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# And So the Pendulum Swings: Senior Student Affairs Officers Balancing Implementation of Federal Campus Safety Mandates at Small Colleges

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AND SO THE PENDULUM SWINGS: SENIOR STUDENT AFFAIRS OFFICERS  
BALANCING IMPLEMENTATION OF FEDERAL CAMPUS SAFETY MANDATES  
AT SMALL COLLEGES

**BY**

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DISSERTATION

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree of

**Doctorate of Education**

**Educational Leadership**

The University of New Mexico

Albuquerque, New Mexico

**July, 2017**

## DEDICATION

This entire journey and dissertation is dedicated to my baby love, Alma Vedilia. Always know that you can do anything you set your heart, mind, and soul to my precious daughter. *I love you to the back of the moon.*

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I would like to thank others who have completed this journey before me who have shown me that, I too, can achieve this great accomplishment. You have shared with me the sense of possibility, the sense of belonging, served as mentors, and inspired me to challenge myself. Chanelle, my dear amiga, as you entered into and joined me on this educational journey, you have reminded me of the value of Chicana sisterhood. Thank you for always being there and simply getting me. To the rest of my classmates, thank you for allowing me to be me and embracing all that entails. I will always remember and cherish our fun weekends and months of July. Thomasinia, Jessica, and Denise thank you amigas for having supported, encouraged, and inspired me. You are all dynamic women whom I admire and hold in high regards.

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**Abstract**

Issues of campus safety are being addressed on campuses nationwide because of the requirements set forth by the Clery Act, Title IX, and the Campus Sexual Assault Violence Elimination Act. The purpose of this qualitative study was to deeply understand experiences of senior student affairs officers (SSAO) at small colleges and universities who have implemented federal campus safety mandates. Their experiences, offered insight into how SSAOs used these experiences to inform their own professional growth, and contribute to the student affairs profession. I utilized a qualitative phenomenological approach and conducted multiple semi-structured interviews with three SSAOs at small colleges and universities. I also conducted document analysis of organizational charts, institutional policies, websites, and program information. The research philosophy underlying my research included elements from both feminist and constructivist paradigms.

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## Chapter 1

So the pendulum swings, and I'm not against the pendulum swinging because sometimes it does swing too far one way or the other...In fact the balance for me is in my role of making sure the students are educated and the students understand process and effective ways to report and all about the students is number one because that definitely and clearly is my job; that's a huge piece.

–Vice President Jones

### Overview of Topic

Incoming college students and their parents are faced with many concerns as they enroll in higher education. Concerns may range from paying tuition, to securing housing as well as how the student will manage their time, and ultimately to how the student will achieve success. There is also concern for personal safety, though this is rarely expressed overtly. Parents especially want to know their child is safe at their chosen higher education institution. New college students are usually focused on starting their journey and do not always think about campus safety. However, due to recent federal legislation, leaders at colleges and universities are now expected to make campus safety an institutional priority. Furthermore, leaders have obligations to students to ensure that addressing campus safety is pursued through the use of the ethics of relationships (Gilligan, 1982; Noddings, 1984) and the ethics of caring (Noddings, 1984). This type of work for senior student affairs leaders is like a pendulum swinging constantly between different needs; responding to obligations of addressing campus safety, working within institutional limitations and demands, external pressures from constituents, and serving and caring for students as a top priority.

There are many different types of crime happening on college and university campuses nationwide. The types of violent offenses that will be explored in this study are

sexual violence including sexual assault, rape, and sexual harassment, as well as domestic violence, dating violence, and stalking. It is estimated that one in five women, one in twenty men, and one in four transgendered students experience sexual violence while in college (Krebs, Lindquist, Warner, Fisher, & Martin, 2007; see also Cantor, Fisher, Chibnall, Townsend, Lee, Bruce, & Thomas, 2015; DiJulio, Norton, Craighill, Clement, & Brodie, 2015). The prevalence of sexual assault on U.S. campuses varies widely by type, “unwanted sexual contact and sexual coercion appear to be most prevalent, followed by incapacitated rape and attempted or completed forcible rape (Fedina, Holmes, and Backes 2016, p.1).”

Another area of concern related to campus safety is domestic and dating violence. According to the National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey administered by the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (2010) one in four women and one in seven men have been the victims of severe physical violence by an intimate partner, and one in nine women and one in nineteen men have been stalked during their lifetime. While there are statistics about the victimization of college-aged women around domestic violence and dating violence, there are limited college statistics (United States Center for Disease Control and Prevention, 2010). This is in large part because campuses were not required to annually report these types of offenses until the passage of the Campus SaVE Act in 2013 (Clery Center, 2016).

### **Relevant Policy Affecting Changes for College Campuses**

Throughout the past two and a half decades Congress passed federal legislation with the intent of requiring colleges and universities to address various campus safety concerns. This legislation includes the Jeanne Clery Campus Safety and Security Act

(Clery Act, P.L. 101-542) passed in 1990 and more recently the Campus Sexual Assault Violence Elimination (SaVE) Act through the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) Reauthorization in 2013 (Violence Against Women Act, P.L. 113-4). The Campus SaVE Act expanded requirements of colleges and universities regarding issues of campus safety and security, with specific focus on sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence, and stalking. The United States Department of Education Office of Civil Rights *Dear Colleague Letter* of 2011 dictated how institutions of higher education respond specifically to sexual violence, including sexual harassment and other sex offenses, under Title IX of the Higher Education Act of 1972 (Title IX, P.L. 92-318). Prior to the *Dear Colleague Letter* of 2011, Title IX was thought to only apply to sexual harassment, but additional guidance clarified that it in fact includes sexual assault and rape.

The high prevalence rates of campus violence and the impending federal mandates on institutions of higher education, has left campus administrators grappling with how to handle compliance requirements such as improved reporting options and services, education to the campus community, enhanced response methods, and proactive comprehensive policies. There are many constituent groups that must be taken into consideration when identifying an approach to address campus safety issues including students, parents, the federal government, alumni, donors, faculty, and staff. First and foremost, there are survivors of campus violence whose experiences are the catalyst for why addressing campus violence is critical. Current and prospective students' safety is of great importance, as well. There are also parents who are concerned with how institutions of higher education are addressing this issue where their child attends school. The federal government is a huge stakeholder and the impetus for the phenomena that colleges and



universities have experienced. Having recognized that campus violence is a major issue that has historically not been addressed universally by all institutions, Congress in collaboration with the United States Department of Education passed legislation and identified mechanisms that would require all institutions of higher education to address this epidemic systematically. Added pressure came from President Obama and Vice-President Biden through the *White House Task Force to Protect Students from Sexual Assault* (The White House, 2014). Alumni and donors are also vested constituent groups. It is likely that alumni want to know that their alma maters are addressing these issues and donors want to donate to institutions with a positive reputation. Another stakeholder group is the campus community. These are individuals, staff, faculty, and administrators, who are trained on how to appropriately respond to these issues and provide education to the campus. However, the individuals with oversight responsibility at colleges and universities to tackle this issue are senior student affairs officers (SSAOs). The SSAOs balance ethical responsibilities of addressing and meeting survivors' needs, ensuring the safety of students, maintaining compliance requirements, attending to the reputation of the institution, and ensuring the training of professionals and paraprofessionals to appropriately respond and address these issues. This equates to a tremendous amount of pressure placed on SSAOs.

### **The Role of Senior Student Affairs Officers at Colleges and Universities**

It is helpful to deeply understand how student affairs evolved through the years. There are many different roles that student affairs professionals have historically taken on at institutions. Barr et al. (2014) categorizes the roles to include: (a) adviser, liaison, advocate (b) counselor, assessor, conduct officer (c) service provider, coordinator of

programs and (d) crisis manager, institutional preserver. Student affairs often encompasses all or many non-academic services for students including: residence life, counseling, co-curricular activity and learning, crisis response, etc. Historically, student affairs professionals, specifically deans of students, often spoke on behalf of the student body, serving as a liaison between students and the administration and as an advocate voicing students' concerns. They were chosen to be in this position because they were well respected and trusted by students (p. 165), but currently this is not a primary factor when selecting a senior student affairs officer. An SSAO can either be a dean of students or vice-president for student affairs. Student affairs professionals then transitioned into being more focused on counseling and guiding students to make good academic and life decisions. There is more of a focus on and a sole responsibility for student discipline. This is in large part due to *in loco parentis* in which institutions of higher education serve "in the place of parents (Donovan and McKelfresh, 2008, p. 387)." "Historical events and societal attitudes influence the relationship between higher education institutions, students, and their families...The role shifted through history, reflecting a variety of relationships between institutions, students, and their families (pp. 387-388)." The diversity of students enrolled at colleges and universities fluctuates based on many factors including culture, age, citizenship status, gender, religious beliefs, military service, socio-economic status, etc. The varying types of students influenced the role of student affairs professionals because student needs differ depending on the students' background and expectations of the institution. This includes but is not limited to financial assistance, housing, child care, transportation, and support programs for specific groups of students. This provides focus on coordinating all of the services necessary to

support students (p. 166-167). Recent social issues such as the Black Lives Matter movement has a great impact on how the role of student affairs professionals within institutions of higher education has changed. During the Civil Rights Movement, the Vietnam War, and other times of protest and turmoil student affairs professionals handle crisis and ensure that students are safe. This level of responsibility brings with it more respect from administration and parents (p. 167-168) and in many ways greater complexity in their roles.

Senior student affairs officers demonstrate fluidity in their ability to adjust to situations and instances as they arise, and therefore, student affairs professionals are now, more than ever, reframed and viewed as institutional leaders, entrepreneurs, and change agents. They balance all the characteristics presented in these roles, and need to be strong leaders called on by presidents and chancellors to handle difficult and complicated issues including the implementation of federal campus safety mandates. “The best student affairs professionals have always adapted...to the needs of their institutions, the needs and characteristics of their students, the culture of the communities where they are located, the priorities of their presidents, and their own values and beliefs (p. 169).” The ability of SSAOs to adjust to an ever changing environment is critical in their efforts to implement federal campus safety mandates.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Federal campus safety legislation and guidance, mandates institutions of higher education who receive Title IV funding, federal financial aid, to provide a broad range of programming and develop policies that inform and support current and prospective students and employees around issues of violence. Campuses across the country were

expected to implement these as unfunded mandates. There was an expectation that institutions of higher education take a comprehensive approach to addressing campus safety. This included clear policies and procedures, accessible services, more and in-depth education to the campus community about campus safety, and a standard by which institutions should aspire. All institutions of higher education were expected to make a good faith effort at compliance in 2014 and were expected to be in full compliance by 2015. The implementation of both the older and newer mandates were expected without any additional funding. Although resources should be allocated and dedicated to ensure campus safety needs are met, it is challenging for some institutions to identify additional funds in difficult financial times. Furthermore, many student affairs professionals are trying to determine what the best approach to address compliance is, with the reality that there could be barriers. Student affairs professionals are not traditionally provided with training and guidance on how to approach compliance with federal campus safety mandates. This study helped to understand and learn about the experiences of senior student affairs officers implementing these requirements and how they made meaning of their experiences.

### **Purpose of the Study and Research Question**

My intention with this study was to explore how senior student affairs officers (SSAO) at institutions of higher education across the country have complied with these requirements and what effects, if any, have occurred on their campuses and in their professional practice from this compliance. Specific attention is paid to the experiences of SSAOs through processes of implementation and response. This study will assist higher education administrators to gain insight into how unfunded federal mandates

affected senior student affairs officials. This study is important to practitioners in higher education because all colleges and universities are required to comply with unfunded federal safety mandates and there are personnel at each of the institutions tasked with this responsibility. Therefore, the research question for my study was:

**What meaning do senior student affairs officers at small colleges and universities make of their experiences as they respond to federal campus safety mandates and what are implications for practice?**

### **Definition of Terms**

*Institution of Higher Education (IHE)*. Postsecondary institutions including colleges, universities, community colleges, graduate and professional schools, and trade schools – that receive federal financial assistance (Title IV funds).

*Small College or University*. Institutions of higher education that have an enrollment of less than 5,000 students. This criteria is outlined by the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA).

*Senior Student Affairs Officer (SSAO)*. The individual holding the highest ranking student affairs position on a campus. At some institutions this is referred to as the chief student affairs officer.

### **Assumptions**

Overall, I as researcher assumed that senior student affairs officers are the individual responsible for addressing and ensuring compliance at their institution. I also assumed that there is an effect on institutions of higher education and SSAOs, both positive and negative, from increased federal campus safety mandates. I assumed all participants were truthful and forthcoming in their interviews.

**Limitations**

As a senior student affairs officer working at a small university, I as researcher hold knowledge regarding the implementation and effects of federal campus safety mandates. Although the voices of participants were prominent in the data collected, the interpretation of the findings was influenced by the lens through which I viewed the data. I as researcher practiced reflexivity throughout the study, bracketing out and setting aside my own experiences to gain fresh perspective and minimize potential bias (Moustakas, 1994; Creswell, 2013). Another limitation was that participant interviews were conducted via the telephone. This allowed me, the researcher, to conduct research on a national scope while maintaining full time employment on one campus.

**Delimitations**

A delimitation of this study was the population interviewed. This study did not take into account experiences of senior student affairs officers in larger institutions of higher education. All of the institutions of higher education in this study were institutions that receive Title IV federal funding and therefore are required to comply with federal campus safety mandates. Participation in federal campus safety mandates is not optional, but rather mandatory when receiving federal financial assistance. The participants were SSAOs working in a small college or university at the time of this study. Due to the narrow scope of the participants, the generalizability of this study was limited.

**Significance of the Study**

With this research I endeavored to deeply understand the effects of federal campus safety mandates on senior student affairs officers and how they navigated all the requirements and expectations set forth. Specific attention was placed on how their

experiences informed their practice. From this research I described the experiences of SSAOs as they worked to address these requirements. Despite the immense amount of public attention about campus violence via the media and social media on a weekly basis and the pressure for compliance, this population of SSAOs and their experiences has been understudied. Yet because of their executive level and types of leadership roles on campuses, their leadership in the area of safety can have a tremendous impact on the overall reputation and functioning of an institution as well as on the safety and well-being of students. Understanding the experiences of SSAOs provides insights and implications for practitioners in the field.

## Chapter 2

### Literature Review

I begin this literature review with an overview of the historical and political context that informed current federal campus safety legislation, as well as an explanation of the requirements and mandates of each of the three federal campus safety policies, the Clery Act, Title IX, and the Campus Sexual Assault Violence Elimination Act (SaVE). Provided also is an overview of the heightened attention to campuses addressing these issues through the media, mainstream outlets, as well as political agendas. A survey of prescribed recommendations for addressing these unfunded federal mandates is next, with a particular focus on institutional response and accountability. Finally, individual considerations of SSAOs were evaluated including ethical obligations, crisis management, and risk management. A focus on individual SSAOs was significant because their role on campus can have a tremendous impact on the institution as a whole, but most importantly on students' well-being and safety.

### Historical Overview of Federal Campus Safety Policies

There is a long historical and political context that shapes modern-day safety and security policies on college campuses in the United States, which is evident by the many federal policies enacted to address these issues. Provided below is a brief timeline (see also Table 1) that outlines how federal policy and suggested recommendations influence and inform how current university administrators responded to and handled such issues at their institutions.

**Clery Act.** Campus safety and security came to the forefront in the United States in 1990 when the Crime Awareness and Campus Security Act was passed by Congress.



Soon thereafter it was changed to the Jeanne Clery Act. It was named for a Lehigh University student named Jeanne Clery who was sexually assaulted and murdered in her campus residence hall. Clery's parents were the driving force behind the adoption of this legislation. The overall intent of the Clery Act in its initial form was to require colleges and universities to disclose their security policies, keep a public crime log, publish an annual crime report, and issue timely warnings to campuses when a crime that poses an immediate threat to the safety of the campus is evident (Clery Center for Security on Campus, 2014). There were many additional amendments to the Clery Act throughout the years that shaped current campus safety requirements. The Campus Sexual Assault Victims Bill of Rights and the Buckley Amendment of 1992 brought focused attention to crimes such as rape and sexual assault to the forefront on college campuses. They also recognized the rights that must be afforded to survivors. The Buckley Amendment clarified that records kept by campus police or security for law enforcement purposes are not considered confidential educational records and thereby are not protected by the Family Educational Rights to Privacy Act (FERPA) (Clery Center for Security on Campus, 2014). This was helpful for law enforcement to protect the integrity of criminal investigations. The Campus Courts Disclosure Provision in 1998 changed the protection of accused students' educational records in the outcomes of student discipline cases. The final results of student discipline cases can be released if the accused student is found to have violated an institution's student code of conduct, specifically violations that include crimes or sex offenses. However, complainants' information must be kept confidential and is protected under FERPA as an educational record (Clery Center for Security on Campus, 2014). Another amendment to the Clery Act included the Jeanne Clery

Disclosure of Campus Security Policy and Campus Crime Statistics Act of 1998, which expanded the geographical area for which crime statistics should be reported including those that physically happen on university property, for geographic areas adjacent to university property, on any property that is controlled by a college or university, or anywhere in which a college or university sponsored activity is taking place. These must now be reported in the institution's crime statistics and disclosed in the annual security report (Clery Center for Security on Campus, 2014). The Campus Sex Crimes Prevention Act of 2000 requires institutions to collect, disseminate, and publish information about convicted sex offenders who are either enrolled in or are employed at the college or university and also requires institutions to ask questions about sex offenses on admissions applications and are required to do the same during all employment application processes for both professionals and student positions (Clery Center for Security on Campus, 2014). The Higher Education Opportunity Act of 2008 amended Clery by adding provisions that require emergency response and notification to campuses, expanded the crime statistics that are reported to include hate crimes, larceny, theft, simple assault, intimidation, and vandalism, established protections for those making reports, "whistleblowers," and made it mandatory for the United States Department of Education to report annually to Congress on Clery Act compliance (Clery Center for Security on Campus, 2014). A timeline of the amendments to the Clery Act is provided in Table 1.

