

Changes made in Red Book on sexual misconduct

For the past month of March, the Women's Issues Committee has provided Davidson College with an array of speakers, panels, films, discussions, and artistic events in honor of Women's Month. The members of the Women's Issues Committee in conjunction with the Gender Resource Center strive year round to increase the student body's awareness of gender programming and women's roles on this campus. Given the threatening events of the past week (screaming behind sophomore dorms, mysterious calls threatening rape), we feel a clarification and discussion of Davidson's Sexual Misconduct Policy is beneficial and imperative.

In the fall of 1997, a group of students initiated changes in the Sexual Misconduct Policy in response to increased dissatisfaction with the policy, as it applied to previous cases. Once a committee formed, they focused on clarifying the definition of sexual assault and "unwanted touching" (Red Book, 1996-7 p. 21). Unhappy with the 1997 policies that failed to explicitly define nonconsensual sexual contact and issues of ability to gain or give consent. We include an excerpt from Davidson's Sexual Misconduct Policy; please notice the ambiguous language and lack of detail regarding issues of consent and use of alcohol (a typical presence in cases of rape and assault on this campus):

Davidson College does not condone and will not tolerate Sexual Misconduct of any

kind. Sexual Misconduct includes sexual assaults (including rape) and sexual harassment. An assault is considered to be a sexual assault, regardless of whether penetration occurs, if it includes the unwanted touching of an intimate part of another person. Digital penetration is one form of sexual assault. Rape is forced sexual intercourse that is perpetrated against the will of the victim; it occurs if one person uses force or the threat of force to coerce another, regardless of the relationship existing between them. In acquaintance or "date" rape, the assailant may be a casual acquaintance, classmate, date, or significant other (Red Book, 1996-7 p. 21).

After reviewing this policy, students from the newly-formed Rape Awareness Committee researched other institutions for examples of sexual misconduct policies. After realizing the importance of mutual consent and presence of alcohol and other drugs that in-

fluence consent, those students initiated a revision of Davidson's policy. Before reading the following policy, please consider the explicit definition of consent, as well as what

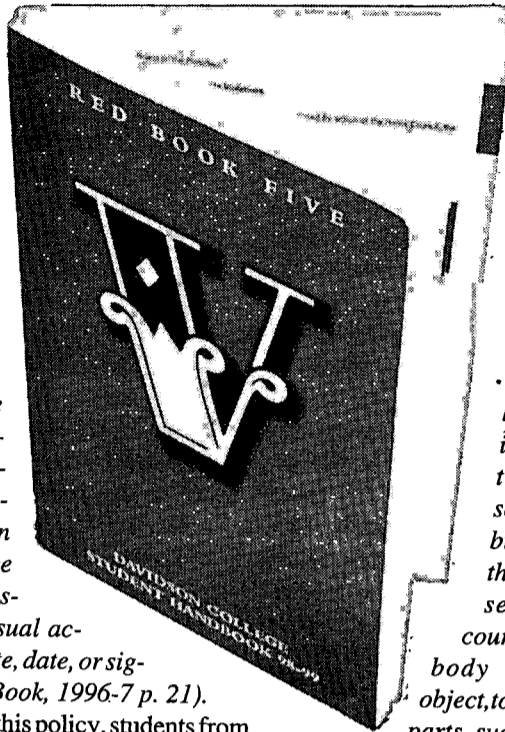
warrants non-consent, including non-communication and incapacitation

Section VI: Sexual Misconduct.

Definition. Sexual misconduct is any non-consensual conduct of a sexual nature. "Sexual Misconduct" encompasses a broad range of behavior, from inappropriate touching to criminal sexual assault. It includes but is not limited to any of the following, if non-consensual: sexual intercourse, penetration of any body opening with any object, touching of intimate body parts such as genitalia, groin, breast, buttocks or mouth or any clothing covering them, touching a person with one's own intimate body parts, or compelling another to touch one's intimate body parts. "Non-consensual" means without ei-

ther explicit verbal consent or overt action clearly expressing consent. Such signals of consent must be mutual and ongoing. If at any time during a sexual interaction any confusion or ambiguity should arise on the issue of consent, it is incumbent upon each individual involved in the activity to stop and clarify the other's willingness to continue. Non-communication constitutes a lack of consent. A verbal "no," even if it may sound indecisive or insincere, constitutes a lack of consent. Incapacitation likewise constitutes a lack of consent. Examples of incapacitation include but are not limited to the following: persons who are intoxicated, passed out, asleep, threatened, or coerced. Use of alcohol or drugs shall not diminish one's responsibility to obtain consent (Red Book online 1999-2000, Code of Responsibility Section VI).

