

Communitas, May 2018

Communication from alumni who have been harmed and PEA leadership
(Not sure what the formal header will be...)

Over the last two years, the Academy has disclosed historical sexual misconduct, and continued the work of investigating any and all allegations that were brought forward. Academy leadership also recognized the need for a better understanding of and improved attention to how sexual misconduct is discussed, identified, and addressed at the school. Trustees, administrators, faculty, and staff began a substantive shift in our policies and practices towards both prevention and response (PUT LINK HERE).

Alumni, some of whom had experienced harm themselves either at Exeter or elsewhere, found one another and formed private groups to share information and provide support. This past winter, some survivors asked to work directly with Exeter. They subsequently formed PATH (Phillips Exeter Alumni for Truth and Healing), and began to meet regularly with members of Exeter's leadership—Principal Lisa MacFarlane, Assistant Principal Karen Lassey, and Director of Student Well-being Christina Palmer.

We have met four times, modeling our work on the restorative components of acknowledgment, accountability, and repair. At each meeting were both survivors who consistently came, new individuals who informed with the impact of their harm, and Lisa, Karen, and Christina. We also invited a trustee to each meeting to hear the impact statements, and to experience the work we were engaged in: Mark Edwards '78, Kristyn Van Ostern '96, Jen Holleran '86, and Doug Smith '83. Mariam Levy, of the Suffolk University Center for Restorative Justice, facilitated.

We began with a shared commitment to designing safe and respectful pathways to community for those who experienced harm which estranged them from a place and people for whom they care; and to ensuring that Exeter today sets the highest standard for education, prevention, and support. Through their impact statements, alumni have helped inform Exeter's approach to training, response, and repair, and reinforced an understanding of the long-term effects of trauma. We discussed three agreed upon areas of concern: meaningful repairs, the ongoing investigations, and the importance of accountability. Collectively, we have made progress toward acknowledging past harm, creating restorative pathways to community, and clarifying legal avenues for mediation that allow those who wish to come forward for repairs, to do so in a way that feels safe and healing.

This work will continue. It is a collaborative effort that rests on taking risks in a spirit of mutual trust. Our shared desire is to expand the circle to additional harmed alumni and Academy leadership who wish to participate. Interim Principal Bill Rawson supports this work and will participate at the next meeting. We intend for our ongoing commitment and work to lead to meaningful closure not only for those harmed, but for the greater community as well.

If you would like more information, or to participate in a future meeting, please contact Christina Palmer, Director of Student Well Being (cdpalmer@exeter.edu), or Ann Malabre '81 (email:pea4truthandhealing@gmail.com).

Lisa MacFarlane, Principal Instructor
Karen Lassey, Assistant Principal
Christina Palmer, Director of Student Wellbeing
Mark Edwards '78
Jen Holleran '86

Sharon-Lee Brinkman-Young '76
Susannah Morrison Curtis '90
Julia Gray '97
Madison Hillyard '16
Ann Malabre '81

Doug Smith '83
Kristyn Van Ostern '96

Hannah Sessler '15