

JUNE 15, 2023

CaLARTS

2023

REPORT ON SEXUAL RESPECT
AT CALIFORNIA INSTITUTE
OF THE ARTS

TO THE CALARTS COMMUNITY:

I'm honored to share with you the third annual CalArts report on sexual respect—our comprehensive review of recent steps across the Institute to prevent sexual misconduct. The following document chronicles the community's progress for the 2022–2023 academic year.

Since we issued [the last sexual respect report in May 2022](#), we have seen greater participation from all Institute communities in proactive efforts strengthening our culture of sexual respect. I'm especially grateful for the widespread engagement in September's town hall meetings about [Where We Stand: The CalArts Survey on Sexual Respect](#) from late 2021.

The power of the CalArts collective supported an atmosphere of empathy and honesty during follow-up listening sessions with La Shonda Coleman, a trauma expert and psychotherapist who coordinates federal Title IX work at Pepperdine University. These smaller group interactions provided a safe space for a frank exchange of experiences, observations, and personal insights.

This work is never easy, but it is essential—and it takes courage. To everyone who joined in these heartfelt and productive conversations, I extend my sincerest thanks. The discussions are foundational to a number of specific measures detailed in this report and remind us that everyone has a role in shaping our collective future.

As we carry out the Institute's commitment to sexual respect that began several years ago, this report also covers our most immediate next steps and the expanding resources available across CalArts. Reporting is a cornerstone of accountability and transparency—an important part of holding ourselves responsible for CalArts' values, including agency, persistence, empathy, equity, and inclusivity.

Our work to create a more secure, inclusive environment is another example of the Institute's commitment to practices that transform ourselves and the world. We can take pride in what we are doing here. It matters for future generations and artists everywhere. Our ability to foster a culture in which we are all free to explore our greatest potential is possible only with our inspired leadership and dedication to one another.

Thanks again for your invaluable support.

Gratefully,

Dionne Simmons

Director of Community Rights and Responsibilities

Title IX Coordinator

2023 REPORT ON SEXUAL RESPECT AT CALIFORNIA INSTITUTE OF THE ARTS

SUMMARY

California Institute of the Arts places a high priority on proactively cultivating an inclusive, secure, and welcoming environment as foundational to realizing its mission: empowering artists to transform themselves, each other, and the world through artistic practice.

Over the past several years, the Institute has committed itself to the pursuit of a climate of sexual respect. From May 2022 to May 2023, the effort drew in large part on the findings from [Where We Stand: The CalArts Survey on Sexual Respect](#). Students, faculty, staff, and alumna participated in this Institute-wide effort in late 2021.

[A detailed professional analysis](#) of the survey responses led to a thorough breakdown and review, recommendations, and community-wide conversations in the fall 2022 semester. Those discussions continue to inform specific actions to improve climate, such as reinforced training opportunities for CalArts students, faculty, and staff.

This document is the Institute's third annual report on sexual respect. It was prepared by the Office of Community Rights and Responsibilities and details the last 12 months—May 2022 to May 2023—of the Institute's work to advance respect and responsibility on our campus. It also previews forthcoming steps to continue fostering a culture and climate of sexual respect. The earlier reports, issued in [May 2021](#) and [May 2022](#), are available on [the Sexual Respect section](#) of the CalArts website.

KEY ADVANCEMENTS

CalArts introduced several mechanisms in the 2022–2023 academic year to bolster overall faculty and staff training. These improvements stem in part from suggestions that community members made during town hall events and listening sessions in the fall 2022 semester.

The town hall gatherings marked the reporting and community-response phase after “Where We Stand: The CalArts Survey on Sexual Respect” in 2021. The town halls brought together students, faculty, staff, and alumna in separate conversations to analyze and make recommendations from survey results. Discussions included panelists La Shonda Coleman, a psychotherapist and trauma expert who leads Title IX work at Pepperdine University; Kevin Swartout, who prepared the survey and analyzed its results; two CalArts vice presidents, Brenda Ivelisse and Natalie Farrar Adams; Institute President Ravi Rajan; and Dionne Simmons, CalArts' Title IX coordinator and director of community rights and responsibilities.

The community had an opportunity to review [a written report](#) on the survey results and an action plan prior to the town halls. The resulting participation was broad. Participants brought specific questions and reflections to each session, setting the tone for future engagement around improving the climate for sexual respect.

Subsequent, smaller group listening sessions for students, alumna, faculty, and staff were hosted privately by La Shonda Coleman. Private settings allowed for participants to share experiences and observations in safe and healing spaces.

Specifics about the 2021 survey results, survey-related recommendations, and future survey activities are included later in this report. Likewise, the report incorporates individual and still-evolving actions informed by the town hall and listening sessions. Among their outcomes, the gatherings made clear an immediate opportunity for better training and awareness-building across the community.

