



**William K. Rawson '71; P'08**  
Principal

September 13, 2021

Dear Exeter Students, Families and Employees,

I am writing today to address issues raised in an article published in *Vanity Fair* and to provide information about the process we follow each time we receive an allegation of sexual misconduct. The article is written by an alumna and raises important issues about survivors, trauma, and sexual misconduct. At the same time, it contains inaccuracies and addresses events involving members of our school community other than the author, some of which are deeply private and on which I will not comment. Sexual misconduct is deeply distressing for all who experience it, and extremely difficult to address for those who seek to support them. We deeply sympathize with those members of our community who are dealing with lasting pain from sexual misconduct.

We report all allegations we receive to the Exeter Police Department (EPD) and to the New Hampshire Division of Children, Youth and Families if the allegation involves a minor (at the time of the incident). While the matter is with the EPD, the Academy may not conduct any investigation, as agreed to in a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Academy and the EPD. If the EPD returns the matter to us, we conduct our own investigation. In most cases, we hire a third party with experience and training in conducting trauma-informed sexual misconduct investigations, usually a lawyer. Our investigations include interviews of the survivor (if willing), alleged perpetrator, and others who might have relevant information. If the person alleged to have been harmed does not wish to participate or denies the allegation or any knowledge of the allegation, we nonetheless continue to investigate. We have an obligation to determine whether sexual misconduct has occurred potentially involving another student or students. All sexual misconduct by an adult involves a breach of trust and abdication of professional and ethical responsibilities.

Our goal always is to conduct the investigation, and make any subsequent public disclosure, in a way that minimizes harm to survivors and anyone else who might be impacted by the investigation. This is difficult under any circumstances, and particularly difficult when the report is made by a third party, and not by the person alleged to have been directly harmed.

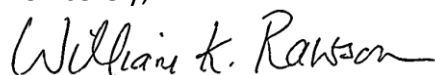
Our published disclosure criteria, first adopted by the trustees in 2016, state that if there is an admission by the alleged perpetrator, then “the Academy should make a public disclosure”; disclosure often results in other victims of the perpetrator coming forward. We contact each directly impacted survivor in advance to let them know that a community disclosure is forthcoming, in an effort to avoid, to the greatest extent possible, inflicting additional harm. The community disclosure typically includes limited information about the nature of the misconduct, and does not disclose the identity of the survivor, reporting party, or include any identifying information.

The report regarding Mr. Weber came from a former student who alleged that Mr. Weber had engaged in inappropriate conduct with another student while they were at the Academy. The alleged survivor denied the allegation to both the Academy and the EPD. That did not preclude the possibility that Mr. Weber had engaged in inappropriate conduct including possibly with a different student. When Mr. Weber was interviewed by our outside investigator, in the presence of his legal counsel, he unambiguously admitted to engaging in conduct with a student that unquestionably constituted sexual misconduct – conduct that he also acknowledged was morally and ethically wrong. Mr. Weber subsequently acknowledged his admission in writing. Consistent with our disclosure criteria, we publicly disclosed his name, providing few details about the specific misconduct, and not disclosing the identity of the student whom Mr. Weber had identified in his admission.

The general process we use to investigate and respond to student misconduct is described in the student [E Book](#), which is reviewed and updated annually. Our student misconduct protocols were updated most recently in the fall of 2019, in consultation with students, faculty, and administrators. The most recent revisions took into consideration and incorporated many of the ideas presented by the student organization Exonians Against Sexual Assault (EASA) and other students in the spring of 2019 and over the course of several meetings with some of the students that summer. For those who wish to read more in our E Book, the Sexual Misconduct Policy (p. 46), as well as the What to Expect... sections (p. 92) provide details about what the various parties to a misconduct case need to know about our process. We have an experienced and diverse team of professionals on campus committed to supporting and guiding our students through these difficult matters with empathy and trauma-informed support.

The Academy’s leadership will continue to prioritize student well-being and safety and make every effort to respond to any allegations of sexual misconduct in such a way as to avoid to the greatest extent possible inflicting additional harm on survivors and other affected parties.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "William K. Rawson". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

William K. Rawson '71; P'08  
Principal