Despite the new policy's focus on obtaining "mutual and ongoing" consent, the instances of sexual misconduct (including date rape) continue to occur in violation of the Code of Responsibility. Just as the statistics of alcohol violations misrepresent the actual amount of underage drinkers at Davidson, so do the sexual misconduct statistics inaccurately reflect the volume of annual sexual crimes that occur here. The number of officially reported and/or prosecuted rapes does not reflect the number of sexual misconduct crimes that are unreported, reported anonymously, or not prosecuted. This paramount distinction emphasizes the difference between Davidson's "serene" appearance and attitude versus the unacknowledged reality of sexual assault at this institution.



The state of race relations at Davidson

A "pre" orientation. Why do the minority students have an orientation before the rest of the freshmen arrive?

A house on the court. Why do the African-American students have their own house on Patterson Court?

A table in the Commons. Why do the African-American students sit together in Vail Commons?

Some Davidson students contemplate these types of topics and ensuing questions in the privacy and safety of quaint dorm rooms in the company of their roommates. Are the right questions being asked or, more importantly, are questions being asked at all? Some students don't take the time to ponder the controversial topic of race relations at all even though it affects us as a society.

Dane Erickson, Student Government Association President, believes that "Davidson is a microcosm of our society" in which we can tackle problems that are present in today's society.

I agree with Erickson that we have been given a unique opportunity to "improve race relations in a drastic way because we all live in a small, protected environment with the sole purpose of learning from books and professors, but also from each other."

However, the knowledge that we gain from personal interaction with other people will possibly be more beneficial in the real world than some of our academic knowledge. For instance, I might be hired to manage a large group of people at an international business in a large city like New York City. I will probably find that the people I manage come from completely different social, economic, and racial backgrounds. How will I handle this situation?

How would you handle this situation if you have not had any previous interaction with people unlike you?

Dane proposes two ways to gain this real world knowledge that is so vital to one's success. The first way is by "increasing awareness" through programs, forums, and lectures. The second is through "Equal-Status Contact", which he explained it as when "people of equal status but of different ethnic backgrounds interact in normal situations and learn from each other." These are pertinent ideas to carry out. However, how are we

going to be successful in improving race relations on this campus?

"For different people to learn from each other and break down stereotypes, they need to interact with each other. In many ways, students at Davidson are on an equal playing field and only need to interact," Erickson said.

Interaction needs to take place.

I support Erickson in his attempts to improve the relations and awareness here on campus. However, does Dane have the full support of Davidson College?

When I tried to get a response from several students concerning the BSC and race relations on this campus, I received surprisingly few responses. However, I thought about why I hadn't received many responses and was no longer surprised when I realized the cause.

There is a general lack of interest in improving race relations and a lack of concern for the future of race relations on this campus and out in the real world, which worries me. We have become accustomed to our safety zones where we can easily be passive about issues such as race relations and claim that they are not our problems. Yet, when faced with a sight such as the Confederate flag still flying at the state capital of South Carolina, it is our responsibility to react to this insensitivity toward the suffering endured by African-Americans.

Has our sense of justice and equality completely disappeared?

Changing the current state of race relations rests on the shoulders of each individual on this campus. Take the initiative to step outside of your comfort zone and reach out to someone who you perceive as completely different from you. You might just discover that you have more similarities than differences. Furthermore, those remaining differences will enrich your knowledge of the world and human nature.

What do you have to lose?
Actually, the right question to ask is:
what do I have to gain?
A new friendship.

Jenny Joslin '01

Jenny Hapgood '01
and Stephanie Kohler '01

WHAT WOULD YOUR FATHER SAY IF HE FOUND OUT YOU WERE A HEALTH ADVISOR?

Georgia Ringle, Health Educator, is now accepting applications to fill four Health Advisor positions for the academic year '99 - '00.

If you have an interest in being a peer educator, designing and putting on hall programs, promoting awareness activities or have a special talent or experience, please apply.

Four Health Advisors will be selected to assist and work with the Health Educator and other students in a variety of areas. Health Advisors will be paid a stipend at the end of each semester.

To pick up an application, come by the Student Health Service. April 14, 2000, is the last day to apply.

Questions? Call Georgia Ringle at x2902.

