

# Impacting a Campus Community When Students Step Up

by Patricia Kostouros, D. Gaye Warthe, & Catherine Carter-Snell

**O**n post-secondary campuses across Canada, there is a movement to create policy and programs in response to sexual assault reports and disclosures.

In the United States of America, sexual assault policies have been in place on post-secondary campuses for some time. Canada is only beginning to respond, with Ontario taking the lead by having legislated sexual assault policy for post-secondary campuses. While we as researchers are supportive of this move, we also see that a sexual assault policy alone may be too narrow.

One of the challenges that is faced by those wishing to intervene and impact sexual assault on a post-secondary campus is the need to contextualize the problem. At Mount Royal University in Calgary, Alberta, we have been delivering and researching a program on our campus that considers sexual assault and relationship violence. We thought it was important to think about programming and intervention more broadly since young adults between 15 and 24 years of age are at high risk for sexual assault (Johnson, 2006) and assaults are generally committed by someone they know (Banyard, Plante & Moynihan, 2004). The people who “know the victim are often the perpetrators of interpersonal violence such as sexual assault and domestic violence” (p.68). When looking for post-secondary campus programs and interventions, finding something that matched the reality was necessary, as opposed to a program or policy that silos one part of a broader issue. We believe that policies need to speak to dating and domestic and sexual violence, not sexual violence alone.

Through previous research, Warthe, Kostouros, Carter-Snell and Tutty (2013) have established that there is a need on post-secondary campuses to respond to dating violence. Additionally, a recent study reported that four in five Canadian undergraduate women experience some form of dating violence (*acttoendviolenceagainstwomen*, n.d.). The 2013 National College Health Assessment completed across Canada on post-secondary campuses found that 7.9% of men and 17.8% of women reported being victims of stalking by a romantic partner and/or sexual partner or former partner. In addition, 17.2% of men and 31.5% of women disclosed being in an intimate (dating, romantic, or couple) relationship that was emotionally abusive, physically abusive, or sexually abusive (NCHA, 2013). When we have this kind of data it seems short-sighted to address one piece alone. Post-secondary campuses need programs and policies that are multi-pronged.

## The Need for Programming

Given our desire to impact the Mount Royal University campus more broadly, a peer-facilitated dating violence prevention program, Stepping Up, was developed and evaluated on our campus in Calgary. The effectiveness of the program demonstrated changes in students' knowledge, attitudes, and behaviours related to healthy and unhealthy relationships (Warthe, Kostouros, Carter-Snell & Tutty, 2013). Another program, Making Waves, existed and addressed most of the key areas that we wished to include in Stepping Up. The Making Waves program, although developed for high school students, had evidence of effectiveness (Cameron et al., 2007). The Making Waves program included modules on healthy relationships, communications and

boundaries, and gender and media issues. Adaptations to the Stepping Up program to suit university students included the addition of a module on sexual relationships and changing the communication and boundary module to one about bystander intervention. By including a module about sexual violence, the Stepping Up program broadened the original Making Waves mandate to include both the sexual assault that may occur in an intimate partner relationship and the sexual violence that may occur outside of an existing relationship.



Since students on post-secondary campuses say they are more likely to approach a peer about a disclosure of violence, it was important that the Stepping Up program also have a bystander intervention focus. Bystander factors are vital in sexual violence prevention programs on post-secondary campuses (Banyard & Moynihan, 2011; Gidycz, Orchowski, Berkowitz, 2011). A bystander approach was found to be effective in creating change up to a year after a dating violence program (Moynihan et al, 2015). If peers have an understanding of the dynamics of dating violence and healthy versus unhealthy relationships, then they can make appropriate referrals for their friends. The Stepping Up program aims to target peer-to-peer contact on campus, both as participants and as peer facilitators. After participating in Stepping Up, peers can make appropriate referrals that will serve to reduce dating violence in people's lives and increase violence prevention on their campuses. Building student capacity has the potential to influence the overall culture of the university environment regarding knowledge and beliefs about dating violence and awareness of community resources to address violence.

## The Stepping Up Model

Stepping Up has two phases. The first phase is focused on peer facilitator development and the second phase is program delivery. In Phase One, the peer facilitators are recruited from the general university population through online advertisements and information sessions. The majority of peer facilitators came from programs with a focus in disciplines such as Social Work, Counselling, Nursing, Psychology, and Sociology. Recruitment is focused on ensuring there are diverse cultural and ethnic communities represented, and that there are enough facilitators to allow for attrition. In the months preceding the actual program weekend, the selected facilitators participate in a number of curriculum and activity development sessions. The facilitators work in conjunction with the faculty research team, community partners, and program staff to determine the content of each of the four modules: gender and media, healthy relationships, sexual relationships, and bystander intervention. Peer facilitators work with one or more content experts (faculty and/or community partners) to create activities that will support their learning objectives. These same content experts are present during the weekend to support the facilitators as needed. Time is allocated during the first phase to discuss module content with fellow peer facilitators and receive feedback on content and activities.

