTF and Current Parent
Melissa Angeli	Alumna & Board Member
Nicole Foran	SMA Principal
Kari Forrer	SMA Human Resources Specialist
Anne Hagge	SMA Director of Academic Support
Bradley Maier	Current Parent
Teri Mariani	Alumna, Member and former Chairman of Alumnae Council
Amy O'Brien	Current Parent & Parent of Recent Graduate
Gabrielle (Gabe) Petersen	Current Parent
Alexandra Reese	Alumna, Member of Alumnae Council
Annie White	Parent of two SMA Alumnae
Carrie Yerton	Health, P.E., Anatomy, and Physiology Teacher
Tanya Young Stump	Independent Facilitator

To deepen our understanding of the elements of safety, identify gaps and clarify best practices, we relied on education from experts. We offer special thanks to the following topical experts who invested

time and shared valuable insights into either the current state at SMA or important areas of our safety considerations: Patty Gorman, SMA Dean of Students, former 38-year SMA teacher and Theology Department Chair; Gabrielle Petersen, MSN, CPNP, Medical Examiner; Nicole Phelps, MSW, Family Support & Intake Specialist; Sara Taggart, MPH, Prevention, Education, and Partnership Manager; Michael Iwicki, Regional Trainer - Allied Security Systems and Former US Navy Seal.

We also owe a debt of gratitude to the 120+ stakeholders who actively participated in crucial listening sessions and one-on-one conversations/interviews. Your willingness to openly share your recollections, collective experiences and commitment to a safe and bright future for SMA were vital to our understanding of the current state and defining our topical focus.

Nicole Foran, SMA Principal, provided critical details and context for all school-related questions, often receiving the bulk of the “homework” resulting from our meetings. Principal Foran’s willingness to help identify gaps in school policies, procedures and culture has already led the way to substantial procedural implementations and upgrades which we will discuss later in this document. Kate Alvord not only provided above and beyond administrative support but brought keen insight as an SMA parent and former educator as well. Many thanks to you both for your professional representation of SMA.

The SSTF was comprised of SMA parents, alumnae, staff, faculty and members of the Board of Directors. The SSTF was charged with making recommendations to the SMA leadership, including the Board of Directors and the President, regarding student safety policies; training for students, staff and parents, reporting and investigation procedures; hiring and supervision practices; and other best practices in an educational setting related to student safety including the prevention of sexual assault and abuse.

SMA hired Tanya Young Stump, an independent consultant, to facilitate the SSTF. She was responsible for:

- Facilitating meetings of the SSTF
- Facilitating listening sessions of SMA stakeholders
- Reviewing existing policies and procedures and identifying experts to recommend best practices on the issues described above
- Developing written recommendations based on the work of the SSTF

Phase 1: Seen and Heard - Seeking and welcoming input from all voices

- ▶ Collaborative listening sessions of Student/Parent/Teachers/Alumnae/Special Interest groups (group sessions and/or 1 on 1)
 - What is the current climate and culture? Where are the perceived high points, where are the gaps? What are the priorities of each special interest /stakeholder group? What are the pain points?
 - Listen for emergent and repetitive themes about current state and desired future state.
- ▶ Considering and acknowledging the existing practices, policies and procedures regarding safety that currently contribute positively to the high-level reputation and student body health at SMA.

Phase 2: Consideration of Existing School Practices and Input from Experts

- ▶ Research from other schools/organizations on helpful framework and innovative, effective methods
- ▶ Connection and input with established experts regarding student safety and personnel policies
- ▶ Review and comparison of current SMA practices with standard best practices in an educational setting including prevention of sexual assault and abuse, considering what is feasible, prudent and beneficial for implementation at SMA

- ▶ Consideration of policy and procedure gaps. What elements of an integrated culture of student safety have yet to be addressed?

Phase 3: Leading the Way - Recommendations for the future

- ▶ Distilled recommendations and implementation suggestions based on insights gained from previous steps. This distillation will be a collaborative effort sharing and incorporating the efforts of the entire task force, fully utilizing their areas of expertise and interest.
- ▶ Delivery of written recommendation report and potential implementation plan to St. Mary’s leadership team including Board of Directors and Administration.

SSTF COMMITMENT TO THE PROCESS

Remain open minded throughout the process. While we acknowledged that it would be a priority to honor the history and traditions of SMA, we also knew that there would likely be conversations, findings and ideas that varied uncomfortably from past approaches. We knew that the task force findings and recommendations would have great potential to create intentionally increased levels of safety and trust within the students, increased levels of security and organizational confidence within staff and teachers and reassurance, loyalty and pride in parents and alumnae. The SSTF committed to follow the information and feedback where it led, make recommendations prioritizing student welfare and safety that we believe benefit the school both today in enhanced student body health and welfare, and in years to come in ever increasing opportunity and school reputation.