Table 1

*Clery Act Timeline*

Year	Title	Provision
1990	Student Right-To-Know and Campus Security Act; Crime Awareness and Campus Security Act of 1990, Title II of Public Law: 101-542 (S. 580)	Required institutions of higher education participating in federal student aid programs to disclose 3 years of campus crime statistics and security policies.
1991	Higher Education Technical Amendments of 1991; Section 10, Public Law: 102-26 (H.R. 1285)	Changed initial collection of statistics from September 1, 1991 to August 1, 1991 and changed crime statistics reporting period from school year to calendar year.
1992	Higher Education Amendments of 1992; Section 486 (c) of Public Law: 102-325 (S. 1150)	Broadened sexual assault reporting and added required sexual assault policy statements. Specified effective dates of initial collection and dissemination requirements.
1998	Higher Education Amendments of 1998; Jeanne Clery Disclosure of Campus Security Policy and Campus Crime Statistics Act, Section 486 (e) of Public Law: 105-244 (H.R. 6)	Expanded crime categories that must be reported, added geographical breakdown, expanded definition of campus, expanded reporting of hate-crimes, added public crime log, and named law after Jeanne Clery.
2000	Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act of 2000; Campus Sex Crimes Prevention Act; Section 1601 of Public Law: 106-386 (H.R. 3244)	Added notice of where public sex offender registration information about offenders on campus may be obtained.
2008	Higher Education Opportunity Act; Public Law 110-315	Required statement of emergency response and evacuation procedures in annual security report and emergency notifications on campus, expanded hate crime statistics reported and statement of policy on law enforcement authority of campus personnel, established safeguards for “whistleblowers.”

Additional literature specific to the Clery Act, provided further historical insight into the perspectives of individuals directly involved in the implementation of the act, including campus law enforcement, judicial affairs, senior student affairs officers (SSAOs), parents, residence hall staff, and victim advocates. A series of research studies were conducted primarily by Janosik (2003, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007 & 2009) and some colleagues with these different groups as their participants. This study suggests that many campus law enforcement professionals (Janosik & Gregory, 2003, pp. 763-778) and

advocates (Janosik & Plummer, 2005, pp.116-129) hold a perception that the Clery Act does not do very much to decrease campus crime. The majority of senior student affairs officers believe that the Clery Act does support campus crime reporting. At four-year institutions, the majority of SSAOs were aware of the Clery Act, while only a small percentage at two year institutions were aware (Janosik & Gregory, 2009, pp. 208-226).

Individuals responsible for campus discipline (Gregory & Janosik, 2003, pp. 763-777) and advocates (Janosik & Plummer, 2005, pp.116-129) found the benefits of the Clery Act included improved relationships amongst campus stakeholders. Campus housing administrators (Gregory & Janosik, 2006, p. 55) and advocates (Janosik & Plummer, 2005, pp.116-129) were not clear as to how the Clery Act influenced students' behavior. While there could be a lack of understanding about crime reported and students' choice of college, parents' understanding of the Clery Act did not play a role in school choice, nor did students (Janosik, 2004, pp. 43-55). This series of studies provided a direct link to key stakeholders and offered perspective on what was traditionally known as the most common campus safety policy, the Clery Act. However, there are more recent federal campus safety policies that informed compliance at institutions of higher education. Another piece of federal legislation, in addition to the Clery Act that impacts safety on the campuses of colleges and universities is Title IX.

**Title IX of the Higher Education Act of 1972.** Title IX is a long-standing law that received more attention in the past five years. Title IX is most commonly known to support gender equity in schools specific to women's sports. However, the overall purpose of Title IX is gender equity in schools. To make a connection more clear between safety and Title IX, the United States Department of Education Office of Civil

Rights issued the 2011 *Dear Colleague Letter* that served the purpose of reminding institutions that the

...requirements of Title IX cover sexual violence and to remind schools of their responsibilities to take immediate and effective steps to respond to sexual violence in accordance with the requirements of Title IX...A number of acts fall into the category of sexual violence, including rape, sexual assault, sexual battery, and sexual coercion (United States Department of Education Office of Civil Rights, April 2011).

When the *Dear Colleague Letter* of 2011 was released, instances of campus sexual violence were on the radar of institutions nationwide more than ever before. This was the first time that official communication from the United States Department of Education Office of Civil Rights was provided to institutions of higher education clarifying that sexual violence was a form of gender discrimination covered under Title IX. Institutions of higher education were concerned they would lose Title IV funding, federal financial aid. Students at many colleges and universities across the United States, depend on federal financial assistance to cover the cost of attending school. More attention to Title IX came about when the U.S. Department of Education Office of Civil Rights released a list of institutions of higher education who were under investigation for Title IX complaints on May 1, 2014 with the intention of “increased transparency...and to spur community dialogue about this important issue” (United States Department of Education Office of Civil Rights, 2014). This heightened attention to campus sexual violence occurred likely because of both the reauthorization of the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) of 2013 that brought about the Campus SaVE Act and former President Obama’s publicly expressed commitment to address campus sexual assault. Currently no action has been taken by the Trump administration to deregulate Title IX as it relates to campus safety, but there has been speculation that suggest changes to the

federal government's oversight of campus safety including "scaling back the reach of the Office of Civil Rights" (Richmond, 2017, "Campus Climate," para. 10) and a lack of commitment from United States Department of Education Secretary Betsy DeVos during her senate confirmation hearing to continue enforcing Title IX as has been previously done (Luther, 2017, para. 4).

**Campus Sexual Assault Violence Elimination Act.** The Clery Act and Title IX were amended through the reauthorization of the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) of 2013 in which the Campus Sexual Violence Elimination (SaVE) Act was enacted that further expanded requirements of colleges and universities vis-a-vis issues of safety and security on campuses. The Campus SaVE Act expanded the types of crime statistics that are disclosed in the annual security report. Institutions are now required to include incidences of domestic violence, dating violence, and stalking in addition to sex offenses which were previously required. The Campus SaVE Act mandates that colleges and universities provide extensive primary prevention and awareness education along with required training to all students and staff (Campus Sexual Assault Violence Elimination Act, 2016). There are specific topics that must be covered in the programming and training to include definitions of the offenses, definition of sexual consent, bystander intervention, and risk reduction. The purpose is comprehensive and on-going programming. Other requirements included developing policy to inform the campus about what procedures will be followed if one of these crimes has been reported, to whom the incident should be reported to, and the protective measures the institution should take (Campus Sexual Assault Violence Elimination Act, 2016). The rulemaking process for the Campus SaVE Act provided much debate about the standard of evidence

that should be used in campus discipline cases. Some groups were in favor of the preponderance of the evidence standard, which is required in Title IX cases per guidance by the U.S. Department of Education Office of Civil Rights, while others argued for a higher standard. Eventually, the final version of the Campus SaVE Act signed by President Obama did not include the preponderance of evidence as the evidentiary standard (Stratford, 2014). All of these requirements, including those outlined in the Clery Act and Title IX, are unfunded mandates institutions of higher education are expected to address.

In July 2014 the United States Department of Education issued another *Dear Colleague Letter* regarding the implementation of the new VAWA amendments. It advised institutions to make a good faith effort to comply with these requirements (United States Department of Education Office of Civil Rights, 2014). In an effort to conceptualize all the various requirements of all three pieces of federal legislation, I developed a table, *Federal Campus Safety Technical Requirements* (see Table 2) to highlight the technical expectations of compliance.

Table 2

*Federal Campus Safety Technical Requirements*

	Clery Act	Title IX	Campus SaVE Act
Education & Training	Provide current & prospective students & employees with primary prevention & annual security report; Annual training of campus security authorities;	Annual training for mandatory reporters; trained investigators (thoroughness, impartiality & credibility) & awareness of parties' sensitivities	Initial and on-going, comprehensive education: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• issues, bystander intervention, engaging men</li> <li>• targeted groups (athletics, Greek life)</li> </ul>
Response	Campus security authorities; Timely warnings & emergency notification; Campus Sexual Assault Victims Bill of Rights: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• option to notify law enforcement</li> <li>• option for counseling services</li> <li>• change in academic &amp; living arrangements</li> </ul>	Responsible employees; eliminate further harm & hostile environment; centralized point of contact-Title IX Coordinator	Provided with written rights: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• options for services</li> <li>• changes in living, work, academic &amp; transportation situations</li> <li>• assistance with reporting to law enforcement</li> <li>• obtain &amp; enforce restraining order</li> </ul>
Investigation	Clery geography reports only; campus security authority is not responsible for investigation as to whether a crime took place—that is the function of law enforcement personnel;	Mandatory, immediate, fair, and appropriate investigation; separate & independent of criminal investigation; establish timeline for investigation; on or off campus reports including in education programs & activities	<i>Not specified, but encourages requirements outlined under Clery Act &amp; Title IX</i>
Disciplinary Process	Same opportunity to have others present during disciplinary process; all parties notified of outcome; publish disciplinary process in annual security report;	Preponderance of the evidence standard; equal opportunity to access, review, and present witnesses and evidence; all parties notified of outcome	Clear description of disciplinary process & range of sanctions; due process for all parties including appeal; option for support person in disciplinary proceedings;
Policy	Clear definitions; extensive policies & procedures included in annual security report: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Missing student</li> <li>• Violence prevention</li> <li>• Drug &amp; alcohol abuse prevention</li> <li>• Sex Offender Notification</li> <li>• Emergency response &amp; evacuation</li> <li>• Fire Safety</li> </ul>	Non-discrimination statement; clear reporting options; widely distributed	Clear definitions; Victims Bill of Rights; Amnesty policy;
Systematic Improvement	Annual reporting; daily crime & fire logs;	Student-centered approach;	Additional crime types reported in crime statistics; confidential reporting options



Good faith efforts for compliance were made by some institutions of higher education, but there remains a fire storm of cases and news stories indicating that not enough has been done. This array of attention to issues of campus safety is a signal that there is still much to be done. As with most crime related societal issues, it is primarily the negative aspects of campus violence that are noticed. This literature review would not be complete without attention to local and national coverage about the Clery Act, Title IX, and the Campus SaVE Act. There has been tremendous amounts of attention brought to these issues through various outlets including social media, congressional concern, advocacy organizations websites, news shows and stories, public service announcements, blogs, and even presidential initiatives. All of these factors influenced the current national landscape.

### **Current National Landscape**

Presently social media is one of the greatest means by which college-aged students communicate. A study by Lenhart, Purcell, Smith, and Zickuhr (2010) suggested “72% of all college students have a social media profile with 45% of college students using a social media site at least once a day.” The use of social media outlets such as Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, and Twitter likely contribute to the awareness of safety and security on our nation’s campuses because posts, snaps, and tweets are a quick and easy way to get the word out about an issue or concern. I conducted an informal review of social media sources, including Facebook and Twitter, to showcase a technological literature field that raises general awareness, but also provides a vehicle for which students, advocates, and supporters are able to mobilize to ensure college administrators are guaranteeing effective compliance with federal campus safety mandates. Student led

grassroots organizations such as, *SAFER* (Students Active for Ending Rape) and *Know Your IX*, have social media campaigns that reach out to numerous college students across the United States. A stated purpose of SAFER, “strengthen student-led movements to combat sexual and interpersonal violence in campus communities.” They also offer resources to support student driven organizing (2016, About section, para. 1). While *Know Your IX* got its name from Title IX, they also promote students’ civil rights under Clery and help students to be equipped with the knowledge of how to file a complaint with the U.S. Department of Education’s Office of Civil Rights (2016, Know Your Rights Section, para. 3.).

Alongside student activists, congressional leaders also brought attention to campus safety on a national level. Senator Claire McCaskill (D-Missouri) hosted a round-table discussion about campus sexual assault in June 2014 after sending out surveys and receiving responses from a sample size of 236 postsecondary institutions receiving Title IV funding. The results of the survey indicated that a large majority of institutions are failing to comply fully with the law and best practices in handling sexual assault cases (McCaskill, 2014, p. 4). “Only 16% of institutions completed a campus climate survey, 51% of institutions provided a hotline to survivors, 44% of institutions provided the option to report sexual assaults online, and approximately 8% of institutions still did not allow confidential reporting (p. 1).”

The amount of news coverage during a given week on these issues is extremely high. Some examples of institutions and the perceived mishandling of sexual assault cases include Baylor, Duke, Stanford, Amherst, Harvard, Florida State, and Notre Dame. The Office of Civil Rights released a list of 55 institutions of higher education who were

under investigation for possible violation of Title IX in April 2014 (Kiss and Feeney White, 2016, p. 100), and this list has continued to grow with 246 ongoing investigations into 195 colleges and universities' response to sexual assault reports as of June 16, 2016 (Kingkade, 2016). Additional national attention occurred with the release of the film *Hunting Ground* (Ziering, & Dick) released February 27, 2015 at the Sundance Film Festival. The documentary brought national attention to campus sexual assault. Additional controversy arose when the film aired via cable television on CNN November 9, 2015. The issue of campus sexual assault was brought into the public eye throughout the nation in the homes of viewers. The documentary highlights different stories of campus sexual assault by capturing the experiences of survivors and how their institution did not respond effectively, minimized the assaults, and in some instances blamed the victim for the assault. Much of the controversy surrounding the film resulted from the reality that many of the institutions featured are well-known prestigious universities. None of the institutions chose to participate in the documentary, thereby adding to the "one-sidedness" of the film. This drew controversy; some critics stated it was "unfair to the accused." Director Kirby Dick stated they were showing "a pervasive culture of campus sexual assault... (NPR, 2015)."

The national momentum behind the Clery Act, Title IX, and Campus SaVE Act continues through efforts of national organizations such as the Clery Center for Security on Campus, the National Center for Higher Education Risk Management (NCHERM), Association for Title IX Administrators (ATIXA), National Sexual Violence Resource Center, Futures Without Violence, the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA), and many others. An impetus that brought the greatest

attention recently to the issues of campus safety was former President Barack Obama and Vice-President Joe Biden's commitment and dedication to addressing safety and security issues at our nation's institutions of higher education. On January 22, 2014 President Obama signed the Presidential Memorandum that established the White House Task Force to Protect Students from Sexual Assault. The task force was co-chaired by Vice President Biden and the White House Council on Women and Girls taking on issues of campus sexual violence in a variety of ways. They hosted listening sessions and engaged campus administrators, advocates, and most importantly student survivors over a three-month period. As a result of their efforts their first report, *Not Alone*, was released in April 2014. In the report they offered a first round of action steps and recommendations. These included: (a) identifying the problem-campus climate surveys (b) preventing sexual assault and engaging men (c) effectively responding when a student is sexually assaulted, and (d) increasing transparency and improving enforcement (White House Task Force to Protect Students from Sexual Assault, 2014). Further elaboration on their recommendations is provided in a later section.

Vice-President Biden most notably penned an open letter to a survivor of campus sexual assault who was the victim of a Stanford University student athlete (Eilperin, 2016) and also initiated the *It's On Us* campaign that is a large scale national bystander intervention effort which calls on the public to commit to address campus sexual assault (White House Task Force, 2014). According to the *Washington Post*, White House officials announced in July 2016 that, "top members of the administration – including the president, vice president, their wives and members of the Cabinet – will not visit

institutions whose leaders they consider insufficiently serious about pursuing sexual assault allegations and punishing perpetrators (Eilperin, 2016).”

America’s colleges and universities are now being held responsible and accountable for compliance and implementation of these policies and recommendations, but it remains unclear if this will continue under Trump’s administration. The intersection of the policies, mandates, and media attention surrounding issues of violence on college campuses creates opportunity for further discussion and analysis surrounding the process of implementation and ultimately compliance. Senior student affairs officers have been charged with taking lead on this difficult initiative, even though it is not an easy task to change the way things happen at institutions. Next, an evaluation of recommendations provided for institutions will be discussed in the next section.

### **Considerations for Institutions**

As institutions of higher education are grappling with the implementation of all requirements set forth in campus safety mandates, there are some recommendations by various entities that prescribe how institutions should approach compliance. Although, there is no one size fits all approach; some of the recommendations include information from the *Not Alone* Report, a model for Technical Compliance and Ethical Commitment to the Clery Act, and the CORE Blueprint. These recommendations were helpful because they provide institutions with guidelines for a macro-level approach to compliance.

**Not Alone Report.** The *Not Alone* Report provided some initial steps for institutions of higher education to consider. They are (a) identify the scope of the problem on college campuses; (b) help prevent campus sexual assault; (c) help schools respond effectively when a student is assaulted; and (d) improve, and make more

transparent, the federal government's enforcement efforts (2014). Because crimes of interpersonal violence, specifically sexual assault, are underreported (Krebs et al., 2007), it is imperative for administrators to have an understanding of the extent of these issues on their own campus. The *Not Alone* report recommends that colleges and universities develop and administer a campus climate survey voluntarily with the intent of making it mandatory in the future (p. 8). The next recommended steps are focused on prevention; educational programming should include national evidence-based curriculum, students should receive comprehensive and on-going education, bystander intervention curriculum should also be taught, and men should be engaged in addressing campus sexual assault (pp. 8-9). The next recommended step is focused on institutional response. It is suggested regardless of the situation, a "school must respond (p. 12). This includes having trained and confidential survivor advocates who can assist students and provide accommodations based on the needs of that student and institution-specific policies that outline the process and advise students about how information will be shared (pp. 11-12). Campus officials must be trained annually on how to appropriately respond to campus sexual assault. These officials include campus law enforcement, those responsible for adjudicating disciplinary cases, and other campus officials. The training should be trauma-informed (pp. 13-14). "This kind of training has multiple benefits: when survivors are treated with care and wisdom, they start trusting the system, and the strength of their accounts can better hold offenders accountable (p. 3)." Providing comprehensive support for students is also provided as a strategy either through on-campus advocacy centers or through collaboration with community service providers and local law enforcement (pp. 14-15). Faculty at institutions of higher education are also challenged to do their part in

researching ways to improve responses to sexual assault (p. 16). The last section in the *Not Alone Report* provides a guarantee by the federal government that they will do their part to improve their response including collaboration amongst federal agencies, more technical assistance, as well as better data, and transparency and clearer enforcement throughout federal agencies and OCR investigations (pp. 16-20). It remains unclear if the *Not Alone Report* will be updated and if the guidance outlined will be carried forward under the current presidential administration, although it is unlikely.