Phase Two includes the delivery of the modules over a full weekend with up to 60 student participants and subsequently assisting students in completing community awareness projects. The weekend includes a media presentation and group discussions on dating violence, peer facilitation of the four interactive modules, a discussion of gender roles and expectations, and planning for community prevention programs. Following the weekend, participants complete projects focused on violence prevention that are presented to the university community. The prevention projects are aimed at supporting attitude and behaviour change among participants and increasing awareness of resources in the community. The additional expectation of a community

project helps students integrate and consolidate learning in addition to benefitting the larger community; participants completing the prevention projects are supported by program staff, peer facilitators, community partners, and the research team. Participants must have the prevention projects approved for content in order to be reimbursed for expenses associated with completion of the prevention project. The small amount of funding ensures the quality of the projects.

## Timeline

### *Advisory Group & Community Partners (Ongoing Involvement)*

- Advisory Committee to include internal and external stakeholders, including the faculty research team, Peer Support Services, HomeFront, Calgary Sexual Health, Alberta Association of Sexual Assault Centres, Calgary Police Service, Calgary Communities Against Sexual Abuse, Calgary Counselling Centre.
- Community partners support training and curriculum development and are recruited from the Advisory Committee.

### *Recruit and Train Peer Facilitators (September to December)*

- University-wide recruitment for Peer Facilitators.
- Train for group facilitation, debriefing following disclosures, awareness of current issues and community resources (through community partners).
- Peer Facilitators develop curriculum and plan activities for workshops.
- Peer Facilitators involved in Family Violence Prevention Month events in November help recruit participants.

### *Prevention Weekend (January)*

- Friday: Ice breakers, collage of media on relationship violence, small group discussion.
- Saturday: Healthy Relationships, Gender & Media, Bystander Interventions, Sexual Relationships, Dating Do's and Don'ts (Part I).
- Sunday: Relationship Do's and Don'ts (Part II), Planning for Prevention Projects

information and resources available through their agencies.

### *Evaluation - Pre, Post, Follow-up (January to September)*

- Pre measures: Dating Relationship Scales (DRS); Knowledge, Attitudes, Behaviour, & Behavioural Intent (KABBI) Scale.
- Immediate Post: KABBI, Program Evaluation
- Focus Groups within one month of prevention weekend with Peer Facilitators and participants
- 8 months post: KABBI

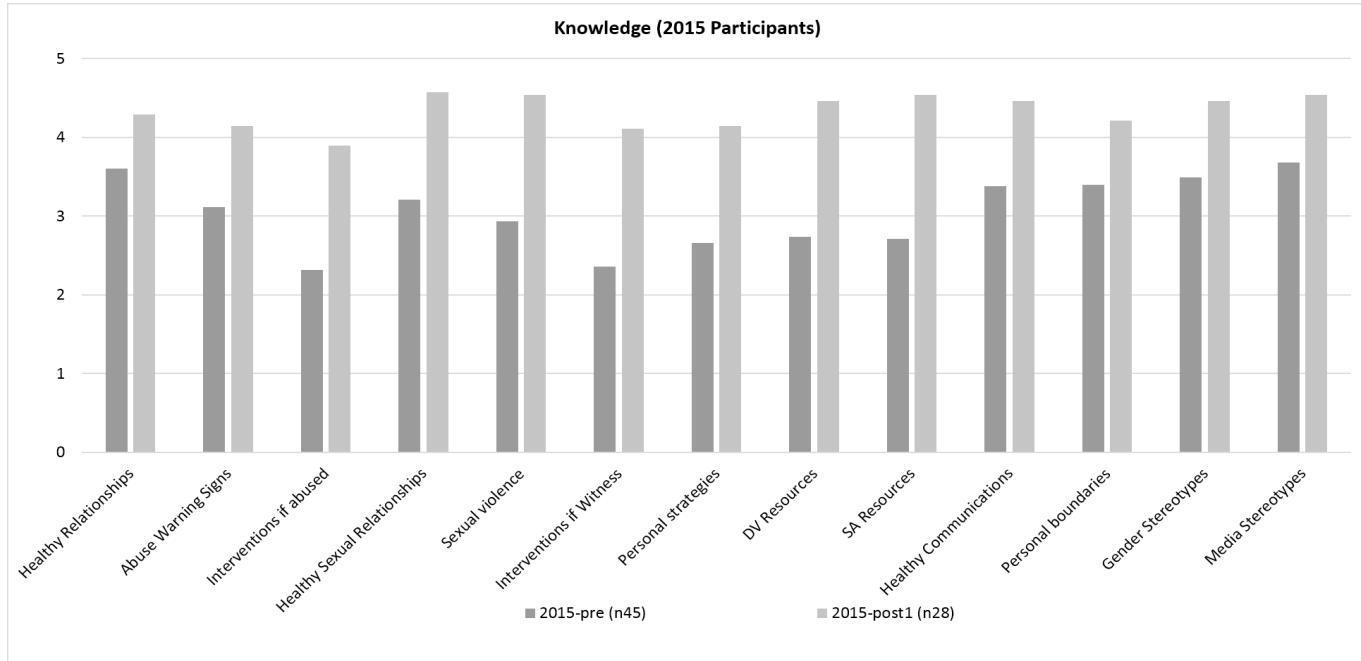
### *Dissemination, Support Violence Prevention Initiatives, and Monitor Impact on the Campus Community*

- Dissemination of project to other post-secondary.
- Support violence prevention initiatives, including resource information, website, training on responding to disclosures, Stephanson-Cooke Symposium, and Family Violence Prevention Month.
- Environmental scan to monitor impact on the campus community.