Transparency = Trust - Open communication was (and continues to be) of paramount importance during this process and the promotion of a culture of safety at SMA.

In order to consider a holistic view of safety within the school community we used the following framework for clarifying and defining safety. This framework was introduced and used during SSTF meetings, listening sessions and presentations by experts and we recommend it be used in continued efforts to discuss and promote a culture of safety.

Five Crucial Elements of Safety

Social	Spiritual	Intellectual	Physical	Emotional
<ul style="list-style-type: none">•Feels at ease with others in school and non-school settings, both with individuals and groups without fear of undue criticism or lack of acceptance or respect.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•Feels that one’s spiritual beliefs and practices can be expressed without fear of recrimination, criticism or judgment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•Feels able to express thoughts and ideas that may be different from others without fear of ridicule or rejection.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•Feels safe physically from harm and inappropriate invasion of personal and private space.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•Feels support for expression of emotions and trusts that others will not ridicule or demean them personally.

Seeking and Welcoming Input from All Voices

We held 5 group sessions and a variety of one on one conversations. Task force members were invited to attend the group sessions and most sessions had at least 2 members in attendance in addition to Kate Alvord supporting administratively. In total we met with over 100 members of the community.

Alumnae 9/27 – invitation to previous attendees of March listening sessions

Parent 10/23 – open invitation via email

LGBTQ 10/25 – open invitation via Facebook (You know you went to SMA if... private alumnae group) and intentional word of mouth

Student 11/7– open invitation and Principal’s Advisory Council

Faculty/Staff 11/28 – open invitation

Tanya Young Stump met one-on-one with a number of interested individuals recommended by the administration or self-selected.

Overview and tone setting for all listening sessions

- It is of paramount importance, as an organization, that SMA is open, welcoming and responsive to feedback from its community and asks for input on a regular basis.
- This was a forum for feedback from the minds and hearts of the community who have deep experience with the school.
- This was not a q&a. Not a presentation of information from those in "the know" or an opportunity to recriminate about the past but an attempt to cultivate a conversation about how the alumnae/parents/students/employees feel about the 5 elements of safety at SMA at current and their suggestions and thoughts about a goal future state for SMA.
- In the wake of the Teacher Standards and Practices Commissions findings of a serious teacher misconduct incident last year, the community may be raw and still processing a wide array of challenging emotions and insecurity about a school they have been proud to be affiliated with in the past. Inviting them in and allowing them to share thoughts and offer potential solutions in a warm, welcoming and non-defensive environment offered them an opportunity to work through some of those emotions and responses in order to regain comfort, re-affiliate and continue with their positive association with SMA.
- As the SSTF we were asking for their help and insight in order to benefit and bolster the work we are doing in developing recommendations for up-leveling SMA's culture of safety.

Each group and most of the one-on-one listening sessions began by asking participants to consider, regarding the 5 elements of safety, what they would wish for a student entering SMA as a freshman in 3-5 years.

Questions to consider regarding future state

- Are there visible security measures?
- What is different about the building?
- What is the same?
- The student-body? Are the rules different?
- How do students report concerns and what happens then?
- What other resources are present?
- How safe is it for student/parent/alumnae/staff feedback?
- What does administrative leadership look like?
- How does communication happen from leadership?
- How thoughtful has SMA been about safety preparedness?

We then asked them to reflect on the current state of SMA or their own experience.

- How secure does it feel from the perspective of the 5 elements?
- What resources are present?
- How responsive are teachers/administrators to large and small concerns?
- How are cultural/ideological/social differences addressed and welcomed?
- How safe is it for student/parent/staff feedback?
- Are concerns addressed?
- What is the perception of SMA's preparedness for a variety of safety concerns?

The following themes emerged as important to the SMA community from the Listening Sessions:

Modeling school values with integrity

- Dissonance between the ethics taught and the response to students when acting upon those ethical standards – Genuinely celebrate and promote student’s voices and strength, don’t say you promote that value then shut them down when they speak up.
- Parents and students are still waiting or further answers/communication about the abuse incident last year. Strongly feel not hearing about it has fostered a relationship of distrust.
- Strong feelings of SMA reputation (optics) being a higher priority than transparency and communication.
- Consistent application of dress code – apply rules to everyone without targeting specific body types.