**Technical and ethical commitment to Clery Act compliance.** The technical compliance and ethical commitment to the Clery Act model is another set of recommendations for institutions with specific focus on the Clery Act (White, 2014 in Kiss and Feeney White, 2016). The model blends the technical and ethical factors for compliance and provided seven recommendations for accomplishing. Institutions should make efforts to ensure there is a strong ethical commitment to campus safety and compliance with Clery, and that this be done in “tandem and not sequentially (p. 107).” Also, there is a pronounced focus on training and preparation. Additional recommendations call for “hypothetical exercises” based on the ethics of a caring framework, and a mandate by the U.S. Department of Education to make annual training a requirement for Clery Act compliance, as is directed under Title IX (p. 107). Institutions of higher education were also expected to have “multi-disciplinary teams who are provided with the mandatory training, and also tackle compliance issues collectively while bringing a variety of knowledge, expertise, perspectives, and interest (p. 108).” Another recommendation included the public relations aspect, equating to the need for leaders to concentrate on the “positive outcomes of an institution’s high technical and

ethical commitment to the Clery Act, rather than sensationalize or focus on negative outcomes of noncompliance (p. 108).” The last recommendation calls for “individuals and institutions to play an active role in combatting some of the barriers to success when possible (p. 108).” Rather than acting in a reactive manner, institutional leaders “should proactively address the concerns of its members and provide adequate resources to comply on the technical and ethical stages (p. 108).” Although this model is specifically recommended for the Clery Act, it can also be applied to compliance with other federal mandates such as Title IX and the Campus SaVE Act (p. 107).

**The CORE Blueprint.** The *CORE Blueprint* is an established criteria that was developed by the Culture of Respect organization in collaboration with the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA). The *CORE Blueprint* serves the purpose of assisting institutions of higher education with compliance of Title IX, the Clery Act, and FERPA (Family Educational Right to Privacy Act) by preventing and responding to sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence, and stalking. This is the document that many senior student affairs officers turn to for guidance specifically because it was developed by an organization where the majority of them hold membership. The *CORE Blueprint* identified six pillars institutions of higher education should consider when implementing federal mandates. They include: (a) support (b) adjudication (c) education (d) public discourse (e) school-wide mobilization and (f) on-going self-assessment (Culture of Respect, 2016). “Positive survivor support options” (Culture of Respect, 2016, pp. 10-19) include various options for reporting whether through anonymous or confidential means, with assistance from a trained survivor advocate who can offer a variety of accommodations based on the needs of the survivor



(pp. 10-19). Options for anonymous or confidential reporting is important because it provides the opportunity for survivors to access resources without an investigation being initiated, thereby encouraging survivors to not remain silent. Confidential reporting locations and anonymous reporting options must provide non-identifying aggregate data for Clery Act crime statistics (Victim Rights Law Center, 2015). The confidential locations and anonymous reporting options must be displayed in campus policies. Also, when a report is received by a non-confidential employee, the process for survivors to request that their case be considered confidential must be outlined (p.9). “Clear policies on campus investigation, adjudication, and sanctions” provides clarity for the investigative, hearing, and appeal process (Culture of Respect, 2016, p. 3). Furthermore, extensive and specialized training for all individuals involved in the various aspects of the administrative process is more likely to provide for a fair and consistent outcome. “Robust multi-tiered education at all levels” is aligned with the requirements of the Campus SaVE Act (p. 3). Educational programming is expected to be provided and scheduled on a regular and on-going basis as opposed to only at orientation, and must be mandatory for students. The content shall vary to include addressing attitudes towards sexual violence, sexual assault in relationships, LGBTQ-inclusivity and empowerment, and bystander intervention. The audience shall include targeted groups such as student leaders, athletes, and Greek organizations. Additionally, it is suggested that university employees receive training on how to respond to students in a trauma-informed and empathetic way. “Public disclosure of sexual assault statistics and related information” (pp. 35-38) calls for transparency and accountability through the use of campus climate surveys, publishing of annual security reports, and comprehensively surveying students

and releasing data to the campus community on an on-going basis. “School-wide mobilization in partnership with campus organizations and student leaders” (pp. 38-40) calls for a leadership team that includes students and calls for a coordinated effort that provides strong support, including financial support, for student organizations engaged in sexual assault prevention and service provision. “Ongoing self-assessment” (pp. 38-40) is the evaluation section of the *CORE Blueprint*. The CORE Evaluation, a supplemental component to the *CORE Blueprint*, calls for four steps to evaluation. First, an institutional evaluation team should be developed to take lead on evaluation of the *CORE Blueprint*. Second, a formal evaluation of the entire campus shall be completed. Third, satisfaction of survivors should be reviewed either through surveys or interviews. Finally, IHEs should commit to make changes that are supported by their findings, but more importantly “promote a campus climate that is respectful of all persons (pp. 40-42).” The *CORE Blueprint* provides a framework that takes approaches a little further than some other institutional recommendations because it identifies strategies that seek to improve the culture of colleges and universities.

While there are various recommendations to consider for the implementation of federal campus safety mandates, there is no one size fits all approach. Institutions vary by size, available resources, institutional knowledge about the issues, institutional history, administrative buy in, student culture, and leadership abilities. The constant is that there is likely one person who is taking the lead on determining what the best approach is for their institution, and that person is likely to be the senior student affairs officer.

### **Considerations for Student Affairs Leaders**

There are many institutional factors taken into consideration when identifying strategies to respond to and implement requirements of federal campus safety policies. Responsibility for many of these decisions is usually held by institutions' senior student affairs officers (SSAOs). These executive level leaders have to consider a range of factors from financial resources of the institution, personnel needed to effectively respond, development of initiatives and policies that support best practices, handling crisis, support and advocacy for students, to limiting negative public relations and potential lawsuits, or complaints. Although this is not an exhaustive list of considerations, there is risk management and an individual SSAO's ethical obligations to students, to campus, and to their profession that need to be understood. The following provides an overview of some individual factors SSAOs are expected to negotiate.

**Ethical responsibilities.** Ethical standards and codes of ethics in student affairs are intended to: (a) promote the interests and welfare of those who are served by professionals, especially students; (b) protect the professional; and (c) advance the profession (Dalton, Crosby, Valente & Eberhardt, 2016). There are numerous professional associations within the field of student affairs that provide ethical guidance; Principles for student affairs professionals include respecting autonomy, doing no harm, helping others, being just, and being trustworthy (Kitchener in Barr, McClellan, & Sandeen, 2014, p. 12).

Student affairs professionals engage with five different domains of ethical responsibility. These domains include the student, institution, profession, community, and individual conscience (Dalton, Crosby, Valente & Eberhardt, 2016). All of these domains

are important to the student affairs profession, but the student domain of ethics must remain at the forefront for SSAOs, because students are who we serve. “The holistic welfare of students is the moral center of student affairs work (p. 203).” The institutional domain also has great influence on the student affairs professional, “through the employee-employer relationship,” but also through the “affirmation and agreement to promote the institution’s mission and values (pp. 204-205).” The student affairs profession domain includes an expectation set forth by the professional associations to uphold and live by ethical standards within the profession. The community domain includes groups that are connected to the institution in a variety of ways, “exerts legal, moral, and political influence on student affairs professionals and can influence the manner in which ethical issues are discussed and decided” (p. 206). The last domain, individual conscience, ties together all the other domains. “Conscience is the domain of one’s most deeply held personal beliefs and convictions...what is fundamentally right and wrong...and is an integrative function in ethical decision making that helps to define personal responsibility, helping to interpret, integrate, and balance the various realms (p. 206).”

Students should be able to expect they can trust SSAOs; that this campus official, in particular, has their best interest in mind, and is an ethical person. Individual and professional ethics vary from person to person and profession to profession. Student affairs professionals should not blindly follow ethical competencies outlined for them in their professional associations, but rather should blend them with their own personal values and ethics. We must remember to take responsibility to address ethical dilemmas that present themselves and always keep in mind that our primary responsibility is to

serve students. Much of the way SSAOs interact with students is based on the ethics of relationships (Gilligan, 1982; Noddings, 1984) and the ethics of caring (Noddings, 1984). “Caring is the fundamental principal that guides this approach. The principle of caring asserts that taking the well-being of the other person into account should be the supreme consideration in ethical relationships. The notion of caring in specific situations becomes complex (Fried, 2003, p. 119).” A complex situation includes how an SSAO responds to campus sexual assault. “The essence of caring in a learning environment bolsters the philosophy of education. To that end, those who play an active role in preventing crime in an educational setting demonstrate care required to sustain a just society (Noddings, 1994, 1995 in Kiss and Feeney White, 2016, p. 105).”

**Student affairs professional core competencies.** Student affairs professionals have foundational knowledge established through an established set of student affairs professional competencies. The two overarching professional organizations of student affairs, American College Personnel Association (ACPA) and the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA) (2015) identify ten professional competency areas which,

...lay out essential knowledge, skills, and dispositions expected of all student affairs educators, regardless of functional area or specialization within the field. Whereas effective student affairs practice requires proficiency in many areas such as critical thinking, creativity, and oral and written communication, the competency areas...are intended to define students affairs work and lay out directions for the future development of student affairs educators both individually and as a profession (p. 7).

Gaining an understanding of the core competency areas for student affairs professionals lays the groundwork for how leaders begin to address the issue of campus safety. The implementation of federal campus safety mandates can be linked to all of the core competency areas. The *Personal and Ethical Foundations* competency includes the “knowledge, skills, and dispositions to develop and maintain integrity in one’s life and work” which is paramount to dealing with highly sensitive issues such as campus sexual assault (p. 16).” *Values, Philosophy, and History* competency area is important for student affairs practitioners as history informs future practice (p. 18). *Assessment, Evaluation and Research* ensures that appropriate methodologies are used and data informs practice, as in the use of campus climate surveys (p. 20). One of the main competency areas related to the implementation of federal campus safety mandates is *Law, Policy, and Governance* which specifically addresses the expectation for compliance and policy development (p. 22). The *Organizational and Human Resources* area includes the management of institutional human capital, financial, and physical resources which are essential when there is an expectation for additional positions and services such as a Title IX coordinator and campus advocacy centers (p. 24). *Social Justice and Inclusion*, to “create learning environments that foster equitable participation of all groups and seeks to address issues of oppression, privilege, and power” which is the impetus behind the development of federal campus safety policies and enforcement by the U.S. Department of Education Office of Civil Rights (p. 30). “Advancing the holistic wellness of oneself, our students, and our colleagues” is the premise of the *Advising and Supporting* competency (p. 35). Other competency areas include *Student Learning, Technology, and Leadership*. In regards to leadership, “it involves both the

individual role of a leader and the leadership process of individuals working together to envision, plan, and affect change in organizations and respond to broad based constituencies and issues (p. 27).” The requirement to implement federal campus safety mandates, while balancing the parameters of institutional ability with student expectations, obligates a SSAO to have a strong foundation in the leadership competency area. Although there are varying levels of outcomes of the competency areas; foundational, intermediary, and advanced, there are additional leadership considerations specifically related to addressing campus safety that should be explored further.

**Crisis management.** The *Guide for Developing High-Quality Emergency Operations Plans for Institutions of Higher Education* was issued by the U.S. Department of Education (2013) and provides a framework for planning for crisis situations. Guidance provided includes the need for prevention, protection, mitigation, response, and recovery. Student affairs professionals handle crises on a regular basis and are often the go to person on campuses to handle a crisis or take the lead on crisis management teams (Zdziarski, 2016, pp. 616-617). Crisis situations can be anything from a single incident to a large-scale campus crisis and may have varying effects on the campus and surrounding community. When addressing a crisis there are various stakeholders who could be impacted by the crisis, including primary, secondary, and tertiary stakeholders (p. 617). The issue of campus safety, specifically campus sexual assault, can be viewed as a national crisis on college campuses and is often referred to as such. However, there are incidents on campus related to the focus of this study that also constitute a campus crisis, specifically a “human crisis – events that are originated by human beings, whether by conscious act or error, and include criminal acts, accidents, and mental health situations

(p. 621).” Certain areas related to crisis management that SSAOs are responsible for include developing crisis management plans. Emphasis is placed on prevention, protection, and response in these plans.

When considering how to respond to a crisis, specifically a human crisis, the case management model for student affairs practitioners (Adams, Hazelwood, and Hayden, 2014; Davis, 2010) can be used as a framework for a student-centered approach to crisis management. “The student affairs case management model provides a structure for all student affairs professionals responding to students involved in incidents, campus emergencies, and disaster-level events (p. 456).” Senior student affairs officers may take on this role themselves, may assign it to another staff member, or may identify resources and provide support to fund programs that serve in this capacity such as campus advocacy centers. “By employing this model based on theory, standards, and professional foundations, student affairs administrators can appropriately answer the call to respond at all incident levels when student needs arise (p. 457).” An appropriate response to a crisis is important, however senior student affairs officers also have to be mindful of legal issues, public relations, and risk management.

**Legal issues and risk management.** As previously discussed, due to the use of Title IV funds, all institutions of higher education are expected to comply with federal campus safety mandates regardless whether they are a private or public college or university. Senior student affairs officers need to have a strong understanding of the legal issues associated with campus safety and how to mitigate the legal risks. However, institutional leaders’ approach to risk management may vary at institutions of higher education depending on whether it is public or private. Public institutions are governed



by U.S. and state constitutions, while private institutions are usually not. Therefore students at public institutions have different rights afforded to them than students at private institutions, specifically the first amendment right to freedom of speech. Students may invoke their first amendment rights especially related to issues of campus sexual assault. Students may protest under this right, such as Emma Sulkowicz who carried a mattress around her campus and at graduation to protest her institution's response to her sexual assault (Taylor, 2005). Senior student affairs officers have flexibility to limit the location and manner in which students protest on campus, but there is still vagueness in the courts regarding free speech through social media (Lowery, 2016, pp. 538-539). Additional consideration lies with protections of the fourteenth amendment in which students at public institutions be provided with due process rights throughout the disciplinary process, with notice, and a timeline for the proceedings (p. 541). Although the specific evidentiary standard is not defined by the courts, the U.S. Department of Education Office of Civil Rights calls for a preponderance of the evidence standard (p. 542). This provides uncertainty amongst private colleges because the "due process clause applies only to governmental actors, not private entities. Thus, public institutions of higher education must provide due process protections to students who are subject to disciplinary proceedings, but private institutions of higher education are not subject to the same requirement (McCallion and Feder, 2015, p. 25)."

Both private institutions and public institutions are directed by contract law, resulting in varying risk management approaches related to campus safety (Miller and Sorochty, 2014). A student handbook is likely to be viewed as a contract by the court. Institutions are expected to review them annually, and are provided with the opportunity

to amend them as necessary so long as students are made aware of the changes (Lowery, 2106, pp. 543-544). Senior student affairs officers are usually responsible for seeing to the development and revision of student handbooks.

Another area for consideration by SSAOs is tort liability. “Torts are civil wrongs rather than criminal or contractual violations for which lawsuits may be brought (p. 544).” Lawsuits are filed against institutions by both complainants and respondents. In early 2016, there were a number of institutions who lost civil suits to respondents because in some instances respondents’ due process rights were not provided according to the courts (New, 2016). Although there are “several factors that may limit institutional liability, sovereign immunity limits the ability of institutions, but not individual employees, from being sued in state or federal court (p. 544).” Individual employees may become liable if institution’s due process rules are not followed. Bearing this in mind, student affairs professionals should “determine whether they should purchase personal liability insurance that is available from several national organizations (p. 546).” This is yet something more SSAOs must contemplate as they work to implement federal campus safety mandates. Senior student affairs officers should “consult with the campus general counsel or attorney” and understand that “consultation can take both a reactive form when litigation is anticipated or imminent and a proactive form as policies and practices are developed (p. 535).” There is also potential loss of institutional and individual reputation that only gains traction with lawsuits.

Risk management approaches should include the following four steps: (1) assess risk for the operations of the institution, (2) prioritize the risks, (3) address the risks, and (4) evaluate the efficacy of the methods chosen to address the risks (Sokolow, 2004, p.

86). Furthermore, institutions should “engage actively in a risk management process” and “understand that it is an on-going process rather than a one-time event (Lowery, 2016, p. 546).” Senior student affairs officers, along with legal counsel, are likely key stakeholders in leading risk management strategies at institutions of higher education.

### **Contribution of this Study to Existing Literature**

“Much less has been written about the role that leadership... plays in developing institutional strategies for mitigating campus sexual violence or how legal mandates shape, or fail to shape, higher education institutions response to incidents of rape and sexual assault (Carrigan Wooten and Mitchell, 2016, p. 2).” My study contributed to existing literature on campus safety by providing current and relevant insight into the phenomena and the experiences of senior student affairs officers deeply as leaders in addressing these issues, specifically at small colleges and universities. I also explored how at institutions of higher education SSAOs complied with unfunded federal campus safety mandates. “Leadership at institutions of higher education need to understand this phenomenon and use it as an opportunity to educate parents, students, donors, alumni, and other stakeholders (Kiss and Feeney White, 2016, p. 102).” Therefore, the research question for this study was:

**What meaning do senior student affairs officers at small colleges and universities make of their experiences as they respond to federal campus safety mandates and what are implications for practice?**

## **Chapter 3**

### **Research Design**

The purpose of this study was to gain a deep understanding of the experiences of senior student affairs officers (SSAO) at small colleges and universities who implement federal campus safety mandates. From their experiences, it was my intention to gain insight about how SSAOs used these experiences to inform their own professional growth, and contribute to the student affairs profession. In this study, I utilized a qualitative phenomenological approach. I conducted multiple semi-structured interviews with three SSAOs at small colleges and universities. I also conducted document analysis of organizational charts, student handbooks, institutional policies, and program information. The research philosophy which I viewed and conducted my research is through both a feminist and constructivist paradigm.

### **Research Question**

My research question for this study was as follows:

**What meaning do senior student affairs officers at small colleges and universities make of their experiences as they respond to federal campus safety mandates and what are implications for practice?**

### **Mode of Inquiry and Rationale**

This study was a qualitative phenomenological study. Using a qualitative mode of inquiry was appropriate for this study because I wished to deeply understand experiences and perceptions about current federal campus safety mandates by individuals responsible for implementing these changes. “Qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings

people bring to them (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, p. 3).” More specifically, “with the changing campus environment..., student affairs professionals face the challenge not only of keeping in touch with current issues facing students, but also using methodologies that are sensitive to this rich cultural diversity in gathering sensitive information (Walters, 2001, p. 183).”

A qualitative mode of inquiry allowed for deep, flexible exploration into the experiences of senior student affairs officers to make sense of the phenomena they are undertaking. This approach made possible the deep meaning making necessary to understand realities and expectations about the complex phenomena of responsibility for campus safety. Additionally, because implementation of federal campus safety mandates is a shared experience amongst SSAOs at institutions who receive federal Title IV funding, a phenomenological approach was helpful “to reduce individual experiences with a phenomenon to a description of the universal essence (Creswell, 2013, p. 76).” A phenomenological approach provided insight into what the SSAOs experienced, but also how they experienced it (p. 76). Furthermore, it was “important to deeply understand these common experiences in order to develop practices or policies, and to develop a deeper understanding about the features of the phenomenon (p. 81).” A deeper understanding of the phenomena of implementing federal campus safety mandates through the meaning making of SSAOs will also help inform student affairs professionals’ practice.

### **Research Philosophy**

I chose to design this study using a blending of tenets from feminist and constructivist paradigms. First, “A primary goal of feminist research and practice is to

create opportunities for those traditionally excluded to express their voice so that institutional transformation can take place (Mohanty, 2003; Guido, Chávez, & Lincoln, 2010).” Throughout my years working in the advocacy field, I viewed the world through a feminist lens often identifying ways in which women were treated differently or faced different obstacles based on their gender. Understanding that the current campus climate has largely been influenced by a modern feminist movement, it was important to approach this study using a feminist paradigm. Some of the basic tenets of a feminist paradigm include *activism*, *change* for social justice, *personal to public* practice of bringing private issues into a public setting and context, *relationship* between researcher and participant, and *caring* (Guido, Chávez, & Lincoln, 2010, p. 14).

This research study was framed from a feminist perspective because of the environmental context in which issues of campus safety come to the forefront, and also through participants’ lived experiences. Feminist standpoint epistemology is “a unique philosophy and knowledge building that challenges us to see and understand the world through the eyes and experiences of oppressed women and to apply the vision and knowledge of oppressed women to social activism and social change (Paul, 2016; Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2007, pp. 4-5).” Working from a feminist paradigm reminded me of the reasons so many students called for reforms of how institutions of higher education respond to campus sexual assault, and why the federal government mandated these requirements. This resulted in so much pressure to change the way things were done for so long on college campuses that additional mandates were placed into law. Issues of campus safety are deeply rooted in feminist activism and advocacy, and using a feminist

standpoint in this study was helpful in great part because campus violence happens primarily to women.

Traditionally violence against women was viewed as a private issue and not discussed publicly. The *personal to public* tenet of a feminist paradigm provided the participants in this study an opportunity to discuss their responses to these private issues in a way that both protects their privacy and also brings their narratives into the public arena. As researcher, I encouraged participants to delve into these issues to better understand and make meaning of their experiences and those of students they serve.

Another tenet of a feminist paradigm is the *relationship* that developed between myself as the researcher and the participants. “Feminist practitioners and researchers focus on feelings, nurturance, intuition, and relatedness (Shepherd, 1993 in Guido, Chávez, & Lincoln, 2010, p. 14). My experience and training in advocacy provided me with the necessary skills to connect with participants, establish rapport, offer empathy, identify with, and attempt to deeply understand their experiences. I used these tools in my approach to working with participants. Establishing trust and a relationship assisted participants to feel comfortable sharing their experiences without judgment. This is important because as leaders, participants can be scrutinized if there are areas regarding campus safety that need improvement at their institutions.

Second, I also used a constructivist paradigm to design this study. Constructivism is dependent on individuals constructing meaning of a situation or experience, and is accomplished through discussions and interactions with one another (Creswell, 2013, p. 25). The basic tenets of constructivism include *understanding* experiences, *exploring* meanings of the phenomenon being studied, and *listening* to the voices and experiences

of participants (Guido, Chávez, & Lincoln, 2010, p. 15). According to Creswell (2013), “multiple realities are constructed through our lived experiences and interactions with others (p. 36).” Holding to a belief in multiple realities throughout my study assisted me in capturing the diverse lived experiences and realities of the participants. The participants and I, together, came to an agreement as to what it is they experienced. We explored what their experiences with the phenomena mean. This was a shared process in which I listened and recognized that the phenomena varied depending on a variety of factors including their individual knowledge about the federal campus safety mandates, institutional support, personal and familial experience, and even their own gender. Overall, framing this study through a constructivist lens assisted us to make sense of federal campus safety mandates, how they are implemented, how they informed participants’ practice, and most importantly how these lived experiences influenced how each addressed campus safety for students.

### **Researcher’s Positionality**

As the researcher, I am close to this research primarily because the study was designed around assessing policies and systems regarding topics I am very familiar with and have direct experience and knowledge about. I have direct insight into the phenomena of required implementation of federal campus safety mandates as I am the senior student affairs officer at my institution and am responsible for multiple departments including housing, student conduct, campus life, student health center, career services, outdoor recreation, student government, and the advocacy center. More specifically related to campus safety, I am responsible for overseeing the safety and well-being of students on my campus which includes developing policies and procedures that



address and comply with federal campus safety mandates. I conduct training for the campus community, provide guidance on compliance, complete student conduct investigations and assign sanctions, as well as oversee the advocacy center that provides direct services and educational programming to the campus community. My perspective on this phenomenon was likely not as common as most SSAOs. Prior to serving as the SSAO, I was the director of a student advocacy center on my campus for six years, and worked diligently to implement campus safety requirements at my institution. Rather than feeling external pressure to address these issues, my experience was the exact opposite. I applied internal pressure to administrators to proactively address the federal campus safety mandates. I recognize that my experience wasn't the norm and this phenomenon is effecting many SSAOs throughout the United States. I was able to take an emic approach as an insider and use my own experiences and knowledge to assist me in this study (p. 92). Additionally, because I work at a small college as all the participants did at the time of this study, I was able to relate to and understand institutional factors they face. Although I expected my prior experience in campus advocacy to limit my ability to share in some of the same experiences of the SSAOs, it actually did not. Rather I found this experience assisted me in remaining open to what I discovered in this study. As an advocate I was trained to use active listening. This skill assisted me greatly in ensuring participants words were clearly heard. I was able to use my experience with interpreting findings because I brought a balanced insight as a campus safety victim advocate and a senior student affairs officer. My experience provided comprehensive insight into differing points of view regarding campus safety issues. This helped me to make connections between participants and identify similarities and differences, all while

interpreting findings from multiple perspectives including my advocacy and SSAO insight. Throughout this study, I worked meticulously to remain neutral and kept extensive field notes and memos to ensure that experiences of participants were accurately collected and my biases were limited during the data collection and analysis processes. During semi-structured interviews with participants, I strived to represent their perspectives by continually asking for examples, stories, meaning making, and clarifications so I was able to more accurately capture their voices and interpretations.

### **Participant Selection**

Campus safety and security policies have an impact on an array of people at colleges and universities, however senior student affairs officers (SSAO) may be the population most impacted because they are often tasked with primary responsibility for implementation of these mandates. I used a nonprobability sample, specifically a purposive sample was necessary to ensure that all participants experienced the phenomenon (Creswell, 2013, p. 155). I deliberately interviewed individuals with knowledge about campus safety mandates to obtain specific and detailed data about participants' experiences and perceptions to inform the research. For these reasons the sample was chosen intentionally.

Senior student affairs officers vary somewhat from institution to institution. These individuals usually include either a vice-president for student affairs or a dean of students. At some institutions, the SSAO reports directly to the president of the institution and at others to the provost. Some SSAOs may also be their institution's Title IX coordinator or even a deputy Title IX coordinator. For the purposes of this study, I solicited participation of SSAOs from a specific institution type. The participants

solicited were from a small college or university with an enrollment of no more than 5,000 students based on criteria outlined by the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA). I studied participants at small colleges and universities because human and financial resources are more limited within this institution size compared to mid and large size institutions. This makes the responsibility of implementation greater for SSAOs at small colleges and universities.

There was at least one male and one female participant. All three of the participants represented a different NASPA region, and there was one participant each from a four-year private and public college. Within the criteria just discussed, I used convenience sampling because the participants were SSAOs who are also members of NASPA's Small Colleges and Universities Division (Creswell, 2013, p 157) of which I am also a member and also have access. I solicited their participation via email addresses obtained through the NASPA Small College and University Division membership list.

I was specifically interested in interviewing SSAOs because they are individuals who hold primary responsibility for campus safety and how institutions of higher education respond to federal and other safety mandates. All participants interviewed were individuals who have direct insight into addressing issues of campus safety. At the time of this study, they were the senior administrator responsible for spearheading and overseeing compliance, including but not limited to policy development, handling conduct investigations, and ensuring the campus community was educated about issues of campus violence. Additionally, I wanted to interview these individuals because they hold responsibilities similar to my professional role as the dean of students and are those with whom I work closely.

### **Data Collection Methods**

I used two qualitative data collection methods in this study; three rounds of semi-structured individual interviews and document analysis of documents collected from participants as a result of requests during the first round of interviews.

**Semi-Structured Individual Interviews.** I conducted three rounds of individual semi-structured, in-depth interviews with three participants to make meaning of their experiences with implementing current federal campus safety mandates. I chose to conduct interviews rather than conduct a survey because I needed to obtain rich data from participants that a survey does not provide. This was important for a phenomenological study in which meaning making is the focus. Semi-structured interviews are “sufficiently structured to address specific dimensions of the research question while also leaving space for study participants to offer new meanings to the topic of study (Galleta, 2001, pp. 1-2).” The semi-structured interviews included open ended questions (see Appendix A) allowing the participants to add to the richness of the data. Performing intensive semi-structured interviews enabled participants to elaborate on specific questions, which were asked in an open-ended fashion. Open-ended, semi-structured questions also created opportunities for me to probe for meaning, clarity, examples, and stories about their experiences. Asking participants detailed questions allowed for a more definitive analysis of the information provided. For this study I chose to conduct three interviews with three participants. This was important because I was able to delve deeper with each participant to capture their experiences, assist with making meaning, and highlight the “essence” of the phenomenology. Conducting more interviews with fewer participants would not have allowed for the depth necessary for this type of study.

I used the first round of semi-structured interviews primarily as a tool to explore participant perceptions of effects that federal campus safety policies have had on their college or university and learned from participants about what structures and strategies were implemented at their respective college as it relates to current federal campus safety mandates. I used the first semi-structured interview with each participant to gauge participants' understandings of the Clery Act, Title IX, and the Campus SaVE Act and the degree to which they believe their institution was implementing these federal requirements. Additionally during the first interview, I asked participants to provide policies, procedures, literature, job descriptions, websites, etc. related to campus safety for review as document analysis. At this time, participants referred me to their colleges' websites.

During the second round of interviews, I learned from participants about their experiences leading implementation of campus safety mandates at their institutions and how they support others in doing so. I also asked questions related to the impact on their personal lives. Participants shared about their leadership style and characteristics, as well as their individual backgrounds personally and professionally.

I conducted the third round of interviews after my analysis of documents. This third round of semi-structured interviews allowed for follow-up reflections from our first and second interviews as well as questions from my review of the documents. Additional calls or e-mails requesting clarity or examples were used. All of the interviews were recorded to ensure accuracy of data and were transcribed.

The research process included participants completing an informed consent form (see Appendix B) prior to interviews being initiated. The informed consent outlined the

purpose of the study, expectations of participants, the option to stop the interview at any time, notification that additional follow up interviews or email questions might be necessary, that a pseudonym would be used, that no personally identifiable information would be included in the results, and that interviews would be recorded.

**Document Analysis.** I used document analysis as a data collection method to assess and review specific artifacts that provided further insight into the phenomenon. “Primary sources are those in which the originator of the document is recounting firsthand experience with the phenomenon of interest (Merriam, 2009, p. 152).” For Dean Martinez’s college I collected the student handbook, Title IX grievance policy, the annual security report, and organizational chart directly from the college’s website. I collected the student handbook, including the sexual misconduct policy and hearing board structure, and information on the counseling center directly from Vice President Jones college’s website. Vice President Jones emailed me the organizational chart and her job description as well. The documents collected from Vice President Matthews’ college were all available on the website. Documents analyzed included the student handbook, discriminatory harassment and sexual misconduct policy, organizational chart, Title IX specific website including a Title IX frequently asked questions page, and the advocacy and prevention education website.

Institutional policies and procedures are documents which participants likely created or had a direct role in creating. Vice President Jones’ job description was the only one analyzed because the other two participants were not able to provide them. The SSAOs’ job responsibilities and reporting structure also came out through the semi-structured interviews and analysis of organizational charts. Authentication of documents

was assured because these documents were provided by or directed me to the website by participants. Policy documents provided information about what formal written mechanisms are in place at the participants' institutions. Organizational charts showed participants' reporting structure and official responsibilities as senior student affairs officers. Campus and program specific websites provided insight into the level of educational information and services about safety available to campus students, professionals, and visitors.

I chose document analysis as a research method because it assists "intensive studies producing rich descriptions of a single phenomenon, event, organization, or program (Bowen, 2009, p. 27)." Also, "document analysis requires that data be examined and interpreted to elicit meaning, gain understanding, and develop empirical knowledge (p. 27)." Developing meaning making was the central focus of this study. "Documents contain text (words) and images that have been recorded without a researcher's intervention (p. 28)." This is especially helpful and necessary for a phenomenological study.

### **Data Analysis**

**Analysis of Interviews.** Qualitative semi-structured interviews focused on understanding the perceived effects of the Clery Act, Title IX, and the Campus SaVE Act from perspectives of SSAOs. Because the study is a phenomenological study, I utilized Creswell (2013) and Moustak's (1994) approach to analyze the interviews. I chose this analysis approach because it provided a clear and simplified process I could easily follow. I began by providing a description of my own experiences regarding the implementation and effects of federal campus safety policies, "bracketing" to set aside

my understanding and to focus on the participants' experiences (p. 193). During the next step in my analysis, I created "a list of significant statements and how the participants experienced" them (p. 193). I then grouped statements together to create "meaning units" and a "textual description" of what participants experienced, including verbatim data (p. 193). Next I developed a "structural description" that focused on how participants experienced the phenomenon, including settings and context (p. 194). Finally, I developed a combined description of the "textual and structural descriptions" to highlight the "essence" of the phenomenon (p. 194). I initially planned to upload transcriptions into Nvivo software to assist me with the data analysis process outlined. However, I ultimately used Microsoft Excel as a tool for qualitative analysis in which I kept track of patterns and themes identified. I chose to use Microsoft Excel as opposed to data analysis software because I am more familiar and comfortable using it.

**Analysis of Documents.** I performed a qualitative content analysis of documents collected with the purpose of "being systematic and analytic, but not rigid (Altheide, 1987, p. 68)." The specific analysis of the documents followed an analytical sequence. This included assignment of codes and themes, and then sorting and sifting of coded material to identify patterns (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014).

**Cross-Method Analysis.** I conducted a cross method analysis between the in-depth interviews and documents I analyzed in this study. When participants referenced something in the interviews I checked documents from their campus to verify my understanding and then clarified with participants in the third interview. This process helped ensure that findings from interviews were consistent with systems and structures



in place at participants' colleges. Cross-method analysis was a checks and balance system built into this study.

### **Quality and Rigor**

It was important to my study to ensure a standard of quality appropriate to a qualitative mode of inquiry. I committed to conducting and presenting research with goodness as an integral and embedded component of the entire study (Tobin & Begley, 2004). The six elements of an interpretive study through which goodness is shown include the foundation of the study, approach and methodology used, methods used for collection of data, representation of voice, meaning making, and implications for professional practice (Arminio & Hultgren, 2002; Tobin & Begley, 2004). As the researcher, I worked to stay grounded through feminist and constructivist paradigms by maintaining the research question as a central focus throughout the study. I also recorded interviews to ensure accuracy of the data collected. I continuously reflected on my relationship with the participants throughout the study and took notes to document this. I strove to remain aware of the bias I brought to this study and did my best to remain neutral. Meaning making took place through a participatory exchange, *writ large*, with participants and ensured that the phenomena identified follows their actual perceptions (Creswell, 2013, p. 252). This study of senior student affairs officers experience with implementing federal campus safety mandates provided insight for other professionals who are faced with similar circumstances.

An additional measure I applied to ensure a standard of quality in my study was crystallization, which includes “the use of a number of different methods, approaches, and points of view to obtain a more complete picture of a complex and diffuse

phenomenon (Tobin & Begley, 2004, p. 394).” Crystallization was used to corroborate the phenomenon identified from the analysis of the interviews, within and amongst the participants, and also with documents analyzed. Data was analyzed across methods and participants to crystalize patterns and themes.

### **Summary**

The main purpose of this study was to develop a greater understanding of senior student affairs officers’ experiences of campus safety policy implementation. Through analysis of these experiences and some of the many policies, pressures, and contexts that influence their experiences, I gained insight into how senior student affairs officers experience campus safety policy implementation and how they make meaning of their experiences. Insights learned from this study provide institutional leaders, specifically SSAOs, with greater understanding of how to handle these highly sensitive issues, and more importantly what strategies can be used when expected to implement unfunded mandates within a context of great pressure.

## Chapter 4

### Findings

If we were doing our job right then we would remove barriers to reporting and people would come to us because people would trust they could get the help that they need and that we expected to eventually see a reduction in reporting because our goal was to reduce the incidence on campus.

–Vice President Matthews

The amount of care and compassion each senior student affairs officer gives of themselves to enhance campus safety is admirable. Through conversations with Senior Student Affairs Officers (SSAOs) in my study, I was blessed to learn about their experiences, insights, and meaning making of enhancing campus safety with all the complexity that entails. They shared their unique backgrounds, both personally and professionally. They confided in me about challenges they face and how they work to overcome them. Vice President Matthews, Dean Martinez, and Vice President Jones (pseudonyms) all discussed their leadership as SSAOs at small colleges, with specific reflection about the expectation to implement unfunded federal campus safety mandates.

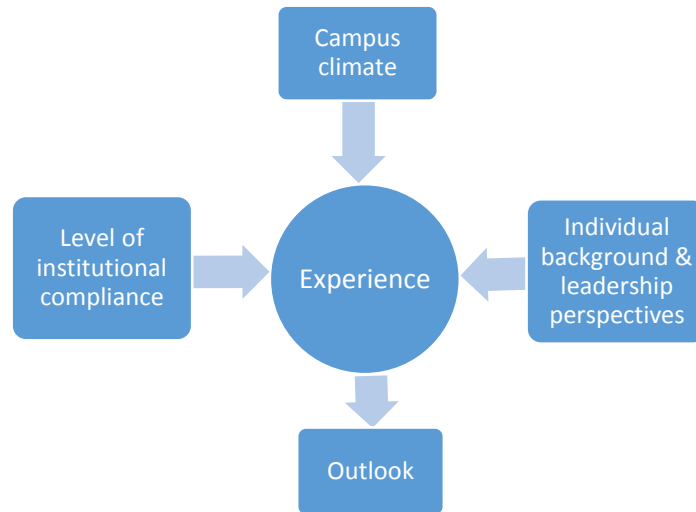
Throughout my research, I strove to remain open-minded to participants' experiences, bracketing my perspectives and experiences during the process to maintain as much neutrality possible. Understanding that my experience as a former campus victim advocate is not the norm among SSAOs, this was especially important. I conducted semi-structured individual interviews with three SSAOs three times each for a total of nine interviews. Participants included one male and two females, from one public institution and two privates, one urban and two rural. Vice President Matthews identified as a white heterosexual male. Dean Julia Martinez identified as a Hispanic heterosexual female. Vice President Jones identified as a white heterosexual female. There was one

faith-based institution and another that is a minority-serving institution. Years of experiences as senior student affairs officers varied amongst the participants from seven to thirty-five years. Their professional backgrounds in student affairs varied as well as their educational degrees. Vice President Matthews worked in his college's counseling center, is a trained psychologist, and has been a SSAO for seven years at his college. Most of Dean Martinez's higher education experience is in enrollment management and she has been the SSAO at her college for about two years. She holds a bachelor's degree in a field unrelated to education. Vice President Jones' has a variety of experience in student affairs including campus life, multicultural programming, and housing. She has been SSAO at her current college for four years, but also served in senior level positions for twelve years at a previous institution. Vice President Jones has a doctoral degree in counseling. I found that there were varying levels of compliance at their institutions and varying levels of individual experience implementing federal campus safety mandates amongst the three participants. Factors at the institutional level and the participants' personal and professional background appeared to influence experiences of the SSAOs and are noted when appropriate throughout this chapter.

### **Weaving it All Together**

Themes identified through data analysis include measures of and perspectives about compliance, legal influences, institution-specific factors and structures, influence of educational and professional background, and perspectives on leadership. These themes were highlighted by participants as they shared their experiences implementing federal campus safety mandates at their colleges. Each contributed to how SSAOs thought about their work and their outlook about federal campus safety expectations. I developed a

model to display this relationship (see Figure 1). The relationship between these factors was complimentary not oppositional.



*Figure 1.* Visual display of senior student affairs officers’ experiences implementing federal campus safety mandates and their perceptions about future efforts.

Senior student affairs officers in this study were able to balance their approach to addressing campus safety by relying on their prior experience, their personal and professional values, along with structures and systems in place at their institution. I categorized this as a tool box SSAOs can use to pull from when necessary. Overall these SSAOs held positive perceptions about federal campus safety issues. All participants shared their belief that there is value and importance in the requirements. Vice President Matthews shared, “The philosophy is remembering what Title IX is about and making sure that the work we do doesn’t become the tail wagging the dog; the compliance issues are really important, but that’s a part of a much bigger whole.” Dean Martinez mentioned, “It’s our responsibility to make sure that our students are safe...” Vice President Jones added, “It’s important not only because it is a requirement, it’s something that does help us, I think to see what’s going on with campus crime...” Campus safety

mandates are external mechanisms by which institutions of higher education, and even more specifically SSAOs are held accountable for taking care of students. The following sections provide exploration of thematic findings identified in this study and how participants make meaning within each theme including compliance, institutional factors, background of participants, and participants' leadership perspectives.

### **Compliance**

In my experience it was the first of its kind of really feeling like – and I can actually remember this – really feeling like the law and the government and everyone else had just stepped fully into my area of work.

–Vice President Jones

Participants' meaning of campus safety compliance was overall positive, recognizing compliance took a huge lift on their part and the institution as a whole. There were varying levels of compliance at each of the three institutions. I characterized the three levels as 1) minimal compliance, 2) compliance with additional measures, and 3) compliance with sustainability. I defined these levels of compliance based on criteria outlined as requirements under the Clery Act, Title IX, and the Campus SaVE Act as well as mechanisms in place at participants' colleges at the time of this study (see Figure 2).

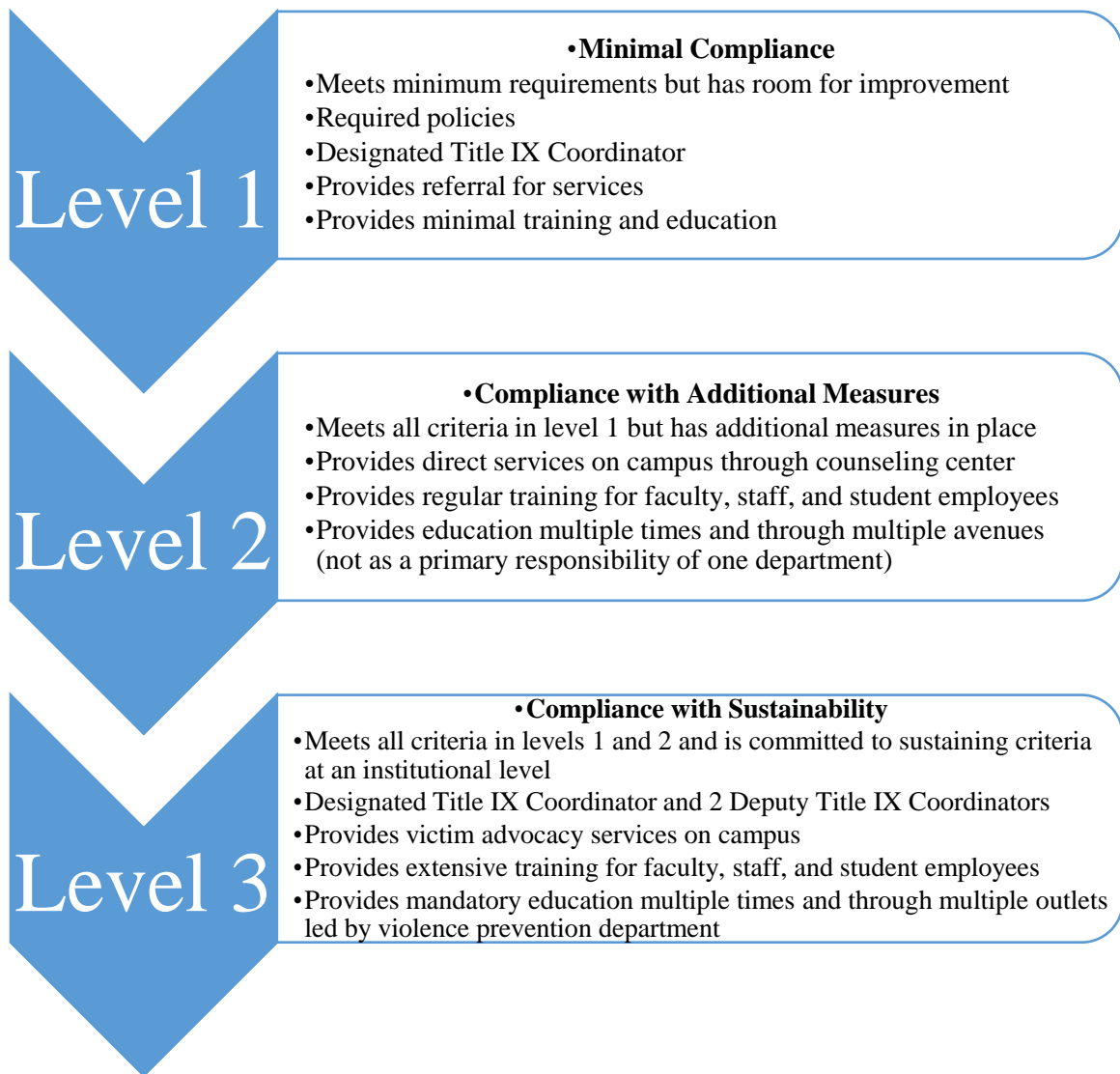


Figure 2. Blea Model of Campus Community Culture of Safety.

Dean Julia Martinez works at a college that meets level 1 criteria, *minimal compliance* (see Figure 2). Although the institution has a policy that addresses the requirements set forth by the Clery Act and Title IX, there are still some areas that need improvement. This college does not have specific services for student victims on campus, but does make referrals to community service providers. There is a designated Title IX coordinator, but this individual's responsibilities are in addition to their role as human

resources director, which are already extensive. Dean Martinez still felt “vulnerable, concerned about where and how students are able to get assistance.” This college also needed to do more to educate students and train campus officials. She shared, “We exist in an environment of high frustration that we aren’t able to do the educational programs like we would like to do.” Being at *minimal compliance* level may be an indication that campus safety is not a top institutional priority for Dean Martinez’s college.

Vice President Sarah Jones works at a college that meets the criteria in compliance level 2, *compliance with additional measures* (see Figure 2). Some of the additional measures at Vice President Jones’ campus include direct services for students through the counseling center. Vice President Jones recognized that mechanisms put into place at her campus such as sexual assault specific policies and processes, victim advocacy services, annual training for faculty and staff, and mandatory educational programming for students assists with increased knowledge about reporting campus violence. There is a commitment from the college to address sexual assault cases in a clear and separate manner from the student code of conduct.

“...because of the College’s concern for sexual misconduct in all forms, and because of the application of federal law, specifically Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, the College has a separate express prohibition of such sexual misconduct, and separate procedures for the handling of any disciplinary proceeding that involves an allegation of sexual misconduct (Student Handbook).”

There is a designated Title IX coordinator on her campus where reports are received. Programming, training, and services specifically aimed towards addressing campus sexual assault has assisted with reporting at Vice President Jones’ college.

The awareness has raised...it has made people more aware of how to report and that it is acceptable – let’s say it that way; it’s acceptable to report, and for most of us it’s encouraged to report because if you have behaviors like that going on



it's better for the college to be able to deal with those behaviors than just have them happening (Vice President Jones).

An increased awareness and expectation for reporting incidences of violence on the campus of Vice President Jones may be a result of multiple peer education and training initiatives. The student clubs and organizations are all required to complete training on how to report incidents of violence, but two clubs in particular, also directly educate other students about issues of violence including a student led faith-based program.

Generally I see that the acceptance of and the attention to violence in general being something that should not occur and should be reported – not just women but sexual assault, etc. – that victimization is wrong. I see that as an overwhelming agreement among students, faculty, and staff. (Vice President Jones).

A clearly outlined process may also assist with increased reporting. There is a separate process laid out in the student handbook for this campus, to be followed when a sexual assault is reported. Vice President Jones pointed me to this policy.

If the Title IX Coordinator determines that the charge involves sexual misconduct in whole or in part, those allegations involving sexual misconduct will be processed pursuant to the separate Sexual Misconduct Procedures set forth. The Title IX Coordinator may determine that a disciplinary proceeding should be processed under the Sexual Misconduct Procedures at any point. If the Title IX Coordinator determines that fairness and accuracy will be better served if the entire matter (and not just the allegations of sexual misconduct) is subject to the Sexual Misconduct Procedures, the Title IX Coordinator may so direct (Student Handbook, p. 14).

At the campus of Vice President Jones, it appears campus safety compliance is an institutional priority. There is a sexual misconduct process, multiple types of education and training, and a reallocation of institutional resources to assist with compliance.

The college that Vice President Bob Matthews works at meets the criteria in compliance level 3, *compliance with sustainability* (see Figure 2). This institution has multiple and complimentary processes and policies including a Title IX specific hearing

board, an honor principle, and a student code of conduct. The honor principle is tied to a core expectation by the college that students define the honor principle for themselves based on what the student believes to be honorable behavior. The college does not provide a definition, but rather challenges students to interpret it as an individual student and as a member of the campus community. This honor code is provided prominently on the college website. The honor principle does not specifically address campus sexual assault, but it provides another institutionalized layer by which students are held accountable. During my conversation with Vice President Matthews, he emphasized the importance of the honor principle that promotes and expects respect of others amongst the college community. He suggested that a responsibility of students through the honor principle is respect, something that is usually missing when sexual assault happens. Vice President Matthews pointed out in the discriminatory harassment and sexual misconduct policy there is a balance between the expected and required language set forth in the federal mandates with language that focuses on individual rights.

The prohibitions within this policy may appear to place restriction on academic freedom and individual freedom of expression. Those forms of freedom are central to the College's values, and occasionally, discomfort may be an inevitable result of the exercise of those freedoms and the pursuit of the mission of the College (Discriminatory Harassment and Sexual Misconduct Policy).

Vice President Mathews shared that policies are developed through an inclusive process, which involves the entire campus community including students, faculty, and staff. Dates of approval by governance groups are clearly identified on all policies at this college, specifically the discriminatory harassment and sexual misconduct policy, "We have a very small 'd'- democratic community and culture here at our college so students are directly involved in writing policy as are faculty, and so that means it's a very

participatory process.” It is my understanding that this college has a “small d” democratic community and culture because they are intentional to ensure that students voices are included in the policies and process established. Vice President Matthews made it clear that his institution is clearly committed to not only meeting compliance requirements, but also exceeding the expectations because it is the right thing to do for the campus. He shared,

I think it’s really important to be really familiar with your institutional mission. It may sound silly but these mandates exist in the context of what the institution has told its students we are going to do... It’s really tempting to just put all your energy into compliance and making sure you’re doing all this stuff the Dear Colleague Letter wants you to do; that’s a starting place; you have to do that, but if you do that and you forget about why you’re doing it I think you miss the boat. To me it’s really, really important to stay focused on what the institution is trying to accomplish and for whom, which is our students.

Vice President Matthews’ college is also very transparent with information and services provided to their campus. There are direct links to the U.S. Department of Education Office of Civil Rights from multiple pages on the institution’s website, including the advocacy center website, Title IX page, Title IX frequently asked questions, and in the discriminatory harassment and sexual misconduct policy. Information from the advocacy program clearly outlines the college’s approach to prevention and response. This includes three elements: (1) prevention through education and action, (2) support for survivors, and (3) and assurances that investigations are conducted swiftly and adjudicated fairly. This mirrors Vice President Matthews’ approach,

One thing that we really needed to keep reminding each other of was, we needed to have a trauma-informed victim center approach to providing support and resources and we needed to have an absolutely neutral, deeply compassionate and highly professional process for adjudication. You can’t have a victim-centered adjudication. So we have trauma-informed processes, we have lots of support mechanisms and fair and equitable processes.

Vice President Matthews made it very clear that he and his college believe strongly in improving processes, policies, and services related to campus safety. For them to do this, these initiatives had to be weaved into the way things are already done at his college, such as orientation for students and training for the entire campus community on a regular and on-going basis. Their focus was not solely on compliance, but long term sustainability.

As noted, there are varying levels of compliance at all three colleges. The perception of risk of non-compliance was greater with Dean Martinez as opposed to Vice Presidents Jones and Matthews. Dean Martinez seemed more worried about her institution's compliance efforts, but had an optimistic mindset about how she was working to address compliance. Vice President Jones was not as concerned with non-compliance, but more so how the way her job has changed such as the role legal counsel now plays in making decisions and writing policies. Vice President Matthews did not appear concerned at all about his college complying with federal campus safety mandates, but more so that his college was doing things that improved the culture of his campus beyond compliance toward a healthier, safer collegiate community. He shared,

We are really interested in restorative justice and I was pleasantly surprised when the students who seemed most engaged in that conversation were victim's advocates who basically said we need to something that is not a repeat of the criminal justice system; we need something that will help victims heal and that will help our community heal, and that is not always a sort of legalistic, punitive process.

Restorative justice is not widely embraced by many institutions, but is viewed as a "way of better serving victims, preventing the recurrence of sexual misconduct and enhancing compliance with Title IX (Koss, Wilgus, & Williamsen, 2014)."

### **Legal Influences**

They have made me... I would say much more apt to pick up the phone and call a lawyer to tell you the truth and to make sure that we are doing... that what we're getting ready to do on some aspect of something is in keeping with those different acts. –Vice President Jones

Participants discussed how there are legal influences in how they work to address compliance expectations, in how they develop their policies, in how they consider making decisions, there is a change in how they interact with legal counsel, and they now must become more informed about the legal aspects of their work in relation to campus safety. Discussion of legal influences was not overtly expressed by Dean Martinez as opposed to the other two participants. She did not provide examples in which she interacted directly with legal counsel. I did not expect this, but rather believed this would be cause for concern because her campus met criteria in compliance level 1. However, this may be because Dean Martinez has not had any major incidents on her campus, “Have we had issues? Yes, we have, but to the extent of anything significant or major like you hear in the news, absolutely our college does not have those.” Dean Martinez likely would have more direct interaction with legal counsel if something major were to happen on her campus, and therefore legal influences would be a greater influence on her professional work.

