In Raising Awareness For Women's Health, Is Pink Overshadowing Red?

Generated from News Bureau press release: Cancer Risk Perception Could Lead to Adverse Health Outcomes Among Women

There’s no denying the power of breast cancer awareness efforts—especially in October, a month-long campaign that features everything from special jerseys on NFL players to marathon fundraising walks to pink ribbons everywhere.

Creating greater awareness of breast cancer is crucial for persuading more women to have regular screenings, and is credited with contributing to a decrease in death rates from the disease over the last couple decades. But there may be an unintended consequence to the effectiveness of the campaign: The actual leading cause of death in women—heart disease—is getting less play. And that could be dangerous, some experts believe.

It isn't called the silent killer for nothing. “Women are much more likely than men to have ‘atypical’ symptoms of heart disease, which can make it challenging to know when there’s an issue,” Andy Barnett, M.D., medical director of Legacy Health-GoHealth Urgent Care, tells SELF. That's why it's so important for women to be proactive in taking steps to ensure their hearts are healthy, he says. But many don't realize they need to be.

While breast cancer is getting a top spot in health perception nationwide, women are neglecting to realize the dangers of heart disease. Is it possible that pink’s prominence is causing an unintended, negative impact on women’s heart health?

Even when it comes to health issues, marketing is a really powerful tool.

Researchers at the University of Missouri were struck by how recent studies indicated that the U.S. has a disadvantage in women’s life expectancy compared to peer countries, despite high rates of health screenings like mammography and breast cancer awareness.

They decided to look at perception of risk, and asked about 600 women aged 35 to 49 about breast cancer risk versus heart disease risk. The researchers found that minority women and those with lower education levels were significantly more likely to believe that breast cancer causes more deaths among women than heart disease, according to lead researcher Julie Kapp, M.P.H, Ph.D., associate professor at the University of Missouri School of Medicine.
“We were not especially surprised by the findings, given the pink ribbon is one of the most widely recognized symbols in the United States and may lead to the perception that it (breast cancer) causes more deaths,” she says.

It doesn't. The number one cause of death for women in the U.S. is heart disease, followed by all cancers, among which breast cancer ranks as the second-most deadly. About 40,450 women are expected to die from breast cancer in the U.S this year, according to breastcancer.org—that's around 1 in 30. As many as 1 in 3 women die each year from cardiovascular disease or stroke—more than from all cancers combined.

The misperception can be especially prevalent among African American women, Kapp adds. Because they are more likely than Caucasian women to die from breast cancer, public health campaigns have very actively targeted that group to eliminate the disparity. “But the messaging may have overshadowed a balanced perception of risks for other diseases,” she says. African Americans are also at higher risk of heart disease.

Heart disease—the number one killer of all Americans, female and male—has its own awareness campaign, of course. February is Heart Health Month, when women are encouraged to wear red. Celebrities and brands join in to sound the call, but it’s safe to say that pink has better recognition.

While breast cancer awareness is, of course, vitally important, the perception of lower risk for heart disease could lead many women to see their hearts as less in need of attention.

Barnett says that could lead to lower participation in screenings that are crucial for keeping your heart strong, like checking if you have high blood pressure, elevated cholesterol, and diabetes.

"A lot of people expect to see physical symptoms of heart disease but that is not always the case,” he says. “Even if you are an active and seemingly healthy person, you need to be talking with your primary care doctor about heart health.”

Of course, it’s not a question of heart vs. breast—and there's a lot of common ground between the two causes.

In terms of how to gain more awareness for our tickers, Kapp would like to see both breast cancer and heart health get equal billing when it comes to campaigns. And rather than having them compete against each other for attention in the national dialog, Kapp would prefer the “stronger together” approach.

“We would love to see pink and red join forces for combined messaging,” she says. She notes that many of the things advocated for in each campaign—upping your physical activity, maintaining a healthy body weight, eating healthy foods, and other common-sense strategies—all work well to ward off breast cancer and keep your heart happy.