Clear and regular courageous communication and trauma informed support/caretaking

- Transparency and open system rather than protective and closed system – courageous communication of tough information

- “In instances of crisis, allow for more time and slow down the discussion, listen and validate voices/ processing of information. Try not to rush the resolve” -
 - Students felt like they had to beg for information/ understanding and that also led to a feeling of shame. It felt shameful to bring up the topic, but there was also so much misinformation being created that they felt a drive to know more/ clear facts, etc.
 - Students say they would have accepted an answer of “I don’t know or I can’t talk about that yet” in contrast to “we’re not talking about this” type of language. Felt like they (students) were shouting at a wall

Inclusion and relationship

- Desire for increased development of trust between students and teachers – an “I’ve got your back” atmosphere
- Representation in faculty and staff of all the different types of people (LGBTQ and people of color) who are appropriately open about their lives to show examples of successful people of different demographics in the world and offer opportunities for connection and normalizing.
- Request for ongoing/ regular face-time (coffee/ fireside chat) with administration – open forum type – Students, especially, want a relationship with Ms. Foran, their counselors and TA’s
 - Stronger utilization of the teacher - student relationship to communicate and process tough information
 - Desire for SMA to prioritize student relationship over parent relationship
- Minimize risk to approach an SMA adult ... risk is “there’s a 50/50 chance the person I am going to try to talk to about this does not support my sexuality/ belief system/ etc.. thus, not a feeling of safety.”
 - Clarity about what the legal responsibilities of adults (teachers) are in the instance of information sharing. Strong feeling that students do not share information because they are unsure “how far it will go” and instead retreat to saying nothing. Clarity around mandatory reporting and parental communication policy.

Physical safety in building and surrounding area

- “A secure building that does not scream security...so, less institutional feeling in terms of security standards” (too much of that makes students FEEL less secure)
- Appreciation was shown for the student exposure and education about how to be safe in urban environment
- Low lighting in front of building

Current State of Safety at SMA: (sourced from Pillars of Distinction and Key Initiatives, Nicole Foran, November 2018)

The goal of the St. Mary’s Academy Student Safety Plan is to provide clear, consistent, and transparent guidelines related to student safety, accountability, communication, and education for all members of the St. Mary’s community. St. Mary’s Academy has embarked on a journey to become a leader in safety and to develop current best practices around the five key areas of student safety: social, spiritual, intellectual, physical, and emotional.

Accountability Platforms, Handbooks & General Safety	Education Faculty/Staff	Education Students	Education Parents
<p>Employee Handbook: Final stages of draft; rollout to all faculty/staff in Spring 2019</p> <p>Professional Conduct and Appropriate Boundaries Handbook for all SMA stake-holders; rollout in Spring 2019</p> <p>REMIND Text Messaging App Training All faculty/staff/coaches are trained and required to use this platform for communicating with students via text messaging</p> <p>Confidential Reporting: We have determined that the EthicsPoint Confidential Reporting System is not the right fit for our school. We are moving toward promoting the confidential State hotline. Procedure outlined in PCAB Handbook</p> <p>Statement of Inclusivity: We are finalizing a Statement of Inclusivity, which will join our non-discrimination policy on our website</p>	<p>Darkness to Light Training: All faculty/staff completed the Darkness to Light training dedicated to empowering adults to prevent child sexual abuse and in accordance with Erin’s Law</p> <p>Green Dot Training: Faculty/staff have completed Green Dot Training, a bystander intervention program for power-based personal violence and annual mandatory reporting training</p> <p>Active Shooter Training: Faculty/staff attended an active shooter training on December 5, 2018</p>	<p>Green Dot Training On April 27, 2018 we trained our first cohort of juniors on Green Dot; on October 10, 2018, all freshmen were training in Green Dot; on October 16, 2018, 25 more seniors were trained; we will continue our training throughout this school year until all students are trained</p> <p>Self Defense: On October 10, 2018, all freshmen attended sessions on self defense</p> <p>Curriculum: Theology 9: Identity, Adolescent Development & Morality Unit: A healthy self-concept unit; peer pressure and conformity; stereotypes as barriers to growth; cultural influences on self-development</p>	<p>Parent Ed Night #1: October 18, 2017 – Technology & Teens: Dr. Doreen Dodgen-Magee, an expert in technology and mental health, presented on strategies for parents to help teens use technology in a manner that supports good mental health.</p> <p>Parent Ed Night #2: May 10, 2018 – The Children’s Center, a child abuse intervention center, and Cares NW, presented "Stranger danger is a myth: Why it's important to understand grooming and how to prevent childhood sexual abuse."</p> <p>Parent Ed Night #3: October 10, 2018 – Kevin Ashworth from the NW Anxiety Institute presented on how parents can approach anxiety in</p>

