



SEXUAL VIOLENCE PREVENTION INITIATIVE

Strategic Plan Outline 2024

A Presidential Initiative



Opening message

Virginia Tech seeks to advance a campus culture free from harassment, discrimination, and sexual violence. Sustaining a safe campus environment in which all members of our community can thrive is in keeping with our Principles of Community and consistent with the core values of our strategic vision. Sexual violence is an issue that impacts all communities throughout the world. The effects can be devastating to the individuals, families, and communities involved.

In fall 2023, President Sands tasked the Sexual Violence Prevention Initiative (SVPI) with advancing a framework for sustainable climate and cultural transformation that establishes sexual violence prevention as a shared responsibility of the entire campus community. This work was the culmination of several years of focused efforts to transform campus culture and climate. This year we chose to focus on prevention because we know culture change only occurs through proactive, preventative action.

To move forward a sustainable framework for cultural transformation, SVPI has developed and advanced this strategic plan to ensure a coordinated and unified vision for the work. Sexual violence is a community issue and eradicating it requires a community solution. Each of us as members of Hokie Nation plays a critical role in the success of this work. We are responsible for creating the culture we want on our campus, for teaching and learning the evidence-based skills that prevent sexual violence, for intervening when we see behavior that does not live up to our values, and for holding our community accountable.

We have established the Office of Sexual Violence Prevention and Education (SVPE) which will have primary responsibility for implementing the unified vision for sexual violence prevention. Guided by the spirit of advancing a culture of learning, empowerment, and accountability, the office will make this plan a living and breathing document.

Cultural change takes commitment and persistence. Grounded by our motto, *Ut Prosim* (That I May Serve), Hokie Nation has the ability to create and sustain a community committed to ending sexual violence.

Sincerely,

Kelly Oaks

Associate Vice President

Office for Equity and Accessibility



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SVPI Steering Committee

Name	Position
Mac Babb	Chief of Police and Director of Security, Virginia Tech Police
Paige Bik	Assistant Director, Prevention, Women’s Center at Virginia Tech
Meagan Brem*	Assistant professor, Department of Psychology
Chelsea Clery	Sexual Violence Prevention specialist, Hokie Wellness
Amy Epperley	Senior Director, Hokie Wellness
Kristina Hartman*	Associate, University Legal Counsel
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Katie Polidoro	Title IX coordinator
Rohsaan Settle	Interim Director for Student Conduct, Student Affairs
Mark Sikes	Dean of Students
Christine Dennis Smith	Co-Director, Women’s Center at Virginia Tech
Shaka Sydnor	Director, Dean of Students office

* steering committee advisor

SVPI Executive Leadership Committee

Name	Position
Frances Keene	Vice President, Student Affairs
Kelly Oaks	Associate Vice President, Equity and Accessibility
Lisa Wilkes	Vice President for Strategic Initiatives, Office of the President

History and Context

Virginia Tech has long been attentive to issues related to gender-based violence. Individuals and departments across the university have partnered to raise awareness of sexual assault and gender-based violence, and consistently worked to improve the campus culture through enhanced policies, practices, programs, and communications. This includes offices and groups within the Division of Student Affairs, the Virginia Tech Police Department, Athletics, and those responsible for Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action, Title IX, and Accessibility.

The Women's Center at Virginia Tech, founded in 1994, brought awareness to the first Sexual Assault Awareness Month in October 1995, and led the university's first sexual assault prevention program in collaboration with the Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action Office and Athletics in the 1995-96 academic year. The first university-wide sexual assault task force was shortly after established in 1996, with representation from the Women's Center, the Virginia Tech Police Department (VTPD), Student Affairs, Athletics, and a number of community partners.

In 2001, the Women's Center and the Office of Student Conduct were awarded a Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) grant, which was used to expand infrastructure, enhance awareness of gender-based violence, and strengthen Virginia Tech's prevention strategy and response to instances of such violence on campus. In 2003, the Sexual Assault Task Force was renamed to the Sexual Assault Prevention Council in recognition of its ongoing role. Over the course of the 2004-06 academic years, the university developed formal protocols for sexual assault and stalking response.

In 2012, the university formalized all positions added to support work related to the VAWA grant into its regular operations. The Sexual Assault Prevention Council convened for many years in support of this work, and university offices have continued to collaborate to raise awareness of sexual violence and ensure robust support, advocacy, and response practices.

Recent History

In 2019, Virginia Tech launched the forum series "End Sexual Violence," which sought to engage the university community in addressing the underlying cultural issues that allow sexual violence to propagate from one generation to the next. This work, unfortunately, was interrupted in the spring of 2020 when campus life was disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

As students returned to campus from remote learning beginning in the fall of 2020, Virginia Tech was not immune to the increase in behavioral issues found nationwide among the student population, including reports of sexual assault.