“Encouraging healthy lifestyle changes can contribute to both heart and breast health,” she says, “so you’tre addressing both at the same time.”
Can a little exercise control weight after menopause?

Generated from News Bureau press release: Minimal Exercise Can Prevent Disease, Weight Gain in Menopausal Women

Minimal exercise may be all it takes for postmenopausal women to better regulate insulin, maintain metabolic function, and help prevent significant weight gain, a new study suggests.

The findings, from research with rats, indicate that women can take a proactive approach and may not need to increase their physical activity dramatically to see significant benefits from exercise.

“Diseases and weight gain associated with metabolic dysfunction skyrocket after menopause,” says Vicki Vieira-Potter, assistant professor of nutrition and exercise physiology at the University of Missouri. “The intent of this research was to determine what role exercise plays in protecting women, specifically less-active women, metabolically as they go through menopause.”

For the study, published in Medicine and Science in Sports and Exercise, researchers compared how exercise training maintained metabolic function in sedentary rats versus highly active rats.

The rats had access to a running wheel, which they could use as much or as little as they wanted. The sedentary rats only ran 1/5th of the distance as the
highly active rats did; yet, the limited physical activity still maintained their metabolic function and normalized insulin levels. Moreover, the previously sedentary rats saw a 50-percent reduction in their fat tissue as a result of that small amount of exercise.

“These findings suggest that any physical activity, even just a small amount, can do wonders in terms of maintaining metabolic function,” Vieira-Potter says. “This is significant for postmenopausal women as they deal with weight gain associated with menopause as well as the increased risk for disease.”

Sedentary women can be proactive as they enter menopause by doing a variety of simple things:

- Go on regular walks with friends
- Take the stairs rather than the elevator
- Join beginners’ fitness programs
- Monitor physical activity through use of fitness trackers

Additional researchers from the University of Missouri, the University of Michigan, and the University of Kansas are coauthors of the work.

University of Missouri discussion to consider impact of last year's protests

Marc Lamont Hill, an author and academic who praised the Concerned Student 1950 protesters as the vanguard of a movement to combat racism and social injustice, will lead a campus discussion Friday to review the long-term impact of those protests.

Hill is a distinguished professor of African American Studies at Morehouse College in Atlanta. He is the host of BET News and VH1 Live and a political contributor for CNN. His latest book is “Nobody: Casualties of America’s War on the Vulnerable, from Ferguson to Flint and Beyond,”
which he said in a July interview seeks to show the historical context of violence and oppression against blacks, the poor, gays, immigrants and others.

The event with Hill, “Race & Social Justice: #OneYearLater,” begins at 5 p.m. Friday in the Conservation Auditorium of the Anheuser-Busch Natural Resources Building with performances by the Legion of Black Collegians Gospel Choir and others. A panel discussion begins at 6 p.m. and is scheduled to last 90 minutes and will include questions from the audience, Department of Black Studies Chairwoman Stephanie Shonekan said.

Three days after the Concerned Student 1950 protests resulted in the resignation of then-University of Missouri President Tim Wolfe and actions by the Board of Curators to meet student demands, Hill said he “couldn’t be prouder of those students” in a commentary on BET.

“When young people took to the streets of Ferguson, Missouri, a year ago, it was dismissed by some people as a passing moment,” Hill said. “What we have learned from the University of Missouri is that we are actually in the midst of a full-fledged movement. All around the country a new generation of young people is building organized responses to social injustice and it’s working.”

Hill’s appearance Friday is sponsored by the chancellor’s and provost’s offices, the Division of Inclusion, Diversity & Equity, the Department of Black Studies, the Black Faculty and Staff Organization, the Black Collective & Allies and Mizzou Advantage.

Hill can put the events at MU into a national perspective, Shonekan said. It is organized as a discussion, with faculty from journalism, history and education taking part as well as a student and community member on the panel, to consider what the protests accomplished.