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Accountability Platforms, Handbooks & General Safety	Education Faculty/Staff	Education Students	Education Parents
<p>Building Security: We are updating our building security to include new exterior doors and alarms, which will allow SMA to move towards being able to go into lock-down mode from a number of spots in the building; we installed a device to make security on the library doors easier and safer; we upgraded the security system to make alarming the school more efficient</p> <p>Emergency Protocols: We have updated emergency protocols around earthquakes and fire safety</p> <p>General: We have passed all of our mandatory requirements around radon/asbestos, generator and lighting, lead & copper water testing, and school insurance</p>		<p>especially media; healthy boundaries</p> <p>Theology 10: Human trafficking</p> <p>Theology 11: Child physical and sexual abuse; pornography; human and sex trafficking</p> <p>Theology 12: Healthy relationships and boundaries; sexual assault; consent</p> <p>TA Curriculum: Consent & healthy boundaries workshop for sophomores</p>	<p>their children and teens.</p> <p>Parent Ed Night #4: Feb 12, 2019 screening of the film <i>Angst</i> with a panel questions and answers following. <i>Angst</i> is an IndieFlix Original, documentary designed to raise awareness around anxiety. The film includes interviews with kids, teens, educators, experts, and parents. Students would view film during the day and parents and public in the evening.</p>

Additional Current Safety Information at SMA

Director of Equity & Inclusion: In August 2017, St. Mary’s created the position for a Director of Equity and Inclusion and hired Dr. Da Verne Bell. Her primary responsibilities are to provide expertise and leadership for professional development for equity and inclusion in the St. Mary's Academy community. In addition, she collaborates with colleagues to plan, implement, assess, and coordinate learning opportunities for students, faculty and staff that provide each the skills, knowledge, and mindset to achieve and sustain an inclusive learning and working environment.

Program Expansion:

- Developed and implemented adult equity and inclusion team
- Developed and implemented student equity team

- Will complete a full data assessment of leadership and equity and inclusion programming in December to be completed in January
- **Center for Equity & Inclusion:** St. Mary's has partnered with the Center for Equity & Inclusion in a multi-phased training which includes three all faculty/staff in-services and intensive training for administrators and groups of faculty and staff.

Student Opportunities:

- Over 60 student leaders received 14 hours of Equity and Inclusion training prior to the beginning of the school year.
- We've launched Affinity Fridays this year as a weekly intersectional event open to everyone interested in what's happening with equity and inclusion at SMA.
- Building on the work that many in the SMA community have committed to, our Adult Equity Team is partnering with the Student Equity Team for regular meetings throughout the year.
- Our first Center for Equity and Inclusion (CEI) cohort started this summer. At the end of our three-year commitment, we'll have 15 faculty and staff members trained by CEI to advance this work in our community.
- Our Director of Equity and Inclusion, Dr. Bell, recently facilitated a training for faculty/staff on micro-aggressions. Dr. Bell conducted sessions with individual departments to delve deeper into our equity and inclusion work. A session on micro-aggressions was also conducted with students during Affinity Friday, and this work will continue with students working with the adult equity team on recognizing and addressing micro-aggressions.
- Dr. Bell plans ongoing special events, for example; one explored colorism with our black student union and another was an "afternoon of culture" for families and students. These events will be ongoing in order to embed awareness and continued conversation.
- The SAFE club launched with a new name this year, the Queer Student Union. The new name better identifies them, and the affinity group is thriving with over 30 participants per session.
- We established the First Nations affinity group this fall and members of this club are students who represent our indigenous tribes and nations.

Student Organizations Representing Inclusion of Our Diverse Populations Include:

- Women of Color in Action (WOCA)
- Black Student Union (BSU)
- Latina Student Union (LSU)
- Asian Pacific Islander Club (APIC)
- First Nations
- Jewish Student Union (JSU)
- Queer Student Union (QSU) (formerly SAFE)
- Immigrant Affinity Group
- Multicultural Affinity Group – in progress

Student Equity and Inclusion Activities/Events/Programs

- Afternoon of Culture
- Martin Luther King Assembly and Encore
- Unite Day
- Affinity Fridays
- Monthly Cultural Recognitions (Black History, Latina/o History, Indigenous Heritage, Jewish Holidays,
- Yom Ha'Shan – Holocaust Memorial Prayer Service

Increases in Student Voice in School Decision Making

- Created a Principal's Council in 2018, a group made up of Student Equity Team and Student Review Board members who will advise the principal on school wide issues. (The first meeting was a facilitated listening session around safety).
- Created a Student Review Board which is comprised of a cross section of student leaders. They oversee student proposals and clubs. They have just trained all club leaders and held an activities fair for their peers.

***Note from SSTF regarding the above St. Mary's Academy Safety Plan**

When we initially convened the Student Safety Task Force, there were several areas of need that became clear including the creation of important safe guarding policies, teacher, student and parent training specific to safety, campus wide communication systems, additional work on diversity and inclusion and student leadership initiatives, for example. The decision was made, by Nicole Foran and her team, to proceed immediately with the creation and implementation of several safety protocols and enhancements rather than wait for the SSTF to conclude our research. This work has substantially reduced the number of recommendations necessary by this Task Force. We view this as a very positive outcome of the campus-wide focus on the 5 crucial elements of safety over the past 6 months and commend the administration's commitment and follow through in being a leader in implementing best practices regarding campus safety.