This prompted a response led by student organizations and activists calling on the university to dedicate more resources and attention to sexual violence prevention. While the university has a long history of addressing sexual violence, prevention was still an area where the institution could grow.

In 2021, President Tim Sands charged the Sexual Violence Culture and Climate Work Group (SVCC) to develop a framework for sustainable climate and cultural transformation that establishes sexual violence prevention and response as a shared responsibility of the entire Virginia Tech community.

Over two years, SVCC and its subcommittees developed a foundation of resources, programs, and assessment tools, in alignment with four strategic pillars: prevention, advocacy and support, response, and adjudication.

This group built on the previous work done by Virginia Tech, which included the inventorying of existing sexual violence prevention programs, implementing a university-wide prevention campaign, establishing a full-time sexual violence prevention specialist position in Hokie Wellness, updating and improving the SAFE at VT website, improving Clery notices, providing enhanced response and prevention training for student employees in residence halls, holding multiple prevention education discussions and workshops, and developing the framework for an alternative resolution policy based on restorative justice principles.

The Sexual Violence Prevention Initiative (SVPI) was formed in fall 2023 to build upon this work and advance the university's established framework for sustainable climate and cultural transformation that establishes sexual violence prevention as a shared responsibility of the entire Virginia Tech community. While progress had been made in this area, much of what had been formalized, documented, and institutionally prioritized was focused on response, advocacy, and support. Similar attention is required to further advance prevention efforts. Therefore, a formalized strategic plan is crucial to prioritizing primary prevention initiatives and further aligning efforts, resources, communications, and strategies to foster a shared responsibility for a safe relationship culture at the university.

Virginia Tech is well-positioned to continued the evolution of this work proactively, rather than in response to a major crisis of violence, irresponsibility, or negligence. Recognizing the needs of our students, we seek to develop the best approaches to building a safe, aware, educated, and engaged campus community culture where individuals are able to use the skills necessary to build healthy relationships and intervene appropriately to disrupt violent behavior. We seek to establish best practices for campus safety and sexual violence prevention that position us as leaders among higher education institutions in the United States for this work.

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PROCESS AND INPUTS TO THE STRATEGIC PLAN

The work of the SVPI took into account the work and recommendations that emerged previously from the SVCC work group, which included:

- Formally involving students in planning for sexual violence prevention work
- Clearly defining the expectations of those serving in the SVPI and educating them about sexual violence at our university
- Providing ongoing learning opportunities (i.e., Sexual Citizens author visit and SVPI Summit 2024)
- Further reviewing internal and external recommendations for a sustainable framework
- Further planning and identification of resources for ongoing university-wide prevention marketing and communication campaigns
- Increasing transparency and sharing of information related to the work of the SVPI
- Identifying opportunities to increase and maintain existing prevention efforts

In spring 2023, the university engaged Segal, an HR consulting firm, to undertake an organizational and operational assessment of the SVCC. This served as a means to better understand results of SVCC, as well as articulate needs for ongoing work.

The study pointed to the university's lack of a clear, overarching framework for sexual violence prevention. While other areas contribute to reducing sexual violence (e.g., prevention, advocacy and support, response, adjudication), it is not effectively coordinated and delivered without a strong, unifying model. Additionally, without this unified model, resources cannot be allocated in an intentional way to support all of the areas of work that contribute to sexual violence prevention.

Segal noted that, historically, the university has prioritized resources for advocacy and support work as well as response work – necessary and important services – but this has resulted in insufficient resources for prevention work. The report specifically noted, “The prevention pillar likely has the highest impact and influence on the University’s culture and climate but lacks the necessary investments and coordination needed to make transformational impact.”

These findings from the Segal assessment also informed the goals of the SVPI, namely to give intentional focus to sexual violence prevention work by developing:

- An overarching organizational structure for institutional sexual violence prevention work
- A strategic plan to guide university activities, investments, and deployment of resources involved in the sexual violence prevention framework, with primary attention to prevention
- A comprehensive communications plan and approach

This strategic plan was developed by the SVPI steering committee through regular conversations about the needs of the Virginia Tech community and the context of prevention work, and was further informed by the following:

- Faculty research on the impacts of adolescent exposure to pornography and the predatory nature of the pornography industry
- Faculty research on the correlation between heavy alcohol use and dating violence on college campuses
- Data and statistics from offices providing sexual violence prevention services and education, as well as those providing sexual support services and response services to the Virginia Tech community
- Undergraduate and graduate student advisory groups
- Two subcommittees: one focused on sexual violence prevention specifically, and one focused on related aspects of advocacy and support
- A subgroup working on communications planning
- Additional student groups providing feedback on strategic plan drafts

While the SVPI recognizes that this strategic plan represents a significant milestone in the university’s history of discussing and responding to sexual violence prevention needs and issues – the first published, unified statement of priorities and strategic goals – we also recognize that the work is not complete. **True progress requires a significant and ongoing commitment to continue the work** that has been started, and this must happen with ongoing resource commitment, support, collaboration, and commitment of the entire university community.