Hill was correct when he said the protests represent a movement that extends beyond Missouri, Shonekan said.

“I have such high regard for the students who raised this issue last year and did the work,” she said. “We know for a fact that so many students on other campuses were inspired by our students, and we are excited that the University of Missouri stands as a model for listening to students.”

The title of his latest book, Hill told Huffington Post in July, came from a conversation he had while visiting Ferguson after the death of Michael Brown, a black teenager shot by a white police officer. After he was shot, Brown’s body remained where he fell for four hours.

“I talked to people on the ground about it and one person said, this girl Keisha, she said to me, ‘They just left him there like he ain’t belong to nobody.’ And that idea of not belonging to nobody resonated with me,” Hill said.
What Enrollment Declines Mean for University of Missouri

Watch the story: http://mms.tveys.com/PlaybackPortal.aspx?SavedEditID=89f08abf-5478-4d44-8a61-24818dfec0b3

MU faculty and staff work to develop student success strategies and programs

Student Success Technology Coordinator Tina Balser: "We’re doing this because we want to help,"

MU faculty and staff have created a number of programs and strategies geared towards helping students be successful during their time at the university.

Jim Spain, the MU Vice Provost for Undergraduate Studies, said MU agrees to a set of parameters that outline student success. These include, but are not limited to, graduation rates, advising success and freshman retention rate.

“Some metrics are percentages, but some are based on performance, experience and enrichment,” Spain said.

MU has invested in a number of programs and strategies in order to create a successful environment.

According to previous Maneater reporting, the Commission on Student Success was created to improve graduation and retention rates.
Since the conception of the commission in 2011, it has also established programs such as MU Connect, which is geared toward centralizing students’ success networks. This includes information on academic advisors, financial advisors and schools and programs.

“[MU Connect is] a 24/7 place for students to schedule meetings and reach out to people for help,” Student Success Technology Coordinator Tina Balser said.

MU Connect allows for faculty and staff to raise flags if they are concerned about a student’s performance, whether it is academically, financially or based on class attendance. The flag will notify others in the student’s success network, which includes academic advisors, financial advisors, residence hall coordinators and others, depending on the student.

Balser said that the goal of MU Connect is to provide ease of access to people and campus resources and alert students as early as possible when there are concerns regarding their status with the university.

Spain said that the top reason students at any university leave is because of financial reasons. Programs like MU Connect have made it easier for students to access individuals on campus who are there to help them with specific problems, as well as notify other important faculty members in the student’s success network.

Other organizations on campus also exist to help with specific problems. Students can take advantage of technologies such as MyZou, Schedule Planner, OrgSync, Canvas and Blackboard.

“We’re doing this because we want to help,” Balser said.

Spain said that another top reason students leave campus is due to a lack of interest in available programs. To combat this loss, MU works to develop new programs and to recruit students who are expected to succeed in MU’s existing programs.

“MU continues recruiting students who MU is the best choice for them,” Spain said.

The School of Health Professions announced a new Bachelor of Health Science in Public Health on Oct. 10, which expands opportunities to students interested in professions such as epidemiology, environmental health and health policy.

These changes will allow for MU to bring in more students and retain more year-to-year, as there are more options for students who are unsure of their program selections.

MU also provides programs that are more visibly related to student success such as the Student Success Center, Freshman Interest Groups, undergraduate research, the Career Center and more provided through specific schools and programs.

Spain said that student success is important to MU because creating successful students is how the university honors the trust placed in them.
“At the end of the day, it’s on the student [to take action],” Balser said. “We can raise flags, but it is up to the student on how they react.”

**MSA looks into Tiger Plan**

The Missouri Students Association plans to educate students about the Tiger Plan and meet with Campus Dining Services to discuss concerns about marketing materials for the plan.

The MSA Campus and Community Relations and Student Affairs committees held a joint meeting Tuesday to discuss the association’s response to complaints about Campus Dining Services’ Tiger Plan, including an editorial published by The Maneater last week.

The Tiger Plan is CDS’ new off-campus dining plan. Students with the Tiger Plan can shop at all Campus Dining locations, including Mizzou Markets and Student Center restaurants. The department’s website advertises that students receive a discount of “up to 63 percent off the cash price” at all locations, but students do not earn the full discount if the base cost, which they must pay to receive the discount, is taken into consideration.

With the base cost factored in, students earn a discount of about 15 percent at all-you-care-to-eat locations and actually spend more than they would by paying in cash at all other locations.

“I think we can all agree that the advertising on the Tiger Plan is misleading at best and deceptive at worst,” Senate Speaker Mark McDaniel said during the meeting.

Both MSA and RHA presidents were given marketing materials for the plan before it was released and both told The Maneater they raised concerns about the high base cost, but said the plan was already fully developed by that point.

At the joint meeting, senators came to a consensus on two main courses of action. The first was to meet with CDS to talk about problems senators saw in the plan, which includes the way it is presented to students. CCRC Chairman Hunter Windholz said he had already scheduled a meeting with CDS Director Julaine Kiehn next Friday.

“We are going to come to [Kiehn] with the perspective of concerned student, an average concerned student, the student who wasn’t able to go and do all this inner math that would’ve been needed to be done to determine the actual miniscule benefits within this Tiger Plan,” Windholz said.

During the meeting, McDaniel and other Senate leaders emphasized the importance of building relationships with administrators such as Kiehn. MSA collaborates with CDS on other projects as well, such as CCRC’s Food Truck Friday.
The second part of the plan is to prepare educational materials about the cost of the Tiger Plan to distribute through advertisements on KCOU and MUTV as well as social media. These materials would help students who had already purchased the plan to understand the most effective places to use it.

MSA also hopes to obtain information from surveys CDS has issued students to evaluate the plan, which is in its first semester and pilot stage. The cost structure of the plan could change based on the way students use it.

Until the information from the surveys becomes available, it is unclear whether students who have the Tiger Plan use it primarily at all-you-care-to-eat locations, which CDS has said is how the plan is intended to be used, or at other locations where they receive less product for the cost.

“That’s why the surveys are so important,” McDaniel said. “The short-term plan is getting students aware of what’s going on.”

The Fuss

How can professors best introduce provocative material in the classroom in an age of trigger warnings, microaggressions and tweeting? Michael Bugeja tackles the issue.

I recently moderated a First Amendment panel at Freedom Fest, a largely conservative and libertarian conclave, meeting at breakfast with two speakers, Robby Soave, associate editor of Reason.com, and Charles C. W. Cooke, editor of the National Review's website. Both were curious about political correctness on campus.

I was eager to have that discussion with two national journalists whose publications question the use of trigger warnings and microaggressions, two components of the current PC debate. I had another side to express: that the media may be focusing overmuch on incidents that seem to threaten academic freedom. I wanted to explain what the fuss is about and why professors like me provide advance notice about sensitive or politically charged content and also recognize the cumulative impact of microaggressions, or relatively minor biased words, phrases or topics.

I teach media ethics at Iowa State University. On the flight to Freedom Fest, I had been mulling over how I would introduce to my class a comment that Benjamin Franklin made in reference to whether slaves were people -- a contentious topic in the modern American classroom.
I had been reading *The Quartet: Orchestrating the Second American Revolution* (1783-1789) by Pulitzer Prize-winning author Joseph J. Ellis. In a section on the Continental Congress debating taxation policy, a prickly topic at the time, Ellis discloses what no delegate wanted to broach -- slavery -- the proverbial elephant in the chamber.

The debate on taxation forced the issue of slavery to the floor. Here is how Ellis describes it:

“The delegates from the Southern states insisted that slaves were property like horses and sheep, and therefore should not be counted as ‘Inhabitants.’ Franklin countered this claim with an edgy joke, observing that slaves, the last time he looked, did not behave like sheep: ‘Sheep will never make any insurrections.’”

I wanted to use this exchange to update a lecture on roots of racism. But I was stumped as to how I might introduce it with (or without) a trigger warning. Like thousands of my colleagues, I give such warning regularly because we cover herds of elephantine subjects in media ethics, including sexual assault, religious extremism and race relations. Warnings provide context, not self-censorship or class dismissal. As such, I had been concerned that the word “property” might upset students of color because microaggressions can accumulate over time to a tipping point.

There is more here than meets the anti-PC eye. The word “property” was operative in the 1857 *Dred Scott v. Sandford* decision by the U.S. Supreme Court, deemed to be one of the worst miscarriages of justice in the United States. All students of color in my classes studied this case. Scott, a slave, had lived in the free territories of Illinois and Minnesota and sought freedom on that basis, only to be informed he was not a citizen but a piece of property akin to cattle. My intent was to demonstrate that founders like Franklin foresaw the idiocy of this contention some 75 years earlier. Nonetheless, students of color cringe at the word “property” associated with their skin color and heritage. They have heard this term before. *Repeatedly.*

There is a popular video about stress noting that a cup of water weighs about eight ounces, until you hold it for an hour or longer. Then it weighs a ton. Weight doesn’t count; time does.

Explaining this to my Freedom Fest panelists, I beheld the look on their faces, from bemused to shock. *Just say it!* After all, I am a professor and students are paying tuition for the information. Why the fuss?
Let me be clear: I’m a journalism professor with deep, abiding respect for the First Amendment and academic freedom. I know the power of both, and power is at the heart of this discussion. Teachers may have a legal right to say or do something, but that doesn’t shield them from consequences or ethical ramifications.

After that First Amendment panel, the debate on political correctness arose again in the wake of a dean’s letter to freshmen at the University of Chicago stating his institution does not support trigger warnings or “intellectual safe spaces where individuals can retreat from ideas and perspectives at odds with their own.”

**Two high-profile cases last year may have inspired that letter. At the University of Kansas, a communications assistant professor, Andrea Quenette, was the target of a complaint for using the N-word to explain how her campus differed from the University of Missouri, where racial tension had flared, fueled by hunger and football strikes with viral video of a faculty member calling for “muscle” to avert media coverage of a protest. That was Melissa Click, another communications assistant professor who sparked a firestorm about “free press v. safe zones” and “free speech v. hate speech.”**

Quenette attempted to put that in context for her class, conceding that her whiteness may have color-blinded her. Her exact words are in dispute. According to an open letter, she supposedly said, “As a white woman I just never have seen the racism. … It’s not like I see ‘nigger’ spray painted on walls.”

Quenette reportedly admitted that she used the slur in context of a comparison and never intended to offend anyone. She was put on leave and later cleared of wrongdoing; ultimately, her contract was not renewed in her bid to gain tenure. (Click was fired.)

The point here is perspective about Quenette and Click (now a Gonzaga University lecturer). Click forgot the First Amendment not only permitted news media to cover protests but also allowed her and students to assemble.

Quenette purportedly injected her view that lower graduation and retention rates for African-Americans might not be due to lack of institutional support but to academic unpreparedness.

It doesn’t matter whether Quenette said that or not. I have heard it repeatedly, even on site visits in my capacity as a team member for the Accrediting Council on Education in Journalism and Mass Communications. Chances are you have heard this, too.
Imagine yourself in the classroom waxing about academic unpreparedness, perhaps in the presence of students of color, during heightened awareness of racial tension on campus. Better yet, visualize being African-American and hearing it. *Repeatedly.*

“As an African-American student, I’ve always had to assimilate to a politically correct idea of who I am,” says Devon Jefferson, one of my former ethics students. Try as he might to blend in, “my presence was often met with bewilderment or challenge.”

He has lived with *white* political correctness throughout his education.

“For instance, many parents tell their children on the eve of their first day of school, ‘Be kind, respectful and treat others as you want to be treated,’” Jefferson also says. “Many minority students’ parents give their children the same exact talk before their first day of school. But there’s so much more: ‘Don’t be loud. Don’t sing certain songs. Don’t repeat what is said at home. Don’t sag your pants. Show them how smart you are. Don’t get discouraged.’ Things like that go on and on forever.”

Microaggressions such as “You don’t act like a black person” or “Where are you from, really?” infuriate some listeners. An apt comparison is the ethnic joke, which endured into the 1980s. If you were Irish, Jewish, Polish or Italian, you didn’t label this microaggression. You told the offender to fuss off.

Now we teach in wireless classrooms. Every student carries a smartphone. Many tweet or post to Facebook opinions about remarks during lecture. Some check the facts of each statement that a professor makes to determine whether it is mere opinion (for which they are not paying tuition) or bona fide research (which they are paying to hear).

We *do* walk a technological tightrope in the wireless classroom. This is not entirely bad. Think back. Do you recall the daft claims that teachers made in high school or college and that you let go unchallenged? Perhaps you passed a snarky note to a classmate and got caught and pilloried. If only you had a smartphone then and nimble thumbs!

Social media keeps us faculty members honest during lectures. This post in Slate, “*What’s the Worst Thing a Teacher Ever Said to You?*” may jog your memory. But social media also is populated by knee-jerk imps and microblog jerks who compel some of us to validate lectures with links and exhibits.
This is why I post all of my lectures -- replete with data, videos, images and links -- on my ethics class website. I rely on the First Amendment to provide fact rather than defense.

That also explains why I had been pondering how to introduce the word “property” into a lecture that (a) tracks to Dred Scott, (b) showcases Franklin's wit and (c) documents that our founders dealt with political correctness in their forum as I do in mine. Done well, I might even inspire some students to access Records of the Continental and Confederation Congresses and the Constitutional Convention.

This approach can be dreary and imperfect. Nevertheless, the focus in class must be on pertinent concepts expressed accurately so as to engage as many students as possible who pay my salary and amass debt in the process.

It is easy to make a stink about political correctness. It is also easy to expound on it without including the perspectives of underrepresented groups. It is difficult to introduce provocative information in the tweeting classroom knowing students might take offense for lapsus linguae. Many of us are doing that effectively in higher education, mindful of our words, although you seldom hear about us in news media, including those covering higher education. Mine is one case.

So when presenting Franklin’s edgy remark about sheep and insurrection, I will provide context with screenshots and documentation. I will field comments about Franklin as a slave owner (two personal servants) and note that his newspaper ran notices about indentured workers. Over time, I will say, he became an abolitionist, proving the conscience grows upon reflection.

Consider what drives the conscientious professor. We are paid by taxpayers, students and parents. Our time-honored role to enlighten the citizenry transcends how we may feel about the tedium of lesson plans.

That is what the fuss really is all about.
When Rachel Nelson, a biochemistry major at Hamline University, became a resident assistant, in August 2014, she went through training on the federal gender-discrimination law known as Title IX. As an RA, she was told, she was a mandatory reporter, a designation given to some staff and faculty members who are obligated to report any potential Title IX violations brought to their attention. Sometimes the violation takes the form of a harassing remark or concern about another student’s relationship; often, it’s unwanted sexual contact. "It’s an interesting dynamic," Ms. Nelson said. That’s because you’re called to be "a peer and a friend" to residents, she said, but also bound to report anything possibly under the purview of Title IX, even against students’ wishes.

While resident assistants have long played mediator to roommate disputes, their place on the front lines of Title IX, the gender-equity law that is bedeviling colleges and universities, is more recent. Though enacted in 1972, the law took on extra force in the eyes of the federal government after the Education Department’s Office for Civil Rights in 2011 issued a "Dear Colleague" letter that pressed colleges to enforce Title IX in cases of sexual violence.
At the forefront of a university’s compliance is typically the Title IX coordinator. But coordinators can’t monitor an entire campus on their own, so they often rely on mandatory reporters to bring possible offenses to their attention.