Taken together, changes stemming from the 2021 survey and subsequent discussions include better preparation for faculty and staff—from the earliest days of their CalArts employment—to help them recognize and address incidents of sexual misconduct. Specific improvements include:

- Incorporation of Title IX training into initial orientation for new faculty and staff members. Title IX is the federal law that bars sex-based discrimination in educational organizations that receive federal financial assistance, including CalArts.
- Training sessions that detail the obligation of faculty and other student-facing employees to report harassment, discrimination, and gender-based misconduct that involves undergraduate and graduate students. Sessions in the 2022–2023 academic year specified the requirement, explained its rationale, and defined types of incidents that trigger mandatory reporting. (All CalArts employees and graduate students with teaching or supervisory authority are responsible for reporting sexual misconduct, discrimination, and harassment. Employees with significant responsibility for student and campus activities, such as deans, vice presidents, and resident assistants, are designated campus security authorities, or CSAs. They are responsible for reporting crimes such as rape, robbery, and arson as noted under the federal Clery Act. The Institute provides a ready reference for reporting responsibilities, CSA duties, and confidential resources. This two-page, easy-to-follow digest is given to responsible employees and graduate students.)

The Institute designed and implemented broader training opportunities specifically for students as well. Training made available to undergraduates and graduate students centered in part on sexual violence prevention and bystander intervention.

Other student training focused on the concept of affirmative consent, more colloquially known as boundary-setting, in the context of intimacy. Programs were well received in participating schools during the 2022–2023 academic year. An anticipated expansion of programming is expected to include more schools and programs during the 2023–2024 academic year.

Choreographer and intimacy professional Emily Barasch, who is an educator in dance, theater, film, and television, led the 2022–2023 workshops with her collaborative approach. The two-hour sessions covered fundamentals of informed consent, establishing boundaries, and staging intimacy, simultaneously tailoring techniques and skills to each discipline and level of study.

The consent training emerged from student-centered listening sessions hosted in fall 2022 by La Shonda Coleman. Conversations then, as well as findings from *Where We Stand: The CalArts Survey on Sexual Respect* in late 2021, spotlighted a need in this particular area.

Beyond training, CalArts prioritized in 2022–2023 the standing, everyday resources available to support community members facing incidents of sexual misconduct. The Institute Office of Community Rights and Responsibilities started an ongoing collaboration with the Student Health Center, also known as Health and Wellness, to identify additional counseling and other programming support for affected students.

To improve awareness of institutional standards and support measures, the office also is developing three resource brochures that highlight, respectively, student rights; CalArts resources to assist those affected by sexual misconduct; and processes that the Institute follows to address such complaints. To strengthen general awareness around sexual violence, the office enhanced programming in April 2023 for Sexual-Assault Awareness Month, adding a healing yoga program for staff and students in addition to the Institute’s recognition of [Denim Day](#).

Continued commitment to sexual respect includes the following actions during the 2022–2023 academic year:

- Identification of more training opportunities in collaboration with individual CalArts schools
- Rollout of introductory training for international students that discuss Title IX, student rights, and complaint-reporting processes
- Introduction of in-person workshops during student orientation to address affirmative consent
- Collaboration with the Student Union to develop an anonymous tool for reporting incidents, requesting help, and exploring supportive resources; the mechanism will connect student and other users with the office directly

- Collaboration with the Office of the Provost, Deans Council, and Academic Council on prevention and related education for faculty
- Consultation with La Shonda Coleman, of Pepperdine University, about programming options

The Institute is among other US institutions of higher education awaiting the release of new federal rules and regulations under [Title IX](#). That announcement is expected sometime in October 2023 from President Joe Biden’s administration. Institute leadership anticipates that a key legal element of CalArts campus policy will be affected by [California Senate Bill 493 of 2020](#) and by the new legislation put forward by the Biden administration. In preparation, the Institute is reviewing its policies and practices so that it’s ready to accommodate new federal requirements. The Office of Community Rights and Responsibilities is closely monitoring developments from Washington, DC, and preparing to engage the CalArts community in any adjustments that may become necessary because of changes at the federal level.

WHAT WE LEARNED

In fall 2021, CalArts retained Kevin Swartout, Ph.D., a professor of psychology at Georgia State University and chair of the ARC3 group, to lead the development, execution, analysis, and reporting of a sexual respect survey in consultation with Institute leadership. Ultimately, the anonymous survey included 728 community members (199 students, 208 faculty and staff members, and 321 alumna) a year earlier. CalArts held town halls in fall 2022 as part of the rollout of the results of [Where We Stand: The CalArts Survey on Sexual Respect](#).