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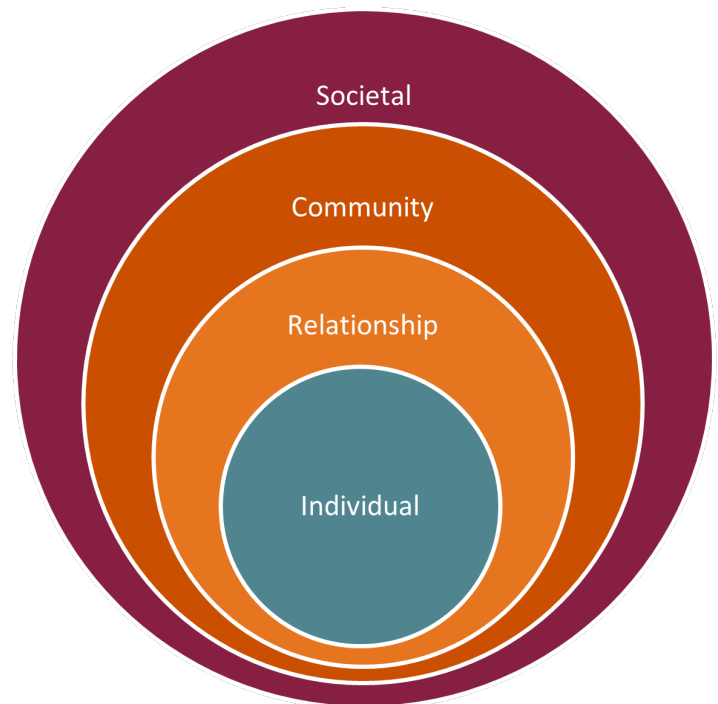


DEFINING “PREVENTION” FOR THE PURPOSES OF OUR WORK

The work of the SVPI focuses on Primordial and Primary Prevention development and strategies – systemic and resilience-building approaches *before* violence takes place. While we recognize that many victims of sexual violence experience their first assault before age 18, when many students begin their education at Virginia Tech (as many as 42-51%), the focus of our work is still to prevent initial and future harm on campus.

Additionally, the work will focus on affecting behavioral change and cultural transformation by creating environments and spaces where people are less likely to experience violence, providing education, and building awareness and skills at individual, interpersonal, and community/organizational levels.

The socio-ecological model, which has also been in use, recognizes the various levels of intervention that are at work in any community. Prevention efforts must be made throughout all levels of this model to positively affect cultural change and meaningful outcomes.



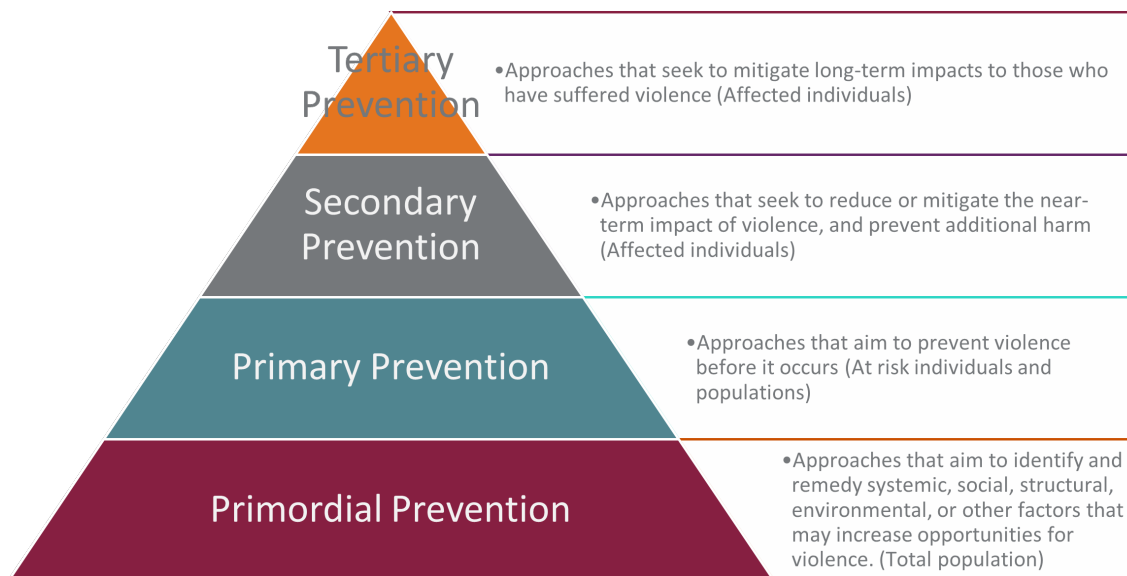
Individual - The first level identifies factors that increase the likelihood of becoming a victim or perpetrator of violence. Prevention strategies at this level are aimed at promoting and building attitudes, beliefs, behaviors, and skills that equip individuals to build healthy relationships and prevent violence.

Relationship - The second level looks at close relationships that may increase the risk of experiencing violence as a victim or perpetrator, such as peer social circles or communities that may influence their behavior and contribute to their experience. Strategies at this level may include specific community-focused programs, the promotion of positive peer norms, and peer mentoring or problem solving skills to promote healthy relationships.

Community - The third level explores the settings in which social relationships occur and seeks to identify and remedy the risks of violence associated with those settings. Strategies at this level may focus on addressing the risks that increase the likelihood of violence in these physical environments.

Societal - The fourth level looks at the broad societal factors that help create a climate or culture in which violence is either encouraged or inhibited. Strategies and approaches at this level may include efforts to build and promote societal norms that protect against violence, as well as to mitigate other societal factors that contribute to a heightened risk of becoming a victim or perpetrator of violence.

We will also continue to use the public health model, which details levels of prevention, to advance the work. This approach has been in use by those engaged in sexual violence prevention work at Virginia Tech to-date and is consistent with best practices in public health, well-being, and violence prevention work internationally. The public health model defines four levels of violence prevention efforts: primordial, primary, secondary, and tertiary.



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CORE VALUES AND CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS

We envision a campus community free of sexual and gender-based violence, in which all members are involved in and share responsibility for developing a life-long commitment to healthy relationships, healthy sexuality, and violence prevention through evidence-based strategies and best practices.

There are a number of core values shared across several areas of the university engaged in prevention work and that have repeatedly surfaced in conversations of the SVPI. These are agreed to be critical to its continued development and progression for the university community. In the spirit of advancing a culture of learning, empowerment, and accountability, this work must be relationally driven, data-informed, grounded in evidence-based best practices, inclusively collaborative, and supported by clear, consistent communication.

As we seek to advance a culture of mutual respect and accountability, and through continued service to our university motto of *Ut Prosim* (“That I May Serve”), we recognize that this work must be **relationally driven**, bringing a strong focus to understanding one another, meeting people where they are, understanding each person’s unique experiences and needs, and employing a variety of strategies to meet the wide range of needs across our diverse population of students, faculty, staff, and other community members.

We commit to ensuring that prevention work is **data-informed**, driven by an understanding of the needs of our community, trends in well-being, violence prevention, and relationship health, and other critical impact factors identified both nationally and on our campuses. We will employ data collection and analysis practices and use it to inform prevention strategies, program development, and campus management efforts.

We will develop and share strategies, communication, programs, and skill-building approaches that are known to be effective. That will mean utilizing well-established resources, faculty and student research, and other **collaborative partnerships** that offer evidence-based best practices that are clearly linked to desirable campus safety and culture outcomes. In order to have the desired influence on a complex, large-scale cultural climate, we need to commit to broad and inclusive collaboration with partners throughout our campus and local communities, and serve all of our various populations and spaces in our prevention work.

Lastly, and clearly linked throughout all of these core values, all of our work in service of sexual- and gender-based violence prevention must be supported by clear, **consistent communication**. To achieve our goal of building awareness and a shared community, it is critical that any communication strategy must permeate our university community and reach all our partnerships and audiences.

Critical Success Factors for Prevention Work

Furthermore, there are three critical success factors that should be woven through all strategies, initiatives, and programs: trauma-informed approaches, intersectionality, and peer-led learning.

Recognizing that many first experiences of sexual- or gender-based violence occur before the age of 18 and that many students have been exposed to such violence either personally or through relationship with survivors before they arrive on campus, all of our work, programming, communications, and initiatives need to incorporate **trauma-informed approaches**. Trauma-informed approaches are designed to be attentive to an individual's past experiences, and to not re-traumatize a person unnecessarily. This means developing an atmosphere of safety, inclusion, support, and understanding.

We also recognize that no one single aspect of a person's identity defines them as an individual. Considering **intersectionality** in our approach is critical to both understanding and responding to the needs of our diverse campus community members. All of our work must be broadly inclusive and consider how a person's identity factors into their experiences.

Thirdly, we recognize that the commitment to building a culture of trust, accountability, engagement, and empowerment is best realized through **peer-led learning**, enabled by a broad network of peer educators and supporters. We commit to approaches that leverage this strategy, build sustainable models for supporting ongoing peer leadership networks, and aim for inclusion across our entire university community.

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CURRENT STATE ASSESSMENT

During their fall 2023 retreat, the SVPI steering committee discussed key aspects of the strategic plan, including the identification of existing challenges and opportunities, key stakeholders and their needs from this work, and current efforts and initiatives related to sexual violence prevention on our campuses.

Environmental Scan

What are the challenges and opportunities that exist for this work on our campus?

Challenges	Opportunities
<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Decentralized communication leads to resources and coordination being not clearly understood or committed■ A perceived lack of transparency about the work of task forces and committees leads to a lack of trust■ Historically, sexual violence prevention work has not been thoroughly measured for effectiveness, making it difficult to plan future work■ The student body is continually turning over. How do we build a sustainable model that serves each new year of students and student leaders, provides multiple touchpoints, and does not burn out staff?■ Reaching, supporting, and connecting off-campus students, other campuses, and graduate students	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Increase student engagement in these conversations and efforts■ Build upon university-wide communications campaign about SVPI■ Tap into the academic research being done on campus in related areas and share this expertise more broadly■ Unify messaging and coordinate communications for talking about sexual violence prevention■ Define an operational framework for prevention in a proactive manner rather than in a response to crisis, and be a leader among universities in this work

Challenges (continued)	Opportunities (continued)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Lack of awareness of timely and accessible resources ■ Limited professional resources and specialists dedicated to prevention work ■ Lack of centralized strategy or direction for prevention work ■ Need Virginia Tech-specific data and understanding of campus experiences to inform the work ■ Leveraging limited resources, as dedicated resources are already maxed out 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Maximize existing and new resources distributed across campus with intentional coordination, strategy/direction, and collaborative approaches ■ Clearly define work in primary prevention efforts v.s. response/support efforts, as well as differentiate and prioritize resources for advancing a culture of safety

Stakeholder Analysis

All members of our university community are stakeholders in this work, having both a vested interest in its success and roles to play in achieving its desired outcomes. University leaders, faculty, staff, and students all contribute to this work, as do community partners, parents, caregivers and families, and governance bodies.

Key audiences for prevention work include students (undergraduate, graduate, on-campus, and off-campus) as well as university leaders, faculty, and staff.

We know students to be at higher risk for experiencing sexual violence. First year students, athletes, members of fraternities and sororities, members of the Corps of Cadets, and members of marginalized campus populations are especially key target populations for sexual violence awareness and prevention programming. However, all members of our campus community, including all students, leaders, faculty, and staff, play roles in setting expectations and holding each other accountable for building the safe and inclusive campus culture we envision.

Student Populations	University Leaders, Faculty, Staff
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Virginia Tech Athletics ■ Student liaisons to athletics ■ Corps of Cadets ■ Survivors and their support networks ■ Sororities and fraternities ■ First year students ■ Student leaders in Residential Well-Being ■ STEM ■ LGBTQ+ ■ Underrepresented groups ■ International students ■ Communities not aware of their risk ■ Students in high-risk environments <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Field settings ◦ Semi-private or low-witness spaces such as labs and offices ◦ Solid doors/no windows/soundproofing ■ Casual relationships/high-risk hook-ups ■ Living Learning communities ■ Graduate students and gray areas of roles/power dynamic 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Cultural and Community Centers ■ Cook Counseling ■ SVPI steering committee ■ Coaches ■ Athletic directors ■ Responders on the ground ■ Those involved in sexual violence prevention work <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Hokie Wellness ◦ CARES ◦ SAVES ◦ VTPD ◦ Office for Equity and Accessibility ◦ Invested student organizations ■ Academic advisors ■ Sorority and Fraternity advisors ■ Residential Well-Being teams ■ Student Engagement and Campus Life

What needs and expectations must be met for this work to be successful?

Student Communities

- Data that can guide the work (such as prevalence data for specific populations, assessment data, and gauging knowledge attainment)
- Responsiveness to trends and experiences of students
- Trustworthy, relatable messaging coming from messengers with similar experiences
- Consistency in messaging
- Support for and promotion of safe spaces
- A clear consent model
- Awareness and skill building
- Investments into campus prevention structure (knowledge, expertise, positional authority)
- Inclusive and comprehensive sex education
- Data-driven education resources on healthy relationships between and among all groups
- Data-driven educational resources and peer-led training on predatory behavior and resistance groups
- Resources to support and bring in proven prevention practices

University Leadership

- Education and awareness building on:
 - Process and procedure
 - What sexual violence looks like on college campuses
 - How to respond and lead on this issue
 - Addressing behaviors and norms that normalize a culture where violence can escalate and thrive
 - Knowledge of available resources
 - Complexity of the issue and the work
 - How to assess impact and success
- Must have sexual violence prevention roles and responsibilities that are:
 - Built into the job description and department roles so leaders have time and capacity to fulfill the need
 - Money and positions to do the work
- Diversity in the industry
- Mutual trust

All of these needs require time, continued commitment, and patience to create the culture of change, awareness, and accountability.

Leveraging Partnerships for Engagement and Delivery

Recognizing the effectiveness of peer-led learning and awareness-building, prevention programming should be delivered by identifying targeted student community audiences in order to build relationships and partnerships to meet their needs. A number of partnerships have already been developed and deployed in building collaborative engagement and a shared ownership model for delivery and accountability in key student communities:

- Athletics departments
- Cultural community centers
- Fraternity and sorority life
- Military leaders
- Residential living and well-being

There also exists several strong local and regional community partnerships, which should continue to be nurtured and furthered:

- Blacksburg and other local police departments
- Women's Resource Center of the New River Valley
- SARA Roanoke
- Forensic nurse examiners and sexual assault nurse examiner providers

Continuing to build additional partnerships with stakeholders and target audiences will further bolster and grow this work. Possible partnerships identified include:

- Parents and caregivers
- Students in leadership roles
- Student Engagement and Campus Life
- The Graduate School (graduate and professional students)
- Other VT campus locations
- Faculty researchers
- Off-campus housing partnerships
- Other local government and business partnerships

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CURRENT EFFORTS ASSESSMENT

There is a significant amount of communication, awareness building, and prevention-related programming already taking place at Virginia Tech. In fall 2023, the SVPI steering committee documented nearly three dozen current programs, initiatives, campaigns, research programs, and other efforts related to sexual violence prevention. These efforts are driven by faculty, staff, specialists, and content experts located in Hokie Wellness, the CARES (Campus, Advocacy, Resources, and Education) Program for Survivors of violence, the Title IX group in the Office for Equity and Accessibility, the Virginia Tech Police Department, the Division of Student Affairs, student interest groups, and related academic departments. Nearly 20% of current programs or initiatives are offered collaboratively by one or more areas in partnership.

Roughly 2/3 of the activities inventoried are specifically prevention focused, while the remaining 1/3 combine prevention awareness and skills with a broader focus that includes response and advocacy. Within the activities focused specifically on prevention, over 70% are described as representing a primary prevention focus, about 25% represent a secondary prevention focus, and roughly 2.5% represent a primordial prevention focus. There were no tertiary prevention activities noted in the inventory.

The majority of current initiatives and efforts are focused on the Blacksburg campus, and are primarily reaching residential undergraduate students on the main campus.

Resources and activities in recent years

In 2022, a dedicated resource website, [SAFE at VT \(safe.vt.edu\)](https://safe.vt.edu), was launched as part of the work of SVCC. The website serves as the university community's centralized point of access for resources, support, and information related to sexual harassment and violence prevention at Virginia Tech.

Prior to 2022, the only full-time position dedicated to sexual violence prevention was located within the Women’s Center’s CARES program. They were responsible for coordinating prevention education, outreach, and facilitator training. In 2022, the university created a second full-time prevention specialist position in Hokie Wellness, resulting in a significant increase in prevention outreach and program offerings.

From February 2022 to spring 2024, the Hokie Wellness prevention specialist engaged with 9,442 students through trainings and outreach events.

From fall 2022 to spring 2024, the assistant director for prevention within the Women’s Center’s CARES program engaged with 3,939 students also through trainings, presentations, outreach events, and social media posts.

This work continues, and the prevention specialist and assistant director of prevention have quickly grown their portfolio of work and efforts to maximum capacity.

As the SVPI has developed this strategic plan, the steering committee has focused on a number of additional goals for this year, which it is on track to complete.

SVPI 2023-24 Goals

Goal	Deliverables
Build a strategic plan for sexual violence prevention work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete strategic plan document (June 2024)
Refine and implement short-term communication plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assessment of current communications efforts and needs Implementation of regular SVPI communication updates Completion of updated prevention program communications plan
Assess structures for advocacy and support and determine if changes are needed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Subcommittee reports on prevention and advocacy with recommendations (March 2024)
Formulate input regarding functional organizational framework to support a sustainable model for prevention at VT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review of benchmarking data on university structures for prevention work and discussion of VT-specific needs (Spring 2024)
Identify resource needs and business case for critical needs budget request	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Executive leadership team request (February 2024)

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CURRENT RESOURCE ASSESSMENT AND NEEDS FOR FUTURE PROGRESS

The work of the SVPI has highlighted the university's dedication of resources to response, advocacy, and resolution for victims of assault. While this is both necessary and admirable, prevention programs and strategies have long been under-resourced. If we are to achieve systemic and cultural change in our university community, there needs to be a significant and consistent dedication of resources to support the outlined strategies in this plan.

