HAVEN: Understanding Sexual Assault

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Introduction

Wake Forest University has always taken seriously its commitment to providing a safe and secure environment for all members of the University community. As part of renewed efforts to prevent sexual violence and other forms of sexual misconduct, in Fall 2015, the University’s Title IX Office launched HAVEN, an online course for students across the Reynolda campus. The course also included two anonymous short surveys.

During the course, students learned to identify behaviors that constitute sexual harassment, sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence, and stalking; ways to prevent sexual misconduct through safe bystander intervention; the avenues available to report sexual misconduct; and the support resources available to those experiencing sexual misconduct as well as to those who may be accused of such misconduct.

HAVEN meets and exceeds the compliance requirements of Title IX, the Clery Act, VAWA, and the SaVE Act.

Methods

Prior to beginning the course, students are asked to complete a pre-course assessment and an anonymous survey (Survey 1). The HAVEN course consists of seven (7) modules focusing on healthy relationships (including understanding sexual assault, sexual harassment, dating violence and stalking); University policies (including the Student Sexual Misconduct Policy and Faculty and Staff Sexual Harassment Prevention Policy); and skill building (including ways to support survivors and how to safely and effectively intervene as a bystander). The course is very interactive, utilizing video and audio, and allows for some self-guidance between modules. Following completion of the course, students were asked to complete a post-assessment as well as a second survey (Survey 2), which became available to students 30 days after the completion of the course. The assessments consisted of tests and quizzes that measure a student’s knowledge. The assessment responses were true/false answers or multiple choice answers. The surveys sought to measure attitudes and behavior through use of a Likert scale (strongly disagree to strongly agree).

Data in this assessment is based upon 2865 students (undergraduate, graduate and professional) who completed all seven modules of the course. 2865 students completed Survey 1 and 1046 students completed Survey 2.

Results

The findings are a snapshot of the types of data collected from HAVEN’s pre and post assessments as well as the two surveys.

Knowledge Gained: A comparison of pre-course assessments and post-course assessments indicate an increase in knowledge about the prevalence of sexual assault on campus (20%), strategies to support survivors (6%), the use of alcohol as a means to facilitate sexual assault (2%), campus sexual misconduct disciplinary policies (3%), and safe ways to effectively intervene as a bystander (6%).

Awareness & Attitudes:

In responding to survey questions concerning awareness and attitudes toward bystander intervention, there was no significant increase between Survey 1 and Survey 2 responses that asked about one’s own willingness to take action (.1% increase) when faced with someone trying to take advantage of another person sexually. On the other hand, perceptions of whether others would take action changed significantly from 47% to 63%. When asked whether the respondent would take action when another person used sexist language, only 56.7% of respondents moderately to strongly agreed. That number, however, increased by 11.4% to 68.1% in Survey 2.

Conclusions

Knowledge Gained: The assessments indicate that students gained knowledge from the online course. Most promising is the 20% increase in correct answers in response to questions concerning the prevalence of sexual assault and other forms of sexual misconduct on college campuses and at Wake. Indeed, the percentage increase in awareness nationally was only 3%, with only 57% of correct answers at the pre-assessment stage. In contrast, 73% of Wake students answered correctly at the post-assessment stage. Awareness of a problem is one of the first steps in solving it.

While there was a significant (6%) increase in correct answers related to strategies to support survivors, it is difficult to draw conclusions that students would actually intervene when faced with a situation involving their friends. Albeit there were small increases in knowledge around alcohol facilitated assaults and sexual misconduct campus disciplinary policies, the number of correct answers during the pre-assessment were high on both assessments. Separate from HAVEN, anecdotal information and informal focus groups have indicated that while students may know from HAVEN, National Aggregate Data

References

1. Evret HAVEN, Fall 2015 – Spring 2016 Wake Forest University Student Assessment and Survey Results
2. Evret HAVEN, National Aggregate Data