While the survey found that, overall, respondents believed that CalArts is a safe place to learn and work, some students, faculty, and staff felt that sexual misconduct remains a challenge on campus. Problematic findings include these:

- Most students disagreed with statements suggesting sexual misconduct is not a problem on campus.
- Students were generally more likely to tell friends or family members about sexual misconduct than to inform campus security or the CalArts Office of Student Conduct.

In an encouraging sign for creating a climate of sexual respect, more than 90% of current students said they intervened as a bystander in a party context, and 65% said they talked about sexual misconduct with friends.

In light of the publication of these findings, during public meetings CalArts heard questions and reflections from students, faculty, and staff that helped position the Institute to continue and strengthen efforts to reinforce a climate of sexual respect. In essence, these meetings marked a starting point for a new chapter of this work.

Based on feedback from the town halls and subsequent listening sessions, the work to support a prevention-focused climate at CalArts continues to evolve. Looking ahead, CalArts is initiating small-group, in-person affirmative consent training, a recommendation from both the survey and from the students, from whom it became clear there was an immediate need to develop this kind of training. The training is scheduled to expand during the fall 2023 semester.

More efforts are outlined in an action plan based on the survey. Among them:

- An ongoing external review of CalArts policies and practices on sexual respect
- Evaluation of restorative practices and resources
- Exploration of permanent healing spaces
- Further enhanced education and training around sexual respect and misconduct for both current and incoming students, as well as faculty, staff, and alumnx

CalArts believes that only by working together will we sustain our progress. Conversations on sexual respect continue at the school level.

THE RESOURCES WE OFFER

CalArtians seeking to access resources around sexual respect would benefit from a reminder about basic definitions.

During the 2022–2023 academic year, the Institute focused efforts on educating employees about the term **responsible employee**. Consequently, all CalArts new hires are required to undergo a robust, revamped Title IX training where they learn that, under California law, all CalArts employees, staff, faculty, teaching assistants with teaching responsibilities, and resident assistants have the duty to report information related to incidents reasonably believed to be violations of sexual harassment or sexual misconduct policies. This responsible-employee training also directs them to confidential resources on campus to aid in their reporting requirements.

Conversely, individuals who seek confidential assistance without making a report to CalArts can seek out a **confidential resource**. The professionals are obligated by law to maintain confidentiality:

- Confidential Student Resource Advocate
Elizabeth Peisner
Executive Director, Health and Wellness
epeisner@calarts.edu
(661) 713-5325 - Available 24/7

- CalArts Counselors
Melissa Shepherd-Williams, MFT
Lily Rodriguez, LMFT
Susan B. Perry, LMFT
- CalArts 24/7 counseling line
This resource is dedicated to CalArts students only and can be accessed 24/7 and anywhere in the United States.
(855) 364-7981

Regardless of which avenue of resolution an incident takes, **supportive measures**—non-disciplinary and non-punitive services for individuals—are available to all parties, including:

- Academic adjustments (changes in section, changes in TA, changes in a class)
- Academic support (more time for an assignment or a test, late withdrawal, etc.)
- Referral to the Employee Assistance Program
- Changes to on-campus housing situation (room, dorm)
- Changes in work schedules
- Campus safety escort
- No-contact directives
- Change of an advisor

For more information, see the [Resources and Support](#) section of the CalArts website maintained by the Office of Community Rights and Responsibilities.

WHAT'S NEXT

Based on feedback from the survey, communication and further assessment are the priorities for CalArts in the coming year. To those ends, CalArts will work on:

- Presentations to school executive committees with the goal of developing a consistent communication plan with the calarts community, including faculty, staff, and students
- Improving the clarity and accessibility of resources, information, and reporting options
- Continued listening sessions with la shonda coleman to cultivate campus community feedback and engage with it
- Developing a comprehensive communication plan for 2023–2024 using feedback from the sexual respect survey, including a timeline of communication with the six individual schools
- Identifying the most effective campus communication mechanisms, such as emails, posters, various councils, feedback forms, and ongoing outreach and training

In addition to the implementation of action items discussed above, the work of data-gathering and assessment will continue as CalArts will commission a second sexual respect survey during the 2023–2024 academic year.

A FINAL NOTE

Improving the climate for sexual respect at CalArts hinges on support and engagement across the community. Incorporating feedback is essential to the mission of the Office of Community Rights and Responsibilities. We invite suggestions, comments, and questions about this report from members of the community via [this feedback form](#).

Community members may reach the CalArts Sexual Respect Committee at sexualrespect@calarts.edu if they have experiences, thoughts, and other input. The information shared via this address will be kept private to the extent possible.

The Institute's fourth annual report on sexual respect is expected to be released in May 2024.