## Program Results

Data about the program and its effectiveness is gathered in two ways. Students who are weekend event participants complete a dating relationship scale, which provides information on what students are presently experiencing in relation to dating violence. We also ask students to complete the knowledge, attitude, behaviour and behavioural intent (KABBI) scale, which they complete before participating in the Stepping Up weekend event, immediately after, and approximately eight months later (Warthe et al, 2013).

Results in the four iterations of this project indicated a significant and sustained change among those who participated, in some instances even becoming more positive over time. Year over year, our results consistently show the increase in knowledge, attitude, behaviour, and behavioural intent, as shown below from the most recent program.



### *Prevention Projects (March/April)*

- Relationship violence prevention projects developed by participants are presented to the University community three months after the prevention weekend.
- Members of the Advisory Committee are invited to share additional

In addition, we collect data from both weekend participants and peer facilitators in separate focus groups. The participants are able to share their lived experiences of having participated in the program and the peer facilitators provide vital information about the program design. When asked, "Overall, how would you rate the Stepping Up program?" 67% of participants rated it "Excellent," 30% "Good," and 3% "Unsure." No participants rated the program "Poor" or "Very Poor." Participants also made

statements such as: "Stepping Up gave me a voice with others for an issue I knew was important," or "This is a great way to learn, and I can impact my campus now." Each time we deliver this program we receive feedback that 100% of the participants would recommend this program to their peers.

Peer facilitators have also provided feedback and each time we ask about program changes, we have received the same feedback, which is that the preparation is time-consuming but worth the time. When asked about program changes, they say they appreciate that the program is grassroots, the content is modified based on what is relevant on campus for that particular peer group, and the discussions are meaningful. The peer facilitators of the Stepping Up program highlighted that change can happen for both those who participate and those who deliver programs. We feel encouraged that these young people take responsibility and care about their peers as well as their campus environment.

## Considerations

Some people have asked about the readiness of the peer facilitators to be delving into such deep topics with only a few weekends of program development. In our deliberations about potential program changes, we suggest that post-secondary students are already having these discussions and that a program like Stepping Up allows those existing discussions to take place in an atmosphere with support, information about appropriate resources, and with community partners in attendance. Participants are highly engaged and verbal throughout the entire Stepping Up weekend and in their feedback; one highlight was being able to talk openly about their experiences in a non-judgmental setting.

It is our hope that readers will consider the programs on their own campuses and question the scope of these programs in relation to dating and domestic violence – and not sexual violence alone. We have an opportunity, through programs such as Stepping Up, to inform students about dating and sexual violence using a grass roots approach that has the potential to change a campus environment. When students take ownership of these programs, they will impact their campus in ways that policies alone never could. We need to remember that students are only with us for a short time and have a context beyond our bricks and mortar. We need to be helping them with bystander intervention for a lifetime – to change their campus, their lives, and their communities.

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# Reviving Risk Assessment: Transforming Traditional Risk Assessment to Nurture the Whole Student

by Alyssa Graham & Scott MacDonald

Risk assessment of student-led initiatives is widely recognized as an important means of improving success and safety, while protecting the institution. The University of Toronto Scarborough (UTSC) has worked to transform the risk assessment process from a standard checklist of rules into an opportunity for campus-wide collaboration and student development. UTSC students are actively involved throughout the risk assessment process, embodying Astin's idea that "the amount of student learning/development is directly proportional to the quality and quantity of involvement" (Astin 1993). In our risk assessment process, students are challenged to develop their critical thinking skills through proactive planning that mitigates risks, creates more inclusive events, and engages a whole campus through collaboration.

## Demographics at UTSC

"UTSC is located in one of the country's most diverse and multicultural communities, and our student body reflects this. Many of our students are either first or second generation Canadians. They tend to live at home and commute relatively long distances to get to campus. Our students often work part-time or full-time, and have connections to multiple cultures, all of which have implications for their life at UTSC." (UTSC Strategic Plan 2014)

When it comes to risk assessment, it is important to understand students in the context of their broader lives beyond the classroom. Supporting students through the risk assessment process allows them to host events that they identify as meeting their needs and interests.

Student organizations contribute in a variety of ways to the educational, intellectual, recreational, social, and cultural lives of the university community. Here are a few statistics relating to student organizations at UTSC: