

TO: **DAMON SIMS**, VICE PRESIDENT OF STUDENT AFFAIRS AT PENN STATE

**RELEASE RESULTS OF THE 2018 PENN STATE SEXUAL MISCONDUCT SURVEY AND
COMMIT TO COMPLETING FUTURE SEXUAL MISCONDUCT SURVEYS**

In 2014, Penn State President Eric Barron announced the University’s Task Force on Sexual Assault and Sexual Harassment — a Task Force urged to consider how Penn State could “become the benchmark by which other universities are judged when it comes to sexual misconduct prevention and response.”¹ The Task Force report, released on January 23rd 2015, included eighteen recommendations. On February 17, 2015, President Barron accepted all eighteen,² including the recommendations that the “University administer a climate survey [in spring 2015]... and conduct regular surveys on sexual assault in succeeding years to give it the knowledge required to create and sustain effective programs, services, and policies”³ and that “the University consider the annual or semi-annual release of aggregate data on sexual misconduct at the University, beyond merely data included in the annual Clery report.”⁴

These University-wide surveys are particularly important because, according to the 2015 survey, “only 2.6 percent of undergraduates [who experienced sexual misconduct] went to campus or local police, and about 3 percent reported the incident to the university’s office of student conduct,”⁵ revealing that most data available publicly reveals only fragments of the reality of sexual violence at Penn State. However, while a survey was initially administered in November 2015 and Penn State News reported it would “be repeated every three years,”⁶ students cannot access the 2018 report and there has been no public comment about a 2021 survey.⁷

Last academic year (2020-2021), in an effort initiated by former and current members of the Schreyer Gender Equity Coalition and then supported by the University Park Undergraduate Association (UPUA) Executive Branch, members of Student Affairs and the Office of Sexual Misconduct Prevention and Response committed to members of Penn State’s various student governments to release the results of the 2018 survey by the end of the school year. Now, several months later, no data has been released publicly.⁸

¹Penn State University Task Force on Sexual Assault and Sexual Harassment. (2015). *2015 Penn State Sexual Misconduct Survey Summary Report: University Park*. pg 1.

²Penn State News. (2015, Feb. 17). *President Accepts All 18 Recommendations Presented By Sexual Assault Task Force*.

³*2015 Penn State Sexual Misconduct Survey Summary Report: University Park*. pg 29-30.

⁴*2015 Penn State Sexual Misconduct Survey Summary Report: University Park*. pg 35.

⁵New, Jake. (2016, Apr. 14). *Telling a Friend*. Accessed Aug. 17, 2021 at <https://insidehighered.com>

⁶Penn State News. (2018, Oct. 26). *Penn State to Initiate Second University-wide Student Campus Climate Survey*. Accessed Aug. 17, 2021 at <https://news.psu.edu>

⁷*As of September 3rd, 2021*

⁸*As of September 3rd, 2021*

Students' inability to access basic data about the prevalence of sexual misconduct at Penn State — data that Penn State *already* committed to compile and release — indicates that Penn State's 2015 commitments lacked the institutional support and long-term implementation plan to make them more than a positive-publicity effort.

Students deserve better. Why is Penn State failing to do the bare minimum?

We ask that, by October 1st, 2021, you publicly release the 2018 survey results with a statement about the promised 2021 administration of this survey and you commit to completing future campus climate surveys (with the below stipulations) at least every three years across all Penn State student constituencies and campuses.

A) In preparation for future survey administrations:

- ❖ Empower a diverse group of students from student advocacy organizations and student governments and staff from the Gender Equity Center and the Center for Sexual and Gender Diversity to participate in the creation and approval of the survey instrument
- ❖ Ensure the survey instrument assesses the experiences of students with marginalized identities, especially disabled, intersex, LGBTQ+ (especially trans and non-binary students), and BIPOC students in an inclusive and meaningful way
- ❖ Include questions that assess
 - students' knowledge of available confidential resources
 - students' familiarity with the Title IX reporting processes at Penn State
 - students' understandings of consent, rape culture, and other pertinent topics
 - the frequency of misconceptions and myths about sexual violence
 - the prevalence of sex work amongst Penn State students⁹

B) Following future survey administrations:

- ❖ Provide the results of the survey in a full report as well as a condensed, easily accessible version within three months of survey completion
- ❖ Release a public statement about the significance of the report's findings and how these findings will influence future policies and programs within six months of survey completion

We look forward to hearing from you.

⁹While there are no comprehensive statistics on how many sex workers in the United States experience sexual violence, sex workers globally have a 45-75% change to experiencing sexual violence (significantly higher than average) and their experiences are commonly left out of conversations about sexual violence due to the stigma that continues to surround sex work. See Cooney's *Sex Workers Say They're Being Left Out of the #MeToo Movement* published online on Feb. 13, 2018, at time.com for more information.

Signed,

The Schreyer Gender Equity Coalition

If you would like to join us in urging Penn State to take these necessary actions, visit <http://www.geneqcoalition.org/campus-climate-surveys> to sign.