Subject Matter Expert Presentations:**Trauma: How It Impacts a School Community, November 28, 2018**

Gabrielle Petersen, MSN, CPNP, Medical Examiner

Nicole Phelps, MSW, Family Support & Intake Specialist

Sara Taggart, MPH, Prevention, Education, and Partnership Manager

All from The Children's Center: A Child Abuse Intervention Center, Clackamas County

Presentation notes:

1. Discussion of teenage brain development:
 - Brain undergoes massive reorganization from 12-26 years

2. High occurrence of traumatized students in school environments
 - Trauma is an emotional response to a stressful event that either threatens or causes harm.
 - The harm can be physical, emotional, real or perceived and it can be the result of a direct threat to the child or to someone close to the child.
 - It can be a single event or multiple events.
 - Trauma happens when a stressful experience overwhelms a person's natural ability to cope.

3. Considerations of brain development

Our environment shapes our brains. Just like kids can be taught that people are trustworthy, the world is safe, I'm not in danger, their brains can be programmed in a way where they live in a constant state of hyperarousal and anxiety.

4. What supports health and healing from trauma?

Ways to Help Children Heal: Establish Safe Relationships

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|
| ❖ Create an environment of respect | ❖ Help kids learn to relax |
| ❖ Identify trauma triggers | ❖ Space, time, low and slow decreases stress |
| ❖ Establish yourself as a safe person | ❖ Help kids recognize and label their emotions |
| ❖ Be consistent and predictable | ❖ Encourage self-esteem |
| | ❖ Use encouraging language versus praise |

The Children's Initiative Counseling Center and Child Welfare Information Gateway.

- Trauma-sensitive schools acknowledge the prevalence of traumatic occurrence in students' lives & create a flexible framework that provides universal supports, is sensitive to unique needs of students, & is mindful of avoiding re-traumatization.

Recommendations from Gabrielle, Nicole and Sara:

- St. Mary's has a major opportunity to be a leader in becoming a trauma informed school and that work would be gaining the trust and confidence of the constituents it serves.
- It is necessary for the staff, faculty, and board members to make a shift in their perception of trauma in schools and its impacts on adolescent development. Students will be bringing their experiences forward when they enter the building and focused and ongoing, trauma informed, professional development training would improve your ability to support them.
- Develop a trauma focused perspective which will help cultivate a culture within the school that expresses both internally and externally that SMA can competently address and be comfortable with the impacts of trauma.
- Think about it as a wheel with trauma in the center and then the spokes of the wheel become the template to address it. For example, how to respond when one student discloses vs. a group, what is the communication plan for parents, news outlet, etc when a big event occurs. SMA will need to have a clear enough understanding of the impacts of trauma that they can create some action plans about how to react when it presents itself in large and small ways.

- Given the national events of mass school shootings, sex abuse scandals both within the church and sports, and the #me too movement, it is a ripe time for St. Mary's to partner with larger educational organizations that are starting to address these within the educational environment.
 - There are several organizations dedicated to partnering with and teaching educators how to create a trauma sensitive school environment. The Attachment and Trauma Network, Inc. hosts a conference of this type, for example. The 2019 conference will be held from February 18-19. This is an exciting opportunity as this is the 2nd conference and it's a way to become informed and work with a group that is starting at ground level and working upward.
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Standards in Physical School Safety, December 5, 2018

Michael Iwicki, Regional Trainer from Allied Security Systems and former US Navy Seal.

Allied Security Systems provides security services for SMA. Michael Iwicki performed a security assessment on the SMA campus in December 2018 checking for security concerns, breaches and areas for improvement. He presented an active shooter training for staff and faculty on December 5, 2018 and a similar training and presentation of his campus review to the SSTF on December 5th as well. Allied Security Services has been providing security for SMA since 2016 when a security company selection effort was undertaken.

General physical safety and active shooter presentation notes:

- Emergency preparedness is the proactive planning for any emergency
- 75- 90% of students and teachers and 65% of parents report noticing some indicative behavior prior to a shooting incident
- There have been 250 active shooters between 2000 and 2017 (6 of them were female) 52 have been in educational institutions
- Most active shooter situations last between 3-5 minutes and resolve before law enforcement arrive
- Currently the recommended procedure is RUN HIDE FIGHT (no longer recommending the DUCK AND COVER procedure). The RHF approach requires critical thinking on the part of those impacted in determining which of the options to utilize at any given time.