And RAs are essential to that. They’re the ones who forge close relationships with residential students, said Christine Davis, associate vice chancellor for student affairs and dean of students at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte (and a deputy Title IX coordinator). Those students see them "as mentors and see them as resources that they can go to in times of distress."

That relationship, though, can sometimes prove problematic for resident assistants. Ms. Nelson, for example, befriended a resident who then confided that she had been sexually assaulted. It was hard, Ms. Nelson said, "because I had to say, ‘I have to tell someone about this,’ and to say that without her shutting down or without her disconnecting our lines of communication." As a resident assistant, Ms. Nelson would normally remind students who came to her that their conversations were not confidential, and though some would go quiet at first, they would usually open up. She would sometimes tell residents that the student staff "can’t be confidential, but we’ll be as discreet as possible."

Jim Whitaker is assistant director for staff and student programs in the residential-life office at UNC-Charlotte, and helps coordinate the training resident assistants there receive on Title IX. Part of that, he said, is to ensure that student staff members aren’t left feeling that they’re violating the trust of residents who come to them in confidence. By reporting, RAs are ensuring that students get help if they want it and are contributing to a "culture of support," he said. Though the Title IX office will kick-start its own process and often reach out to the student, that student doesn’t have to respond.

But the Title IX reports serve another purpose: helping administrators find serial offenders. Ms. Nelson said she had been trained to report any incident, even a small one, because the administrators receiving the reports have a more-informed vantage point. "It’s about us being able to use that information to piece a larger picture together of what’s happening," said Mr. Whitaker.

A New ‘Intensity’ on Title IX

Saunie Schuster, a co-founder of the Association of Title IX Administrators, conducts training for coordinators and other staff members. In that training, she said, RAs should be "funnels of information," not sieves. "Don’t try to sift and sort. Is this Title IX? Is this not Title IX?" Let the Title IX administrator do that, she said. An incident
that seems small could be a "puzzle piece" for the coordinator, demonstrating a pattern of behavior in the accused.

RAs are often prepared for their role as mandatory reporters during training sessions preceding the fall or spring semesters, adding to the litany of instructions they receive on college policies and resident care. The focus on Title IX, though, is relatively new.

Alvin Sturdivant is vice president-elect of the Association of College and University Housing Officers – International, and has held several positions in student housing and development. There’s always been training about harassment, he said, but "the intensity of the training around Title IX-related matters has definitely shifted in probably the last eight to 10 years."

RAs at the University of Colorado at Boulder go through a two-part training on discrimination, harassment, and Title IX, said Julie Volckens, an associate director in the Office of Institutional Equity and Compliance there. The training consists of an online tutorial and quiz and a two-hour in-person lecture, where participants consider hypothetical scenarios. "Do you think there’s a policy violation here? Yes? No? Maybe? OK, so let’s talk about that deeply," Ms. Volckens said.

Part of the training, she said, is getting the RAs "into the mind frame that these are the things to look for. Don’t worry if you can’t decide. Report it up. When in doubt, report it up." RAs nationwide are also typically made aware of other resources on a campus, like counseling services, and are told to direct students to them when needed.

The training helps set the stage for what RAs might encounter, said Mr. Whitaker, of UNC-Charlotte. They’re "signing up for this responsibility," he said, to be part of a web of services supporting students.

Ms. Nelson is now an assistant area coordinator at Hamline, a position akin to a senior resident assistant. After reporting her former resident’s assault, she said, things were at first "weird and distant and awkward" between her and the other student. In an effort to limit the number of people who heard about the incident, Ms. Nelson made her report directly to the institution’s Title IX coordinator. And she continued to check in with the resident to make sure she was OK.

"Once she realized that she wasn’t just telling me this information and I didn’t care about her anymore, or that I was going to completely disregard it," Ms. Nelson said, "I think it actually built a stronger relationship with her."