

Sep 27

Hold the Academy accountable for supporting its Student Leaders

We are protesting the unfair burden that the Academy places on student leaders due to their negligence in communications surrounding sexual misconduct.

We, as student leaders, will no longer continue to accept this burden for the sake of protecting our students. The Academy must take responsibility for supporting the general student body and allow student leaders the space to live and learn at the Academy without the responsibility of fixing the Academy.

Additionally, we are asking the Academy to acknowledge their role in inflicting harm upon students who have been failed by the Academy when they decide to report sexual misconduct. Furthermore, the Academy must take responsibility for the active role they have played in inflicting harm and work to minimize harm to survivors in the future.

Our Demands:

1. The Academy must hire an expert consultant that comes from a background of sexual violence prevention and advocacy. This consultant will be present during all discussions of how and when to present information to the student body, and will advocate for the general school community in these situations. Currently, this position does not exist and the responsibility of supporting the general student body through processing these events falls on student leaders.
2. The Academy must better support student leaders who are expected to provide space and assistance to the general student body following the release of sensitive information. Though student leaders have risen to the emotional burden of supporting our peers regarding topics surrounding the Academy's history of mishandling cases of sexual misconduct, none of us have adequate time or training to handle such responsibilities. Student leaders deserve a warning before the general student body is notified of sensitive information as leaders are expected to bear so much of the following emotional burden.
3. The Academy must reevaluate the position of Director of Student Health and Well-Being. For student leaders to be relieved of many of the burdens involving reporting, there must be significant trust between the student body and the person they are expected to report to. That trust is not built easily, but currently there is none between the DSHWB and students. This position must be held by someone students can fully trust and by someone trained specifically in sexual-assault focused trauma care. The Academy must expand the position to involve multiple people as the burden of being reported to 24/7 is too much for one person to bear. The Academy must work with student groups (such as Exonians Against Sexual Assault and Feminist Union) to reevaluate the position and make the process more trauma-informed so that students can finally feel comfortable reporting to the school and using Academy-provided support systems.
4. The Academy must acknowledge the harm its failure to handle cases effectively causes students, and take responsibility for said harm. Language in all communications from the Academy must not be passive and must actively acknowledge their role in any events being addressed.