Historically, individuals involved in sexual assault prevention and response work at the university have had to dedicate more time, energy, and planning than what is expected of a full-time role in order to fulfill their responsibilities. In utilizing all resources at their disposal, the two full-time positions mentioned above noted their limited reach among the student population.

If we are to broaden our reach further into student communities and build needed additional partnerships, additional resources must be committed to the efforts outlined in this strategic plan.

Strategic Statement of Opportunity

Virginia Tech has the opportunity to be a leader in the space of sexual violence prevention efforts in higher education, leveraging existing strengths, expertise, and resources to proactively define a unique operational framework. We seek a framework that is scalable and sustainable to meet the needs of our campus community and build a culture of empowerment, respect, and safety for all its members through collaborative and proactive programming.

Strategic Priorities and Goals

The strategic plan is grounded in four strategic priorities with specific focus areas. These can be further broken down into short-term, mid-range, and long-term goals for implementation and action planning. These goals and related initiatives need to be resourced appropriately in order to make sufficient progress. Without additional resources dedicated to the efforts outlined in this plan, there is not capacity to make significant progress.

Strategic Priority #1: Development and evolution of functional organizational framework and sexual violence prevention framework for the university

Prevention Level: Primordial

Driven by University Leadership

Strategic Goals:

- Define functional organizational framework deemed most likely to succeed within Virginia Tech's culture and begin plans for transition to this model for full implementation (FY 2024-25)
- With organizational framework defined, leaders and partners in the work must confirm or define the desired unifying sexual violence prevention framework model for the university (FY 2025-26)
- Consider models for sustainable student/faculty/staff involvement in peer leadership roles, and implement accordingly (FY 2025-26)
- Discuss and plan for regular review of operational effectiveness and implement continuous improvement efforts to adjust as necessary (FY 2026 and beyond)

Strategic Priority #2: Unified vision, core values, and critical success factors

Prevention Level: Primordial, Primary

Collaborative community engagement, driven by university and prevention leadership, or identified prevention working group

Strategic Goals:

- The university must confirm a centralized and unified vision, core values, and critical success factors for sexual violence prevention work. It should then obtain feedback and gain consensus on vision, core values, and critical success factors developed by SVPI (FY 2024-25)
- Clear outcomes and success measures for sexual violence prevention work must be collectively defined (FY 2025 and beyond)

Strategic Priority #3: Campus awareness and engagement (communication and marketing)

Prevention Level: Primary

Dedicated resources must be identified

Content to be inclusive of individual, relationship, and community levels of the socio-economic model

Strategic Goals:

- Finalize comprehensive communication plan and marketing campaigns that share and reinforce the vision for campus prevention and safe culture building, and promote ready access to the range of existing resources and programs (FY 2024-25)
- In addition to promoting the site, evaluate and redesign safe.vt.edu to ensure easy-to-find resources, information, and support as needed by all in the university community (FY 2024-25)
- Gather appropriate data to measure and assess reach, determine best strategies for communicating with students, and identify where gaps exist (FY 2025-26)
- Ensure ongoing planning, assessment, and campaign development occurs to reach higher saturation of the campus community, including ensuring equitable distribution across subsets of the population (e.g., historically marginalized groups) (FY 2025 and beyond)

Strategic Priority #4: Gap analysis and program development

Prevention Level: Primary

Driven by prevention leaders and collaborators

Inclusive of individual, relationship, and community levels of the socio-economic model

Strategic Goals:

- Continue to incorporate best practices in prevention deployment throughout the student experience to inform overall resource and deployment needs (FY 2024 and beyond)
- Conduct complete gap analysis informed by current programs and the university population's needs, and document gaps with a particular eye to emerging trends, needs of marginalized populations, and primordial factors, such as environment and operational factors influencing sexual violence (FY 2025-26)
- Continue coordinated development of data gathering and assessment, and formalizing coordinated use of shared data to inform development and prevention strategies (FY 2025 and beyond)

** None of this suggests that current efforts and programming should not also continue



PROGRESS AND EVALUATION

It is imperative that this plan be championed by a university leader or leaders who will take responsibility for ensuring that progress and evaluation measures are regularly documented, outcomes are communicated, and updates are made as needed over the coming years.