On the campuses of the other two participants legal influences are more prominent. Mathews explained, “For the longest time it was a local process, the campus exclusively, but now of course it began to involve the federal government and legal experts.” Legal counsel is now directly involved in development of institutional policies and processes. It was apparent that legal counsel is involved in policy-making, specifically one SSAO described how she is depending on legal professionals to ensure

that their policies are in line with expectations set forth under Title IX and that they'll hold up if challenged in court.

At this campus I'm helping revise and improve and create the sexual misconduct process. That involved definitely lots of work with an attorney as well to make sure we were writing the right things, complying with the right things... primarily the three of us – worked with the attorney to get all that written and revised in our handbooks (Vice President Jones).

Legal counsel is now allowed into student adjudication processes at these campuses as well. Guidance provided by the U.S. Department of Education Office of Civil Rights calls for an advocate for both complainant and respondent. Oftentimes respondents will elect to have an attorney serve as their advocate.

It's a change for us because in our process what we had written is that the students have the right to have an advisor, but there weren't any attorneys involved in any of it; attorney's weren't allowed in. You could have an advisor but not an attorney. Now pretty clearly the advisors can be attorneys (Vice President Jones).

The role of legal counsel in adjudication processes can be limited by institutions, but it is not always easy to limit their influence. Mathews describes one way legal counsel can influence, "Sometimes the students who are participating get advice from their lawyers to delay; then it can take twice that long, easily." This involvement complicates student conduct processes and directly impacts the way conduct officials do their job. Additionally, the need for legal support and guidance at colleges is evident.

The other challenge is really the staffing and the resources that could be put into this, and it gets more and more legalistic and more requiring of lawyers will be put into it because lawyers don't volunteer; you have to pay them (Vice President Jones).

Participants' overall viewpoint of legal influences and how they approach it varies. Vice President Jones felt a need to rely more on legal counsel, "What of this do I need to pick up the phone and call the legal counsel about?" whereas Vice President Matthews believed that was a specific responsibility of the position He explained,

I'll just be very blunt; if I felt like my President or Board or others expected me to make decisions based on what I thought would protect the institution the most I would just say someone else needs to do this. I think if my decisions... if I didn't understand legal risk and I didn't understand the implications of the decisions we were making that would be sort of a fatal flaw. You have to understand those things, but if those are the things that are, at the end of the day, influencing your decisions fundamentally then I think you're in trouble. So I feel very, very fortunate in that way to have support from the board and from my boss.

While participants recognized the need and importance of legal concerns to be taken into consideration as a regular part of their job, they also believed that they should not hinder them from providing the highest level of care for their students, nor be a deterrent on how they respond to issues of campus sexual assault. Rather participants, specifically Vice Presidents Jones and Matthews, embraced this evolving factor. Though, Dean Martinez did not interact with legal counsel as frequently as the other two participants, all participants have not allowed legal factors to change their commitment to serving students and addressing campus safety issues. However they do think twice and more thoroughly when making decisions that could have legal ramifications.

### **Institutional Factors**

“We are a small campus and so many of us wear so many hats and so many of us interact with students on such a variety of levels.”  
–Dean Martinez

There were multiple areas specific to institutions that factored into participants' experiences. The main pattern related to institutional factors existing across all three participants is size of the institution. All three participants expressed that because they worked at a small college their response to campus safety was somehow impacted or limited. This included a limitation of human and financial resources. There were also structures and services established at some colleges as opposed to others. Another sub-theme that was present is institution specific history. Each of the colleges had its own

unique and different safety related occurrences which seems to have influenced participants' experiences.

### **Institutional Size.**

I think that was a challenge for us more or less from the jump because we are a small place. I could see at other big state schools for example where they had multiple people in offices, lots of different layers. If there was a conflict between a student and one of the people in the roles they often had another person. We have one-person offices in many places on campus and we all are very accustomed to wearing multiple hats, but that becomes really tenuous and sometimes untenable when these issues involve students who already have working relationships with people who have roles in the process. –Vice President Matthews

At small colleges, there are fewer resources and personnel to address requirements of federal campus safety legislation. Participants discussed amounts of personnel dedicated to working on these issues and the lack thereof as directly linked to the size of the institution. Both Vice President Matthews and Dean Martinez framed it as staff having to “wear multiple hats,” while Vice President Jones was specifically concerned with “depth of the staff” in being able to fill in if someone was out or if there was a conflict of interest.

The only thing, and this is very time-specific, but again because it's a small campus, small staff, the only time that I had concern that we were not prepared enough has to do with the depth of the staff. The people, the actual people, are not deep enough (Vice President Jones).

Because of the amount of staff available at small colleges it is demanding of SSAOs as well. Martinez shared, “It takes a toll on all of us because again we wear many hats. We can't necessarily devote 100% to one job that we have on campus so it creates a lot of professional stress on each of the staff.”

The ways in which participants interact with their students likely varies from those experiences of SSAOs at larger institutions. Often SSAOs at small colleges have a



relationship with or at least know students who are involved in incidences at greater levels because of the small size. Jones explained one area influenced, “So the appellate panel is looking at each of these people one by one and all of that and having to write back a very structured, very legal kind of response; that felt out of character because of knowing all these students.”

Participants felt somewhat susceptible, not because of a lack of knowledge, or missing structures and policies in place at their college, but because of the size of their institution. It seemed apparent that there is a level of vulnerability that exists amongst SSAOs at small colleges. It was not overtly expressed, but was evident that being from a small college placed participants and their colleges at a disadvantage. In addition to institution size, SSAOs also had other institutional factors to consider.

#### **Institutional Structures.**

“It’s everybody; in the case of these federal mandates it’s a collaborative effort between various individuals and offices on campus.”

–Dean Martinez

The types and varieties of services available for students, ways in which these services and processes at institutions are structured, and amount of training for participants and staff at their campuses varied. According to the college website of Vice President Matthews, they have sexual assault specific advocacy services, although primarily staffed by peer advocates. In the student handbook of Dean Martinez’s college, there are not any campus advocacy services listed, depending on community partnerships to meet this need. They do not have a mental health counselor either. However, Vice President Jones’ college has a counseling center that works directly with students and recently added a half time position for additional support, but still believes it is underfunded.

Each of the participants held different responsibilities within their institutions and their positions are structured differently within the organization as well. Vice President Matthews reports directly to the president, but also holds the position of Title IX coordinator. According to an organizational chart from his college, he has specific oversight of the dean of students who handles student discipline, the advocacy and prevention program which provides direct services and education, and campus safety, in addition to other programs. There are also deputy Title IX coordinators for staff and separately for faculty. The student handbook lists multiple boards including a judicial board which has student members and addresses disciplinary issues, a Title IX board that reviews Title IX specific cases, and the Honor Principle that addresses the honor code for students at their college.

Dean Martinez reports to the Provost and holds a dean of students title, yet is also listed as the registrar in her college's organizational chart. The Title IX coordinator is also the human resources director and campus safety and security reports to finance and administration. Dean Martinez is part of a core team who works to address campus safety which includes human resources director/Title IX coordinator, financial aid director, campus safety director, diversity and inclusion director, and director of advisement. Dean Martinez's role is limited more in scope compared to the two other participants. She describes her role,

If there is an incident on campus serving as Dean of Students I'm involved with being able to take care of the students themselves and find them resources or identify appropriate resources for them to be able to receive services that they need.

Vice President Jones reports directly to the President and is also the Dean of Students. The college has a Title IX director who is also human resources director. Vice

President Jones oversees campus police, which according to the campus organizational chart includes certified officers, the counseling center, and religious services, in addition to other programs.

The amount and types of training participants and their colleagues receive varies greatly. Dean Martinez stated, “I don’t have any formal training with it; I have no formal training at all.” Her college does not have resources to participate in training, but relies on colleagues for guidance. While Vice Presidents Matthews and Jones received more in-depth training through professional organizations such as NASPA. Additionally, there is wide-spread training across their campuses which has now impacted reporting. Vice President Jones explained the impact of this training permeating campus processes,

Now this process has said a college official cannot just hear talk, pretty much, and also the fact that there is the Title IX Coordinator, there is an investigation process –I heard this, who do I tell? I know because in my role I know all that but if I am a faculty member or if I’m another student or if I’m the RA I have some training but if I hear something now I think it’s pretty easy to find out not only who do I tell but also what’s going to happen because we’ve all written that down.

Structures in place at each college contributed to the compliance levels indicated in Figure 2. These senior student affairs officers acknowledged that they’re not always going to have control over what services are offered and what structures are in place, but despite this they will work with what they have toward the most favorable outcome for their students and institution.

**Institutional History.** There are some characteristics which appear unique to each campus. The historic role of campus mission and incidents of campus safety that take place play a large role for SSAOs and their institutions. Vice Presidents Matthews and Jones work at private colleges and appear to not have the same financial constraints as Dean Martinez experienced working at a public institution. Vice President Jones works

at a faith-based institution where providing programs to support religious life and spiritual development are essential as outlined in the official job description she provided during the study. Values of Vice President Matthews' college are strongly present in how campus safety is addressed. He described,

It's incumbent on each member of our community to think about honor and what it means to be a member of an honor-bound community, so they have to sort of define it for themselves. That's really sort of a hallmark of an education from our college, it's the honor principles.

An institutional standard is important because students know what conduct is expected of them at their college. This is helpful when trying to establish a culture of accountability. The college is holding students to a certain standard and they in turn will likely hold their peers accountable to higher standard.

In addition to the mission of the colleges, at times specific incidents take place and change the way in which institutions approach campus safety. An incident occurred on the campus of Vice President Matthews that was very visible in the media. He discusses how he was targeted in social media after an incident,

I was the subject of some very direct social media and other campaigns as sort of a symbol of the college not doing enough. That was a very painful and difficult time on our campus because students made it clear that they thought we weren't doing enough and it got very, very personal here.

Vice President Matthews reflected about this incident and its effects,

It was really, really hard and I've learned a lot about what it is to be in this role and be... for students to feel like you as a senior student affairs officer are standing between them and their rights.

Vice President Matthews did a lot of personal reflection about this incident to make sense of it and to continue on in his role as the SSAO to serve students. He realized that he couldn't take it personally, although it felt very personal. Rather his efforts focused on

identifying strategies and processes to improve the system at his college so students did not have to question what was being done. This led to a level at Vice President Matthews' college of *compliance with sustainability*. They were very intentional in their approach to addressing campus safety.

The approach of Vice President Jones' college changed from being reactive to proactive. She recognized her college had not been through anything major unlike Vice President Matthews. However, Vice President Jones shared that at a previous institution she was at there were some major issues that were addressed. The proactivity could be attributed to Vice President Jones' professional insight. She shared,

One other quick thing, it also could be that I'm not at a college that has been under any serious scrutiny because of not handling a situation in a way that... I haven't had an experience where this is something that's covered under Title IX or the Clery Act or whatever, that has gone sour. That might make a huge difference.

Dean Martinez hopes they can accomplish this, "I'd like to be more proactive with it to know what we can do, what we should do, than to have a knee-jerk reaction to it." Her ability to be proactive in addressing campus safety has been limited by scarce institutional resources and the lack of campus safety as an institutional priority. Also, because nothing major has happened on her campus, the institution is not forced to prioritize campus safety compliance.

Institutional specific factors such as size, structures, and institution history all contribute to how participants felt about their colleges' compliance efforts. Dean Martinez feels vulnerable because her college is small and they do not have additional structures and systems in place that many other schools do, nor do they have resources to enhance their offerings. Although Dean Martinez feels vulnerable, to date her college has not had any large issues come up in regard to campus safety. While Vice President Jones

felt more comfortable with structures in place at her college, she recognized some drawbacks to being a small college as it relates to human resources. Additionally, Vice President Jones acknowledged that her college had not yet dealt with negative publicity related to campus safety. Vice President Matthews felt optimistic about how his college is now addressing campus safety despite dealing with negative publicity directly targeted at him.

Negative publicity can be difficult for colleges to respond to. Unfavorable exposure through media, U.S. Department of Education Office of Civil Rights complaints, and student protests, among others is a catalyst for colleges to go above and beyond to limit bad publicity and protect their reputation. The less there is negative exposure the college has had, the less campus safety is likely to be a top priority. Usually campuses are reactive rather than proactive. Senior student affairs officers can have campus safety as a top priority, but true commitment to addressing campus safety must be an institutional priority if it is to reach higher levels of compliance (see Figure 2) and a campus culture of safety.

### **Influence of Educational, Professional, and Personal Backgrounds**

Empathy and compassion ... they're not hats that you take on and off; they're part of the way that you see the world. I definitely see it as an opportunity and I guess would even say obligation to work toward empathy and to try to understand where a person is coming from and support them based on that understanding. I hope that that improves the work that I do. It certainly informs the work that I do.

–Vice President Matthews

All three participants have different educational and personal backgrounds, as well as differing years of experience as SSAOs. Vice President Matthews is a clinical psychologist by training and has seven years as a SSAO, while Dean Martinez has over

thirty-five years of experience in higher education and a bachelor's degree unrelated to student affairs, with two years as SSAO. Vice President Jones has nearly forty years of experience in student affairs and a doctorate in counseling with fourteen years as SSAO.

The educational and professional background of participants influenced their perception about implementing federal campus safety mandates and working with students. In higher education and specifically student affairs, a diverse background is beneficial and should be advocated for (NASPA & APCA Professional Competencies). Supporting students from various walks of life is complemented nicely by a diversity of personnel similar to the diversity of the student population. Vice President Mathews discusses the importance of his background, experience, and willingness to keep learning as essential,

I didn't go to school to get a degree in education or student affairs. We all have our life narrative and mine was just different. I think now I realize with a combination of diligence and working hard and coming from a clinical background and being a student, like being interested in this stuff and willing to learn more about it, I feel like I am actually pretty qualified to do this work and have something to offer, to my college, and hopefully to the field.

Vice President Jones as someone in the student affairs field for nearly forty years was able to reflect on her life and experiences and how times have changed,

The experience of a person at my age and stage is that even at the beginning of going to college I would have been on the end of the population in the U.S. with the group that the voting ruled out...But then after some more years another structure took its place; there was more basically structuring around an environment that supported civil rights better, that supported women better, that supported underrepresented populations for the most part better and some growth there, definitely.

Dean Martinez as a professional without a traditional background in student affairs does bring thirty-five overall years of experience in higher education and recognized how her professional background contributes to service at her college. She explains,

I think that it takes an individual to serve in an institution like the institution I currently... for all the multiple hats that I have to wear. I don't think either profession, whether it be along the line of student affairs or the line of the nuts and bolts of keeping a university or college doors open. But I think it comes from years of experience and I've been fortunate enough to be able to be involved with many different initiatives on this campus and at my previous institution that have given me a wide range of professionals that I can count on or that I can receive counsel from.

I believe if Dean Martinez had a stronger background in student affairs education and experience in student affairs specifically, her campus may be further along in compliance than level 1, *minimal compliance*. Experience and education in student affairs is necessary for campuses hiring SSAOs with appropriate preparation for the many complexities asked of them, including campus safety and compliance.

Two of the three participants made mention of their family backgrounds and how it shaped them into the leaders they are today. Vice President Matthews specifically shared about familial influences and upbringing. He shared,

I think my parents had a huge influence on me personally and professionally actually. I think my dad in particular was very deeply engaged in the Civil Rights Movement and social justice ever since I was a little kid and remains so. He's involved in higher education as well and so I'm sure that had a huge impact. My mom... I was very close to my mom; she died when I was in college and I think that had a huge impact. It was very unplanned and sort of circuitous to end up doing the therapeutic work, the counseling work, but I think that definitely creates a mindset that influences the work. Just like anybody, your family, your upbringing, your education, your early career; all of those things.

Dean Martinez commented that her upbringing impacted her sense of how others should be treated and respected. She explained,

I was raised in a family where people are people regardless of anything; regardless of religion, color, sexual orientation, any of that particular kind of thing and still know that we still live in a society that there may be groups of people who think that they're better than other groups of people just makes me shake my head.



Participants made meaning by making connections with students and colleagues based on who they are as people and as professionals. Participants also made meaning by drawing from their reservoir of prior knowledge and experience. The SSAOs were able to use who they are and what they know professionally to address campus safety.

### **Leadership Perspectives**

“[Leadership is] Being able to bring the people together to be able to know that this is our responsibility and that we need the right people at the table to understand what the requirements and what the expectations are.”

–Dean Martinez

The leadership approaches to campus safety has common characteristics amongst participants. These characteristics include a strong sense of collaboration, communication, and how participants take care of themselves while doing this work.

**Collaboration.** Collaboration was a key factor with all participants’ approach to addressing campus safety on their campuses. They all referred to working as part of a team. Vice President Matthews indicated the Sexual Assault Response Team (SART) on his campus who “primarily serve in an advisory capacity to me on most decisions that relate to Title IX and VAWA.” Taking it a step further he shared how collaboration is essential, and yet how ultimately as a leader, being responsible and accountable for decisions is important.

The most important thing for me is collaboration and to be open to different ideas and I think that remains true. I think what I would add though is it’s become more and more clear as my role here has evolved that I’m expected to make decisions, I make very few decisions without first consulting and collaborating with the people on my team. It’s one thing to collaborate and consult and then at the end of the day I really do have to make decisions and then be accountable for those decisions. I think what I’m trying to be is a hybrid between someone who’s very collaborate and open to alternative viewpoints and someone who’s able to make decisions and be fully accountable for them (Vice President Matthews).

For Dean Martinez, collaboration with colleagues across campus is essential for serving students. She explained,

Students' needs are met through collaboration and through keeping your ear to the ground, through being available and visible on campus, to being able to share with your peers what your responsibilities are and where you're located and what they can do and what I can do or what anybody can do on campus to be able to ensure student success emotionally, physically and mentally while on our campus.

Vice President Jones also believed strongly in collaboration on campus, but also shared a need to collaborate with community partners to provide services for students. "We also work with some off-campus entities that are – rape crisis programs that are not on our campus but are in our community, our county." Collaboration was identified as the right thing to do as a leader, also for the institution, but primarily for students.

A sense of collaborativeness, a sense of ethics, a sense of caring and a sense of being successful, not only for myself professionally and personally but being successful for those that I work with on a regular basis (Vice President Jones).

Addressing campus safety issues on campuses was clearly identified as a team effort. Utilizing a team effort helps SSAOs with not feeling that they are tackling this all alone, but rather there's a support system in place. A collaborative approach reassures SSAOs that they do not need to carry the load alone. This backing helps lessen burnout of SSAOs, but most importantly enhances services for students.

**Communication.** Communication was also found to be a crucial characteristic of participants' leadership in addressing campus safety. As SSAOs, participants communicate to a variety of constituencies including their campus community, boards, and with colleagues at other institutions. Open and ongoing communication is necessary.

Our president is adamant about putting out communication to students – well it goes out to the whole campus – that we respect each other, we're expected to respect each other, we're expected to be helpful, we're expected to help others and if there is a point in time when someone doesn't feel like that's what they're

being afforded certainly the President had maintained an open door, the Dean of Students has an open door (Dean Martinez).

It is also imperative that communication with students throughout investigative and adjudication processes is established. This is one way to ensure that processes are fair as required by Title IX.

So we've found that one of the things that complainants in particular but participants across the board tell us is that communication is really helpful. So we try to tell students ok, we're in this phase; at this point it's going to take us at least a week to get to the next phase. You will hear from us by this date no matter what with an update, hopefully with additional information. So that way you're not leaving people hanging having to guess what's going on (Vice President Matthews).

Clear communication to all parties involved in adjudication cases is necessary so steps along the way are not left open for interpretation. If students are not aware of what's going on they may become skeptical which can lead to mistrust of the institution.

Communication with students must be intentional and continuous.

Vice President Matthews also discussed expectations for communication upwards to the college's president and board of trustees. He shared,

I was really kind of on point to make sure that the college was doing what it needed to do...trying to make sure that the Board of Trustees through their fiduciary responsibility for the college knew what was going on.

Trust amongst institutional leadership is also necessary for SSAOs to feel confident that they are handling campus safety issues appropriately. Trust is established through open communication. Senior student affairs officers communicate intentionally to students, internally with colleagues, and upward and laterally to other institutional leaders.

All three participants emphasized a need for networking and communication externally with colleagues at other institutions and through professional associations to help address campus safety requirements at their colleges.

I think it's really important to have an open line of communication with colleagues and counterparts; people who do the work at other places, because the risk is that you become insular in your focus and you kind of just think about your institution (Vice President Matthews).

Reach out to your counterparts; don't reinvent the wheel, be able to ask for how they might do something, what is their protocol, who is their team of first responders – those particular kinds of things to be able to do the professional outreach (Dean Martinez).

I started making sure that when I went to NASPA and those other kinds of things that we go to that I went to the programs that were about the new policies that were being thought about... I think it has caused some of our national associations to become more important to probably all of us than being able to get full professional development out of state and regional associations and entities because interpreting what's going on at the national level had become more important now (Vice President Jones).

There was an unspoken agreement that it's okay to depend on others for guidance and support. In senior leadership positions it is often expected that a SSAO be able to handle many situations that arise without direction from a college president. Instead, these leaders can call upon colleagues on their campus and within the student affairs profession more widely. A spirit of collegiality exists within the profession and provides support to SSAOs without causing feelings of inferiority.

**Self-care.** According to participants, the student affairs profession can be stressful and exhausting. I often times tell my staff, "You can't pour from an empty cup, and you can't help others if you don't take care of yourself." Self-care was a theme that came up with participants. Vice Presidents Matthews and Jones had regular and healthy routines for self-care which included exercise, prayer, meditation, reading, regular health

checkups, regularly scheduled days off, and a strong support system. Support systems should exist at work and can be helpful for personal growth.

I think we all debrief with each other in a way that allows for all of us to be more resilient than we probably would if... If we hadn't had the experiences before and if we weren't using each other as good sounding boards and be able to say, 'Yeah, that was hard but I think something good came out of it. Let me show you what that was,' or, 'Let me tell you about another conversation. Maybe that one didn't go so well, but let me tell you what happened to that person later,' that kind of thing (Vice President Jones).

Support systems in personal lives are important as well, although they vary from those at work because family members and friends cannot relate, whereas colleagues can.

Additionally some information has to remain confidential and cannot be shared with others.

I have a wonderful family and a great group of friends and fundamentally the most important thing in my life is to be a good dad and a good husband and a good son and a good friends. So that is self-care in a sense because I think that feeds me and gives me solace and strength in a lot of ways. I've gotten much better at taking some time away and not feeling guilty about it, so going on vacation with family and spending the occasional day, just a personal day... Yeah, that's the kind of thing that I think is actually essential. I think self-care has a way of sounding a little bit fluffy, but I think for people in our positions it's essential (Vice President Matthews).

Admittedly so, Dean Martinez confided self-care is lacking on her part.

You know I don't do a really good job of that, I really don't because I take a lot of this home with me. I mean I can compartmentalize it when I need to but it's never far from my mind to do what I need to do in order for others to be successful, so I'm not really good at it. I will take care of others before I take care of myself and at points in time that's lead to, if nothing else, it's led to stressful health issues (Dean Martinez).

Participants recognized that practicing self-care had to be intentional and done regularly. It is also necessary for them to maintain balance in their personal and professional lives. Self-care assisted the SSAOs with staying motivated in their work despite struggles, frustration, and setbacks.

## Conclusion

So I just try really hard to remember that the path of least resistance is just to spend your time and energy on the problem. I think what's really important is to make sure you're strategic in your focus and that you understand you're trying to set the stage to foster an environment in which students can thrive, and that's both in dealing with problems but also in trying to make sure people have opportunities to get the most out of their education.

–Vice President Matthews

Overall, participants' perceptions about expectations to comply with federal campus safety mandates along with specific compliance measures at their institutions appeared to influence how they made sense of the intent of federal campus legislation and how they viewed its future. Participants made meaning of their experiences through different perspectives. Dean Martinez was very frustrated and felt "survivorship" was how to make sense of how her college was complying. Vice President Jones viewed the expectation for compliance as a tool to "educate" in an alternative way. Vice President Matthews viewed federal campus safety compliance as a "civil rights" issue and felt strongly providing fair and equitable processes is the "ethical" thing to do. Furthermore, he elaborated,

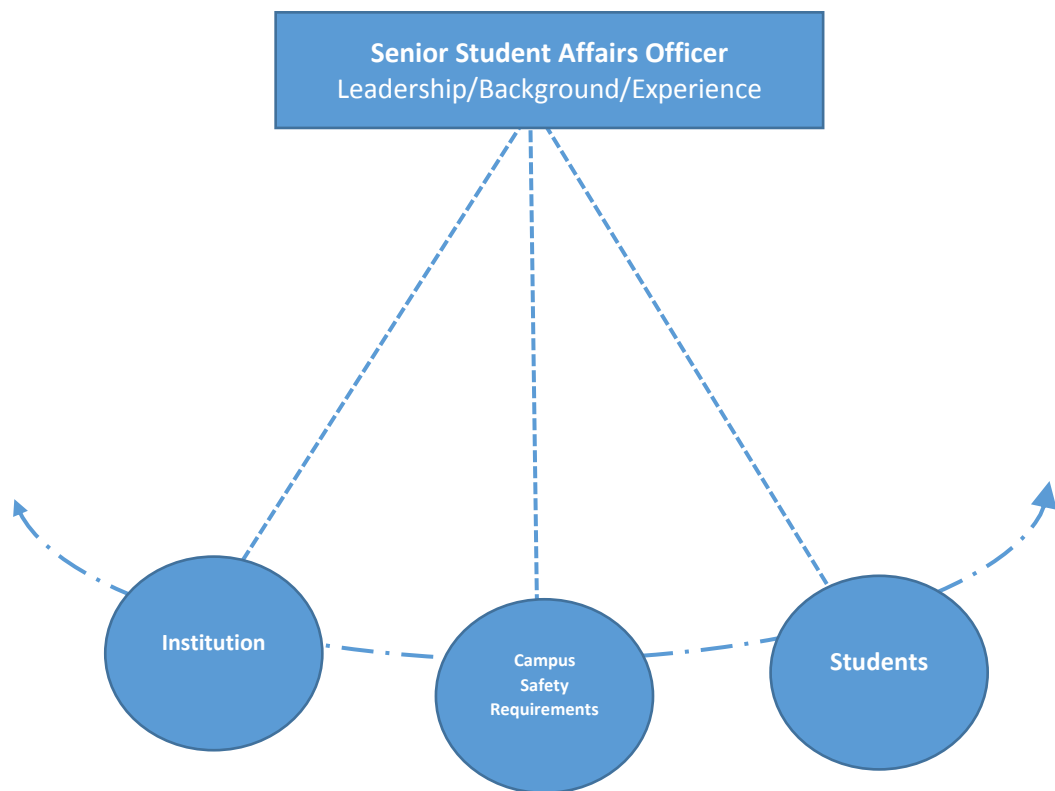
Compliance is a starting place and beyond compliance is about how do we make these campuses truly inclusive and how do we remove barriers that might otherwise prevent people from getting the full benefit of an educational program? It sound really simple but it's not and I think that's really the key. I would like to think that a social justice lens would inform what we're trying to do but I think fundamentally you have to have a commitment to fairness and a commitment to education, and then the compliance part of it doesn't kind of obscure your vision for the other really important parts.

Participants believed that federal campus safety legislation was beneficial for students at their colleges although it required more work on their part. The SSAOs made meaning of their individual experiences by understanding that they are in the student

affairs profession to improve experiences of students, thereby supporting them to achieve positive life outcomes beyond their time in college.

### **Overall Phenomenon-*The Pendulum***

To best capture and explain the phenomenon experienced by the senior student affairs officers in this study, I developed a visual model and metaphor to illustrate (see Figure 3). Participants made meaning of their overall experiences implementing federal campus safety requirements by recognizing that there are many things they must balance to adequately address the intent of requirements with the expectations of their campuses and the needs of their students.



*Figure 3.* Pendulum model displaying phenomenon of senior student affairs officers experience implementing federal campus safety mandates

Vice Presidents Matthews and Jones both specifically made mention of the word “pendulum” to describe how they felt in balancing federal campus safety mandates, with structures and resources at their institutions, as well and most importantly with needs and expectations of their students.

Sometimes for example the impetus for the work in 2011 in OCR [U.S. Department of Education Office of Civil Rights] was really about victims and it was overdue. There was a reason for that; a very good reason for that. I think – people use this phrase all the time; the pendulum, right – so boy you have to make absolutely sure that your processes are fair and equitable for everybody involved (Vice President Matthews).

So the pendulum swings, and I’m not against the pendulum swinging because sometimes it does swing too far one way or the other...In fact the balance for me is in my role of making sure the students are educated and the students understand process and effective ways to report and all about the students is number one because that definitely and clearly is my job; that’s a huge piece (Vice President Jones).

The top anchor of the pendulum is the individual leader. Their own leadership style and characteristics, experiences, and background keep them grounded in who they are as senior student affairs officers and human beings. The motion, or gravity, that keeps the pendulum moving in balance is the leader’s persistence and perseverance. Although experiences of participants becomes difficult or frustrating at times, participants all discussed moving forward and not giving up. They have had to address compliance requirements as part of the institutional weight in the pendulum, including developing policies and processes, responding to external pressures from parents, community members, alumni, board members, and others.

I think if you spend most of your day on most days dealing with really serious problems it’s very difficult to have a mindset around building programs and resources that can help students thrive. There’s the firefighter mentality where you’re looking for the hottest, the most serious problem, and then there’s this notion of trying to support students. Really I need to be able to do both and I think that’s good because we keep an eye on the fact that Title IX fundamentally is



about making sure people are not denied access to or benefit of the academic program (Vice President Matthews).

Participants made meaning with the pendulum phenomenon by characterizing their experiences as having to have grit. The SSAOs recognized that they have to remain steadfast in their work, specifically as they addressed campus safety mandates. They were going to “keep on keeping on” despite any obstacles, challenges, or barriers they face. Participants’ motivation for this resilient mindset is care for their students. At the end of the day, they’re in the student affairs profession to help support the betterment of college students.

## Chapter 5

### Discussion and Recommendations

To me this is a campus-wide issue; it's an issue that directly impacts all the constituencies in our community. So I see it kind of as my job to figure out how people can engage across the institution most effectively with these issues and not overwhelm them because really at the end of the day that's my job. —Vice President Matthews

Federal campus safety mandates are expected to be implemented by colleges and universities across the country with no additional funding to do so. Senior student affairs officers primarily take the lead on this initiative because of their student centered role on college campuses. What participants in this study experienced varied based on factors at their institution and their own background. Overall the phenomenon participants experienced while implementing federal campus safety mandates can be characterized metaphorically as a “pendulum,” balancing needs of their students with competing expectations of campus safety requirements, institutional demands and limitations, as well as external concerns of parents and community members. In this chapter I provide an overall discussion of the research question, summarize the meaning of findings, explore implications for practice, and offer options for future research.

#### Research Question Discussion

The research question I explored was:

**What meaning do senior student affairs officers at small colleges and universities make of their experiences as they respond to federal campus safety mandates and what are implications for practice?**

Based on my findings from this study, the overall experiences of senior student affairs responding to federal campus safety mandates varied amongst participants. Variations

appeared to occur because of different individual backgrounds and levels of experience as well as diverse factors at the institutions. Themes identified in the findings include: (1) measures of and perspectives about compliance, (2) legal influences, (3) institution-specific factors and structures, (4) influence of educational and professional background, and (5) perspectives on leadership.

### **Meaning of Findings**

The foundation for this research study was framed through a policy lens, through context for institutional compliance, and considerations for individual student affairs leaders. Overall findings from this study showed individual experiences varied, but there are also commonalities amongst participants. A discussion of the meaning of findings in relation to literature is presented below.

Examining policy framework in comparison to findings of this study showed that generally all participants are aware of the Clery Act, Title IX, and the Campus Sexual Assault Violence Elimination Act. The participants discussed how they approached compliance with all three policies, but primarily focused their efforts on Title IX compliance. This may be because the *Dear Colleague Letter* of 2011 is what reignited national attention to campus safety issues. Also the *Dear Colleague Letter* of 2014 required institutions of higher education to have a designated Title IX coordinator. The expectation for campuses to add a staff position or this responsibility to another position is not something that can easily be ignored, either you have a Title IX coordinator or you do not. Additionally, Title IX calls specifically for increased transparency in how campuses address and respond to campus sexual assault. The levels of transparency at the participants' colleges varied. At Dean Martinez's college there appeared to be

transparency at a lower level because information was more difficult to find on the website, for example. I do not believe this was intentional, but rather a result of not having as many structures in place and meeting minimum compliance requirements. However, at the college of Vice President Matthews transparency appeared to be something embraced by his institution. Their processes are very clear and there are even direct links and information about the United States Department of Education Office of Civil Rights present throughout their website and policies. This is a clear sign of transparency.

Previous research specifically related to perspectives about the Clery Act suggests that “a benefit of the Clery Act is improved relationships amongst campus stakeholders (Gregory & Janosik, 2003, pp. 763-777 and Janosik & Plummer, 2005, pp. 116-129).” This perspective was clearly evident in the study. Participants talked about how they are all part of a team of campus stakeholders who discuss campus safety issues regularly. Improved collaboration across campuses does not exist solely because of the Clery Act but is more likely a result of renewed focus on campus safety in general, and established trust amongst colleagues.

As this study focused on leadership of senior student affairs officers at small colleges, it is important to deeply understand how the findings relate to different dynamics of leadership. Preskill and Brookfield (2009) ascertain that “leaders should place learning at the center of their practice (p. 6)” and discuss highlights of learning leadership as “a capacity to learn from experience; desire to explore new areas of knowledge and practice; readiness to critique, revise, and sometimes abandon past assumptions in light of new events or insights...(p. 14).” Implementation of federal

campus safety mandates was a new expectation and experience for participants. Participants realized and accepted that they needed to learn a new and different way of doing their job in order to address compliance requirements. This is an on-going and continuous process. Senior student affairs officers had to humble themselves and recognize this to address implementation.

We've learned a great deal from our experience with our staff and faculty and in particular our students and I would say that we continue to learn; you're never done with this work (Vice President Matthews).

Another important aspect of leadership exists regarding how senior student affairs officers are expected by their institution to address compliance requirements and the expectations they have of their colleagues. "Trust places an obligation on both the truster and the person in whom trust is placed. It is the foundation of success in leadership... Trust is central to empowerment, expectation and predictability (Fairholm, 2000, pp. 91-92)." Trust is often a silent expectation, not always overtly expressed. Amongst all participants, their supervisors entrusted them to take the lead as point person or as leader of a group to address campus safety. Trust of participants' colleagues and staff also existed. There is a strong presence of dependency and trust established with others who all shared a part in addressing campus safety.

In the study, there is no doubt as to whether or not implementation of federal campus safety mandates was necessary and the right thing to do. All participants believed addressing these requirements provides equity for their students, especially women. There is an unwavering belief this is important. I believe this is rooted in the ethics of each of the SSAOs. Shapiro and Stefkovich (2011) provide insight into ethical paradigms for decision making by educational leaders. They explore ethics of justice, ethics of

critique, ethics of care, and propose ethics of the profession paradigm (pp. 10-27).

Utilizing these ethical paradigms, they developed a model displaying the paradigm for professional ethics (see Figure 4) recognizing that “consideration of those moral aspects unique to the profession and the questions that arise as educational leaders become more aware of their own personal and professional codes of ethics (p. 19).” This model helps to illuminate how senior student affairs officers should strive for navigating ethical decision making in an effort to keep the best interest of students in mind.