Specific findings resulting from his safety assessment at SMA campus:

- SMA has one entrance and that is the gold standard in recommended approach
- There are cameras at the front and side entrances that are monitored
- There is a security person monitoring the front door at all times during school day and after school activities
- The front door is locked except during passing times and the security guard is instructed to meet each visitor, ask their business and direct them to the office
- The front office and the Dean of Students office is in view of the front door
- Principal Nicole Foran's office is lockable in the event of an emergency or intrusion and front office staff are instructed to assemble there and lock if appropriate
- There is a safety and evacuation protocol posted in every classroom that is reviewed annually by the security company and the school administration
- Freshman students are given training near the beginning of the school year about safety in the urban area around campus
- Mike reiterated several times that SMA is in the "top tier" of physical safety preparedness

Professional Conduct and Appropriate Boundaries Handbook, January 2, 2019

Nicole Foran, SMA Principal

In the first few meetings of the SSTF we reviewed the current state of policies and expectations regarding adult/student relationships and response to allegations of sexual abuse and misconduct. We felt a need for clarity in expectations, policy, procedure and response to concerns or allegations. Specifically:

- Heightened awareness and clear expectations regarding appropriate adult/student relational behaviors giving consideration and priority to:
 1. Student safety as the top priority
 2. Preserving the long-established culture of relational care and connection between adults and students at SMA.
- Clarity of policy, procedure and response to allegations of sexual abuse and potential misconduct
- Very clear guidelines for appropriate personal boundaries between adults and students.

This need was a clear priority so Principal Nicole Foran and her team moved forward immediately to create the Professional Conduct and Appropriate Boundaries Handbook as a supplement to existing annual Mandatory Reporter training.

Portions of the Handbook were sourced from a similar document written by a team at Emma Willard in Troy, NY and have been in use for several years.

The SMA Handbook was modified and expanded for culture, concerns and circumstances specific to St. Mary's Academy by Nicole Foran, Patty Gorman and legal counsel.

The first section of the Professional Conduct and Appropriate Boundaries Handbook states:

“The safety of St. Mary's Academy students is our highest priority. We are a community that fosters strong, independent young women and our students must be able to learn and thrive in an environment in which they are safe and supported. Our students have a right to a life and educational environment free of abuse, misconduct, and harassment and in which appropriate adult-student boundaries are respected and maintained.

This policy sets forth the rights and expectations for all St. Mary's students, staff, families, and volunteers regarding the important issues of child abuse, sexual misconduct, sexual harassment, and appropriate boundaries. Specifically, this policy sets out the expectations regarding each of these issues, establishes how members of the St. Mary's Academy community should report concerns, describes how St. Mary's Academy will follow-up on any concerns, and provides information about where members of the community can go with questions or for additional support.

St. Mary's Academy prohibits and will not tolerate child abuse, sexual misconduct, or sexual harassment, and requires that all adults affiliated in any way with St. Mary's Academy maintain appropriate adult-student boundaries with St. Mary's Academy students."

The remainder of the document outlines standards of behavior and clear steps to providing timely response to rumors and allegations. Each student, faculty, staff, coach, volunteer and any other adults regularly on campus will be required to read and sign an acknowledgement that they have read the Handbook.

The SSTF reviewed this document on January 2, 2019 and agreed that it is an appropriate foundational, procedural document to introduce to the SMA community regarding prevention of sexual abuse, misconduct and appropriate boundaries. The Handbook is designed to be a living document that is regularly evaluated for comprehensive effectiveness and clarity of application. The intention is to infuse the language and conversation of personal boundaries and safe behaviors into the SMA culture.

The Professional Conduct and Appropriate Boundaries Handbook will be implemented at SMA based on the following schedule:

- February 8th - Training for Faculty and Staff
- February 19th - Training for students during TA
Parent informational email sent
Link to Handbook placed on SMA website
Dates offered for informational meetings with Principal, Nicole Foran

Mission: St. Mary's Academy, sponsored by the Sisters of the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary since 1859, is a Catholic high school for young women, providing a challenging college-preparatory education in a vibrant learning environment. Guided by the values and charism of the Sisters, St. Mary's fosters a diverse community, educates the whole person by nurturing spiritually, encouraging creativity, promoting justice and inspiring a sense of global interdependence to prepare students for service and leadership.