The following must be done to ensure effectiveness:

- Progress to plans should be regularly assessed, with regular check-ins once per semester and a formal status evaluation annually. Ideally, this will happen with participation from the collaborative practice group, who will also bring in new environmental scan data to inform needed adjustments to the plan over time.
- Key performance indicators for overall performance and progress must be identified early in the implementation of the plan, with results documented and shared publicly on an ongoing basis, ideally in an annual report.
- Coordination with partners across campus must be leveraged to cultivate data gathering related to campus culture and climate from all stakeholder groups, with trends reported regularly.

It is of the utmost importance that the ongoing work related to sexual violence prevention be continually and clearly communicated to the university community. Regular updates on the strategic plan and prevention work should be included in the ongoing communications plan, posted at safe.vt.edu, highlighted via VT News, promoted through social media channels, proactively shared through student communities and organizations, and through the university networks of leaders, faculty, and staff.



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Appendix: Glossary of Related Terms

Included in Virginia Tech policies:

At-risk individual - an employee, student, or other person who is a potential target or victim of violence, or a threat to self or others.

Campus - any location, either permanent or temporary, owned or leased by Virginia Tech. This includes, but is not limited to, buildings, grounds, and the surrounding perimeters, including the parking lots, field locations, classrooms, residence halls, alternate work, or class locations.

Consent - generally defined as knowing, voluntary, and clear permission for something to occur.

Consent in the context of a sexual activity - knowing, voluntary, and clear permission by word or action to engage in mutually agreed upon sexual activity. The existence of consent is based on the totality of circumstances, including the context in which the alleged consent occurred. Silence does not necessarily constitute consent, and coercion, force, or threat of either party invalidates consent.

- Consent cannot be given if someone is incapacitated, intimidated, threatened, coerced into saying yes, or is not of legal age to give consent as defined by law
- Consent to any one form of sexual activity cannot automatically imply consent to other forms of sexual activity. Consent can be withdrawn at any time
- Previous relationships or prior consent cannot imply consent to future sexual acts

Dating violence - acts of physical or sexual abuse committed by a person who is or has been in a social relationship of a romantic or intimate nature with the victim.

- The existence of such a relationship shall be determined based on the reporting party's statement and with consideration of the length of the relationship, the type of relationship, and the frequency of interaction between the persons involved with the relationship
- Dating violence includes, but is not limited to, sexual or physical abuse or the threat of such abuse but does not include acts covered under the definition of domestic violence

Gender-based harassment - as acts of verbal, nonverbal, or physical aggression, intimidation, or hostility based on sex or sex-stereotyping, even if those acts do not involve conduct of a sexual nature.

Gender-based stalking - repeated contact with another person when the contact is unwanted. Additionally, the contact may cause the other person reasonable apprehension of imminent physical harm or cause substantial impairment of the other person's ability to perform the activities of daily life. Contact includes but is not limited to communicating with (either in person, by phone, or by computer) or remaining in the physical presence of the other person.

Sexual exploitation - an act or acts committed through non-consensual abuse or exploitation of another person's sexuality for the purpose of sexual gratification, financial gain, personal benefit or advantage, or any other non-legitimate purpose. The act or acts of sexual exploitation are prohibited even if the behavior does not constitute one of the other sexual misconduct offenses.

Sexual violence - physical sexual acts perpetrated against a person's will or where a person is incapable of giving consent due to the victim's use of drugs or alcohol or is unable to give consent due to an intellectual or other disability. Sexual violence includes rape, sexual assault, sexual battery, and sexual coercion (see [Student Code of Conduct under section V. Prohibited Conduct](#) and see [section 5.0 Definitions in Policy 1025.](#))

Victim - an individual who has experienced or witnessed an act or acts of violence or threats of violence.

Additional Definitions

Adjudication - references the resolving of cases and claims related to incidents of sexual violence through university mechanisms or the judicial system.

Advocacy and support - includes clinical and non-clinical assistance or interventions which provide both emotional and practical support strategies for coping with the impact of violence.

Evidence-based practices and strategies - skills, techniques, approaches, and strategies that have been proven to work through experimental research studies or large-scale research field studies. This practice involves making use of the best available data and research and applying it in the context of known stakeholder needs for a higher likelihood of realizing desired outcomes.

Response - the area of the sexual violence operational framework that receives, investigates, tracks, and responds to reports of sexual violence on campus.

Trauma-informed approach - a human service model that recognizes that everyone has a history of trauma. It is guided by six key principles that can be applied in many different settings: safety, trustworthiness and transparency, peer support, collaboration and mutuality, empowerment, voice, and choice, and cultural, historical, and gender issues.