*Figure 4.* Diagrammatic representation of the ethic of the profession (Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2011)

Different sections of the model appear to be parallel somewhat with the understanding of how participants experienced ethical dilemmas in their works as SSAOs. The first section, *standards of the profession*, represents how things are done as SSAOs across the profession in relation to responsibilities they hold. Taking implementation of federal campus safety mandates into consideration, the *CORE*

Blueprint, discussed earlier in this manuscript, is an example of standards of the profession participants rely on to make informed ethical decisions. The second section, *professional code of ethics*, is criteria outlined and set forth by professional organizations such as the National Association for Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA) and American College Personnel Association (ACPA). The participants shared how they utilized these organizations to reflect on how they approached situations on their campus. The third section, *ethics of the community*, refers to how things are done within a specific campus community. Recognizing there are not uniform approaches across institutions, the ethics of a college community is likely rooted in the mission, vision, and values of the institution, priorities the college identifies, and the manner in which the institution has regarded ethical behavior. Vice President Matthews articulated this most clearly throughout the policies and expectations of the members of his campus community. The fourth section, *personal code of ethics*, is how individual morals and values come into context with professional work of senior student affairs officers. All participants brought their personal identities and ethics into their work and into how they addressed the implementation of federal campus safety mandates at their campuses. The next section, *individual professional codes*, which is not solely those of student affairs professionals, but also additional professional codes participants brought through prior experience. Vice President Matthews brings professional codes he possesses as a clinician, whereas Dean Martinez engages those she brings as a registrar, and Vice President Jones draws from those of the counseling profession. There is not a way to separate out all professional knowledge and competencies that participants hold; rather they are able to use it to enhance and influence how they address campus safety. This model displays a

relationship between various ethical paradigms educational leaders face. To me, this is a representation of yet another way in which senior student affairs officers have to balance the swinging pendulum.

### **Implications and Recommendations for Practice**

Senior student affairs officers could use the compliance level model (see Figure 2) as a basic framework to evaluate and assess their institution's level of compliance. Doing this would be an initial step that SSAOs could build off of. Nationally, small colleges and universities could be identified based on their compliance level. By doing this, there will be institutions at a higher compliance level that institutions at a lower level could connect with. There will be an identification of what is in place, how the process happened, and what were any challenges associated with obtaining the highest compliance level. Although not everything will work the same at every place, there's no need to reinvent the wheel.

The professional and personal development of senior student affairs officers is extremely important to success of the leaders themselves, and also to the long-term success of their students. Often SSAOs gain knowledge, insight, and practical wisdom from on the job training that occurs throughout many years of work in higher education. There's a need for continuous learning and openness to new perspectives and evolving policies and societal changes. Senior student affairs officers should be supported by supervisors and institutional leaders especially related to dealing with campus safety issues. Senior student affairs officers should be intentional to develop a professional network that provides opportunities to discuss best practices in addressing campus safety. Although informal networking or an occasional webinar or training session centers



around this topic occurs, leaders are not able to really delve into these issues and do not have a dedicated group to ask questions of or receive support from. NASPA has knowledge communities that focus on certain topics that are of importance to the student affairs professionals. Although there is a campus safety knowledge community, there is not one specific for SSAOs working to address campus safety issues.

In addition to SSAOs initiating professional networks, it is important for professional organizations such as NASPA or ACPA through their leadership preparation programs to openly discuss these issues and how to navigate them at the institutional level while maintaining the best interests of students. For example, NASPA's New Vice President for Student Affairs Leadership Institute is focused on orienting new professionals who have been in a senior leadership position for less than two years (NASPA). This would be an ideal opportunity to train and mentor on how to handle and balance difficult issues in a senior leadership role. Another recommendation is for NASPA and ACPA to develop executive level competencies as opposed to only core competencies that guide all student affairs professionals. This would take it up a level and provide frameworks to help guide senior level professionals specifically.

It is difficult and practically impossible for student affairs professionals to separate who they are personally from their professional work. Therefore, it is important for SSAOs to find ways and necessary support to be self-reflective, bring more of who they are individually into their work, but also for them to encourage and embrace their staff in doing the same. The ability to do this compliments, supports, and celebrates students' diversity as well. Together, with staff and students, there will be multiple

authentic perspectives which assists with tackling difficult issues facing higher education and society in general.

A final recommendation is focused on self-care. As senior student affairs professionals, self-care must be practiced and an expectation of staff to do the same. An established group for self-care accountability with colleagues is a positive suggestion to ensure SSAOs are practicing what they preach, but also to maintain a healthy body and mind so they can continue serving students despite difficulties they may face. This practice is aligned with NASPA's personal and ethical foundation competency which includes a "critique, and adherence to a holistic and comprehensive standard of ethics and commitment to one's own wellness and growth."

### **Implications for Future Research**

The focus of this study was on a specific type of leader, institution size, and a targeted phenomenon, the implementation of federal campus safety mandates. In future there are different areas related to this research study to be explored to contribute further to the literature. Perspectives from other institutional leaders, such as presidents or chancellors could be examined. An analysis of their experiences would provide insight into how addressing issues on their campuses is prioritized in comparison with all other needs of an institution of higher education. Benefits from conducting a study with this population may include understanding relationships with and expectations of senior student affairs officers and other top institutional leaders.

Another area of future research includes a focus on specific types of small institutions. In my study, there were two private institutions and one public. It appeared that a lack of financial resources was not nearly as much of a concern at the private

colleges as it was at the public one. There is potential difference in how the public versus private institutions prioritize these issues. This may be related to a reliance on state appropriations and current fiscal conditions that exist in the states of public institutions. Additional research conducted comparing four year and two year schools would also benefit higher education across the country in regard to how federal campus safety mandates are addressed overall in the post-secondary arena. Also, other specific types of institutions should be researched. Priorities of a faith-based institution or a minority serving institution are often outlined in institution's mission, vision, and values. An examination of experiences of SSAOs at institutions with similar priorities could provide an opportunity to highlight these types of institutions as well. Finally, research is needed on experiences of SSAOs at larger institutions as well.

It is evident from this study that size of the institution plays a role in how these types of cases are addressed as well. There may be more autonomy for SSAOs at small colleges compared to larger institutions. At larger colleges and universities, the amount of staff designated to address these issues is likely greater, there may be more resources, and they probably have bigger athletic programs. As captured in the film, *Hunting Ground* (Ziering, & Dick, 2015), prominent athletic programs can also impact how institutions address campus sexual assault. Research with SSAOs at large colleges and universities may highlight differences in comparison to small institutions.

All three participants had different individual and professional backgrounds. The gender and ethnicity of participants varied. Vice President Matthews identified as a white heterosexual male. Dean Julia Martinez identified as a Hispanic heterosexual female. Vice President Jones identified as a white heterosexual female. While this provided a

varied perspective based on gender and ethnic identity, further research may include considerations for senior student affairs professionals and intersections of other identities including sexual orientation. Ethnic and gender minorities, but especially women of color, may approach implementation of campus safety as SSAOs different than non-minorities. Literature surrounding women of color as higher education leaders exists. However less literature exists specifically including women of color as SSAOs because there are far fewer ethnic minority women serving in this role. Additionally, there is not literature directly exploring women of color as SSAOs and how they approach and manage difficult decisions and tasks related to implementing federal campus safety mandates. More research on survivorship among SSAOs would be beneficial to SSAOs during trying times, but also would provide insight for future SSAOs. I am aware of minimal research related to experiences of Title IX coordinators. Additional literature regarding Title IX coordinators and the professional intersection with senior student affairs officers would be valuable as well because both positions directly address campus safety.

A final area for future research includes gaining perspectives of students at small colleges and universities. Insight provided by students may assist SSAOs with ensuring students are directly informing the approach on their campuses. Conducting research with student survivors and perpetrators would provide insight into how students experience the institutional processes designed to be fair and impartial. Perspectives from a general population of students would act as an evaluative tool to determine institutional compliance and students' perceptions about campus safety. Research with student employees such as resident assistants, peer advocates, and peer educators would provide

insight into how students balance professional obligations with being a student. Students' perspectives would help ensure institutions are in fact providing a student-centered approach, thus serving as a checks and balance system.

### **Conclusion**

Through this study, I set out to understand and make meaning of the experiences of senior student affairs officers implementing federal campus safety mandates at small colleges and universities. My research established that participants made sense of the phenomena by characterizing it as a swinging pendulum in which they balance expectations of students, campus and community members, institutional needs, and requirements for compliance of federal campus safety mandates. Further, I found varying levels of campus safety compliance and was able to visually demonstrate this in the *Blea Model of Campus Community Culture of Safety* (see Figure 2). Understanding the varying levels of campus safety compliance is important because it sets a benchmark by which institutions of higher education can assess their campus' efforts. This model is a tool which provides the opportunity for colleges to move beyond compliance to develop campus community cultures of safety, care, and advocacy that does not necessitate reinventing the wheel. Institutions of higher education that are at a higher compliance level could share with other institutions what worked for their college and what did not. This provides a starting point for institutions that have room for improvement. This assessment and sharing of information can be coordinated through a NASPA knowledge community or institute designed for senior student affairs officers to specifically gain technical assistance in addressing unfunded federal campus mandates.

When this study was first initiated expectations for institutions of higher education to implement federal campus safety mandates was extremely important under the Obama Administration. Currently the future of this requirement is unclear. It is yet to be known if compliance of the Clery Act, Title IX, and the Campus Sexual Assault Violence Elimination Act will continue to be required and even if the U.S. Department of Education who's tasked with enforcing compliance will exist. However, all three participants in this study strongly believed if there were no longer expectation to comply they would do everything they could at their own colleges to ensure that students had access to necessary services, a fair and transparent process would remain, and continued collaboration with colleagues to maintain the level of support and care their students deserve would exist. They believed that a continuation of services and support for students is the right and ethical thing to do.

Overall expectations for SSAOs to meet requirements of federal campus safety mandates has been met with tenacious, determined, and dedicated professionals who persevere by bringing their professional and personal whole selves to their work to tackle what is placed in front of them. It is unclear if this is a result of training and professional development of SSAOs or if it has more to do with grit that they possess individually. Although SSAOs can feel alone when tasked with implementing federal campus safety mandates, it is important to understand and recognize that there are multiple avenues for support; either through colleagues, professional associations, or training and leadership development opportunities. Participants in this study are admirable and courageous leaders who are resilient in the face of changing and challenging times.

## Appendix A

## Round 1 Semi-Structured Interview Questions

## Institutional Focus

1. What is your understanding of the Clery Act?
  - a. What is your experience implementing the Clery Act?
  - b. Would you share a story or example to illustrate some of this?
  - c. How have these experiences affected you and your role as SSAO?
2. What is your understanding of Title IX?
  - a. What is your experience implementing Title IX?
  - b. Would you share a story or example to illustrate some of this?
  - c. How have these experiences affected you and your role as SSAO?
3. What is your understanding of the Campus Sexual Assault Violence Elimination (SaVE) Act, also referred to as VAWA section 304?
  - a. What is your experience implementing the Campus SaVE Act?
  - b. How has this experience affected you and your role as SSAO?
4. Please share what some of the challenges of implementing these federal mandates.
  - a. Financial? (examples/stories)
  - b. Institutional Support? (examples/stories)
  - c. Human Resources? (examples/stories)
  - d. Campus Culture (of dating, relationships, treatment of women, etc.)?  
(examples/stories)
  - e. Personal/Professional challenges for you?
  - f. Other?

5. What are some successes or accomplishments your institution has experienced with implementing these federal mandates? (examples/stories)
  - a. How do you feel/what do you think of these successes?
  - b. What was your role in these successes?
6. What are some areas for improvement?
  - a. What do you believe your role should be in relation to these improvements?
7. In what ways is your institution prepared to implement these mandates? In what ways is it not?
  - a. How do you feel/what do you think about this?
  - b. How do these institutional choices affect you?
8. Can you explain your specific involvement with developing your institutional policies regarding campus safety?
  - a. Educational literature?
  - b. Student services?
  - c. Your leadership?
9. Whose responsibility is it at your institution to ensure policy compliance?
  - a. Educational programming?
  - b. Annual training?
  - c. How does this affect you?
10. Who is responsible for providing content for inclusion on your website?
11. What else would you like to share about your experiences that I didn't know to ask?



## Appendix B

## Round 2 Semi-Structured Interview Questions

## Individual Leadership Focus

1. What have you thought of or reflected about since the last time we spoke?
  - a. Has anything occurred since then on your campus or in your work that you would like to share?
2. What is your title and who do you report to?
3. What are your responsibilities as the senior student affairs officer at your institution?
  - a. How have federal campus safety mandates changed your role and/or responsibilities?
  - b. How do you balance these many responsibilities?
4. How prepared do you feel you are personally/professionally to implement these mandates?
5. What kind of additional support, experience, training or other would be helpful to you in implementing these mandates?
6. If you could offer advice to other senior student affairs officers regarding implementing these mandates, what would it be?
7. Please share what some of the challenges are in implementing these federal mandates.
  - a. Pressure/expectations from those you report to? From Community?  
(examples/stories)
  - b. Personal? (examples/stories)
  - c. Other?
8. How has working to address these requirements affected you professionally?  
(examples/stories)

- a. Personally? (examples/stories)
  - b. In other ways? (examples/stories)
9. There are evolving concerns regarding the recent presidential election. If the mandates were no longer required, what would you do?
  - a. How would you describe the current political social climate and how does it affect you as you lead the implementation of these mandates? What if anything has changed?
10. What else would you like to share that I didn't know to ask?

## Appendix C

## Round 3 of Semi-Structured Interview Questions

1. What have you thought of or reflected about since the last time we spoke?
  - a. Has anything occurred since then on your campus or in your work that you would like to share?
2. Please help me understand how these types of cases are handled at your institution once reported?
3. How have others at your institution responded to these requirements? How has this impacted you?
4. What have been some of the challenges implementing the federal campus safety requirements while having competing interests of different student groups (identity groups-LGBTQ, minority student groups, veteran students etc.)?
  - a. How do you ensure that all students' needs are met? That they're all served?
  - b. How do you ensure policies are inclusive, fair, etc.?
  - c. How do you feel about this?
5. What type of pressures do you feel as it relates to competing student interests?
6. How do you feel about these competing student needs as it relates to the budget across your division?
7. What would you recommend to senior student affairs officers newly coming into this position?
8. What strengths do you bring to implementing federal campus safety mandates?
9. What do you struggle with most personally as it relates to the implementation of federal campus safety mandates?
10. How does addressing these issues on your campus and specifically with your students affect you personally?
  - a. What types of feelings are brought up as a result of doing this work?
    - i. Feelings of protecting others?
    - ii. Feelings of anger? Frustration? Stress?
  - b. What in your own history contributes to this?

11. How has your job description evolved since the requirements of implementing federal campus safety mandates has taken place?
12. What else would you like to share about your experiences that I didn't know to ask?

Appendix D

Documents Analyzed

1. Institution Websites
2. Annual Security Reports
3. Prevention Education and Services Websites
4. Policies of the Prevention and Response to Campus Violence
5. Organizational Charts

## Appendix E

## Informed Consent Form

**What are Senior Student Affairs Officers' Experience with Implementing Federal Campus Safety Mandates at Small Colleges and Universities?**

## Informed Consent for Individual Interviews

## Introduction

You are being asked to participate in a research study conducted by Kimberly J. Blea, who is the Researcher and Doctoral Candidate, under the guidance of Dr. Alicia F. Chávez – Associate Professor, from the College of Education - Department of Teacher Education, Educational Leadership and Policy at the University of New Mexico.

With this study I seek to understand senior student affairs officers' experiences while implementing federal campus safety mandates including the Clery Act, Title IX, and the Campus Sexual Assault Violence Elimination Act. You are being asked to take part in this study because you are a senior student affairs officer at a small college or university with responsibility for implementation of these mandates. The overarching question I want to explore is:

**What are the experiences of senior student affairs officers as they implement federal campus safety mandates at small colleges and universities?**

If you have any questions, please ask me as the researcher.

What will happen if I decide to participate?

If you agree to participate, the following things will happen:

- You will sign the consent form.
- You will be asked to meet with me for three interviews each for about ninety minutes at a time that is convenient for you. The interview will take place via videoconference or telephone in a private office. The interview will be audio recorded. I will also request documents from you for analysis including:
  - Institutional policies
  - Job descriptions
  - Website links
  - Educational literature

**Confidentiality**

- Your name and the institution that you work for will not be provided on the recording or any written document.
- All audio and digital files will be secured on a password protected computer.

- Your audio files will be erased three months after transcription is complete.
- After audio files have been transcribed, you can request a copy of your interview.
- Your study documents will be kept for five years after the study is complete. At which time they will be destroyed.

**Risks and Benefits:**

There may be a few risks if you decide to participate. You may experience stress or feelings of discomfort. You can choose to skip any questions you don't want to answer. Because this interview will be recorded some things you say might not be private. Names will not be used during the recording. Each participant will be identified using a unique pseudonym or number.

**Compensation:**

You will not be paid for participating.

**Voluntary Participation:**

Your participation in this study is for you to decide. You can choose not to participate or stop your participation at any time in this study without anything happening to you. If you start the study then decide you don't want to be a part of it anymore, anything you have said will not be used in the study. You have my full support and respect whether or not you choose to participate.

The researcher for this study is Kimberly J. Blea. Please ask any question you have now. If you have questions at a later time you may contact Kimberly J. Blea at [kjblea@unm.edu](mailto:kjblea@unm.edu) or at 505-617-1050. You may also contact Dr. Alicia F. Chávez at [afchavez@unm.edu](mailto:afchavez@unm.edu).

If you would like to speak with someone other than the researcher you may call the UNM IRB Office at 505-277-2644.

Whom can I call with questions about my rights as a research participant?

If you have questions regarding your rights as a research participant, you may call the UNM Office of the IRB (OIRB) at (505) 277-2644. The IRB is a group of people from UNM and the community who provide independent oversight of safety and ethical issues related to research involving human participants. For more information, you may also access the OIRB website at <http://irb.unm.edu>.

**Consent**

You are making a decision whether to participate in this study. Your signature below indicates that you read the information provided. By signing this consent form you are not waiving any of your legal rights as a research participant.

I have had an opportunity to ask questions and all questions have been answered to my satisfaction. By signing this consent form I agree to participate in this study. A copy of this consent form will be provided to you.

---

Name of Participant (Print)

---

Signature of Participant

---

Date

**Researcher Signature**

I have explained the research to the participant and answered all of their questions. I believe that they understand the information described in this consent form and freely consent to participate.

---

Researcher (Print)

---

Signature of Researcher

---

Date



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