Charism/Value Statements: The charism we have inherited from the Sisters of the Holy Names, who founded St. Mary's Academy, includes the following principles to which we are committed:

- A special concern for the economically and/or emotionally poor and disadvantaged
- A dedication to value-centered education with a clear emphasis on spirituality, issues of justice, including the pursuit of civil liberty
- A clear call to service
- A commitment to meet the diverse needs of the day with love and compassion
- A strong commitment to justice for women and women's issues
- A devotion to the full development of the human person
- Encouragement of racial, economic, and ethnic diversity
- A dedication to a warm and hospitable environment

Our Findings:

In our research, hearing presentations from topical experts in trauma, mental health, youth development, physical school safety, laws and best practices in addressing misconduct and abuse regarding minors, talking to stakeholder groups and learning from the academic policies vetted and implemented in other academic institutions across the country it is clear that the topic of safety is broad and complex and impacts nearly every aspect of life at St. Mary's Academy. It is also clear that the students at St. Mary's Academy receive great benefit from pivotal and high-quality relationships between teachers and students and this unique benefit should be retained and promoted to the extent possible.

Major Conclusions:

Considering the five crucial elements of safety that we used as our framework - Social, Spiritual, Intellectual, Physical and Emotional - several areas of focus and priority emerged from our work:

- Create a culture of emotional safety and trust
- Communicate effectively and courageously
- Increase focus and understanding of inclusion and equity
- Create a system to effectively implement and regularly review policies and procedures
- Continually evaluate physical safety

We believe that a focus on these 5 topics will help SMA align with their stated relational values and operate within a pervasive culture of safety within the campus community.

- **Create a Culture of Emotional Safety and Trust**
 - This overarching priority will require an increase in intentional trust building. A focus on creating an open system where transparency, honesty, vulnerability and deep listening skills are demonstrated and highly valued at the administrative level, the educator level and the student level will lead to an increase in trust. SMA's charism values of love, compassion, warmth and hospitality are a priority here and should be the focus.
 - Create ongoing opportunities for regular, open forum type, face-time with administrators and other leadership. Courageous listening and feedback sessions, open access question and answer sessions, with both defined and open-ended topics all structured with transparent and trust building communication as a priority.
 - The creation of alumnae affinity group advisory teams to act as an insightful resource for administration. Creating opportunities to better understand and value the needs and interests of students. These could provide equity insights, sensitivity awareness, cultural advisory, insights into unique experiences and needs, etc.
 - Regular training on appropriate response to trauma and becoming a trauma informed school. High numbers of students are experiencing trauma both inside and outside of school and it is crucial that staff, faculty and administration shift their perception and understanding of trauma and its impacts on adolescent development and gain skills to respond in healthy and appropriate ways.
 - Openly engaging both students and employees in decisions that pertain to them to the greatest extent possible will build additional trust. Many student and staff advisory groups are underway, and we recommend they be activated as broadly as possible.
 - Incorporate additional curriculum on the topic of boundaries and safety that promotes an interactive conversation between students and parents/guardians during every year of school. Each year the discussion progressively builds, introducing timely and important topics and conversations as the students develop, mature, and prepare for college. Design thoughtful questions for student contemplation and then prompt discussion between student and parent/guardian as part of homework requirements.

- **Communicate Effectively and Courageously**
 - Establish a defined communication plan that prioritizes transparency, effectiveness and timeliness with teachers, students and parents. Information moves quickly in the digital age and SMA should seek to inform the community, to the best of its ability, of important events before they hear it elsewhere. This promotes trust and respect. Pre-written blast emails and texts with general information or pre-recorded phone messages on the main office line might be of benefit.

- In instances of difficult conversations or tragic circumstances allow more time and slow down the discussion, be as transparent as possible, even saying “I don’t know” when necessary. Listening and validating voices and allowing ample time and resources for processing of information is crucial for healthy and healing communication. Resist rushing to move on or resolve.
 - Students at SMA are taught to be confident leaders who value civil liberty and justice. It is important that SMA teachers and administrators respond with integrity, encouragement and receptivity when students practice those skills and use their voices in dissent during their education at SMA.
 - Many topics regarding safety are already included in the SMA curriculum and scheduled throughout the 4 years. This task force believes there would be benefit to front loading those topics in the first two years so students may be earlier equipped with skills around boundaries, exploitation, abuse, healthy relationships and sexual health that will benefit them both now and into new adult experiences.
- **Increase Focus and Understanding of Inclusion and Equity**
 - Prioritize developing awareness and understanding of what inclusion and equity look like to minority populations. Give specific and careful consideration to all communications, curriculum structure, course offerings, employment selections and all other actions, doing everything possible to act with educated, cultural competence in protecting and treating all students equitably; explicitly reinforcing that every student deserves to have a safe and welcoming school, no matter their sexual orientation, gender identity, race or ethnicity, disability, religious beliefs or any other factor.
 - Intentionally offer inclusivity and diversity in hiring of minority populations so the diversity of adults in the building is a representation of the diversity of students in the building. This should also include actively representing all minority groups in curriculum.
 - Actively apply existing policies that invite the inclusion of LGBTQ students and employees, making safety and welcome a consistent priority for all individuals.
 - Give additional consideration to the experience and voice of the LGBTQ individuals. Their experience is unique given the combination of theological and political complexities in our society and in a private Catholic school that are not present with other minority groups. This creates vulnerabilities and nuances that require careful listening and thoughtful insight in order to offer a safe environment. Reference the recommendation in the above section for an LGBTQ Advisory Team.
 - Use the implementation of the new Professional Conduct and Appropriate Boundaries Handbook as an opportunity to raise school-wide awareness of the many forms of abuse. Sexual abuse in LGBTQ students is reported at 3 times higher than nationally reported rates of sexual abuse in heterosexual students

and it is crucial that SMA increase awareness, sensitivity and safeguards against abuse in any form.¹

- **Create a System to Effectively Implement and Regularly Review Policies and Procedures**
 - The creation and implementation of the Professional Conduct and Appropriate Boundaries Handbook is a very significant safeguard for SMA students. This task force recommends using the topics in this handbook as a cornerstone to deliberately and diligently promote a culture of awareness and open discussion with students around developing confident personal boundaries and trusting themselves to identify and report misconduct, boundary violations, and abuse in their own lives and in the lives of fellow students.
 - Create a due diligence check-list or flow chart as a reference for teachers, administrators and students which simply outlines the chronological steps to address allegations of misconduct or abuse, when and how to report, who gets notified, when to access a neutral outside investigator, what is the required reporting timeline etc. Clarity, simplicity and training will minimize subjective risk.
 - Create a similar flow chart for teachers, students and parents to clarify mandatory reporting rules, define reportable information and what is required of teachers when students self-disclose information.
 - Create a clear path of due diligence so students feel fully protected and employees are assured that a process is in place that will adequately protect them from unfounded allegations.
 - Consider special training for adults coaching SMA sports teams as their role is of a different relational nature and may benefit from additional clarity.
 - Annually review policies, procedures and training regarding misconduct, abuse and reporting to evaluate continued benefits, clarity, gaps in policy, and environmental changes. We recommend seeking student and teacher feedback during the review process. The rapid and ever-changing landscape of society may warrant a regularly scheduled, deeper review and update to policies and procedures. We recommend this in-depth review process include the use of a task force; similar to the current SSTF, under the supervision of the Principal and made up of parents, alumnae, faculty and staff.
 - Work with appropriate advisors to create a clear SMA policy regarding the documentation and reporting of misconduct and/or abuse that clearly outlines what to document in a report, who has access to reports, how and where they

¹ (<https://qz.com/1014142/a-teen-health-survey-crucial-to-us-public-policy-is-finally-asking-kids-about-their-sexual-orientation/>)

will be preserved and for what duration. Ensure appropriate personnel are trained on confidentiality, preservation and non-destruction procedures.

- **Physical Safety Considerations**

- Advise against arming teachers
- Define policy regarding what circumstances merit increased security measures and/or utilization of armed security guards
- File SMA Safety Plan with PPD (It is already on file with PFD)
- Consider installing locking mechanisms for doors that open outward
- Consider clarifying evacuation/active threat response during assembly and after-hours circumstances
- Consider increasing lighting in front of building
- Recommend practice evacuation and RUN FIGHT HIDE drills each semester
- Consider connecting to PSU Mass Messaging to be aware of their security concerns
- Consider forwarding PPS messaging to parents and students (lock downs, imminent threats happening near SMA)
- With consideration for building security, specific recommendations regarding campus safety measures have been forwarded directly to administration and will not be published in this document. Contact Nicole Foran if you would like more information.

Being entrusted with the minds and hearts of students in an educational setting is a significant honor and responsibility. The values and charism that St. Mary’s Academy has undertaken to share with the young people in the SMA community demonstrate a great desire to equip service-minded, balanced leaders who pursue a commitment to justice and equity as powerfully and with as much tenacity as they pursue as love and compassion. This commitment and devotion to the full development of the human person, in an all-girls, urban, Catholic school, in the digital age of 2019 is a profound and important challenge.

The commitment to a broad, lengthy and reflective investigation into what will promote a culture of safety in this challenging environment is a crucial and ongoing conversation. In order to meet their great potential, students at SMA must have an opportunity to practice using their voices to advocate for both themselves and others and be provided with intellectual, social, emotional, spiritual and physical safety while learning to do so. This begins with the understanding and self-awareness of what feels personally safe and what does not and the ability to use that knowledge with personal agency.

The Student Safety Task Force offers these recommendations to the St. Mary’s Academy Administration with a desire that they contribute to the creation of a dynamic culture where personal safety is a top priority, where students are encouraged to deeply understand how to honor themselves and each other, celebrate their diversity and use their voices and talents in service to the world.

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