



January 26th, 2022

Dear LSA Community:

In the aftermath of the Board of Regents's decision to fire former President Mark S. Schlissel, the newly established Task Force for Sexual Misconduct Response and Prevention (SMRP) has found an even higher sense of urgency. It has been made clear that effectively addressing sexual assault, harassment, and discrimination on campus is more vital than ever and that further measures are necessary to counter this crisis at even the highest levels. As a student-led initiative, this task force is meant to be a tool for the student body and university staff to advocate for their own well-being without outside pressures influencing their concerns.

We have three requests for the Board of Regents. We ask that they take substantive action to prevent a lapse like this from ever occurring again, rebuild student and staff trust in the university, and dramatically reduce sexual misconduct on campus within two years.

While we join LSA Student Government in our appreciation for the Board of Regents' decisive action in investigating and firing Former President Schlissel, we encourage the Regents to take this opportunity to not repeat former mistakes. The 2013-2014 Presidential Search Advisory Committee [did not incorporate student values](#)¹ and, as a result, the appointed replacement (Former President Schlissel) was not equipped to address the demands and priorities of the university community. SMRP and LSA-SG urges the Board of Regents to seek out student input and accept the suggestions that students are willing to share. Furthermore, there have been many measures set in place to combat Sexual Misconduct under the direction of Mark Schlissel. It would be pertinent to review these measures to evaluate how Schlissel's leadership may have compromised the effectiveness of any progress. This review should include University Sexual Misconduct Policy, investigatory procedures, survivor resources, and all other pertinent actions that intersect with active policy. We also recommend expanding existing measures to address this shameful and serious crisis moving forward.

In addition, we strongly recommend that the university establishes an independent monitor to ensure that the university adheres to its own policy at every level. This reform removes the risk associated with an organization policing itself and strengthens existing measures..

The several² sexual misconduct³ scandals⁴ that Administration has been involved in⁵ has eroded trust between the university community⁶ and the university's leadership. Former President Schlissel's blatant disregard⁷ for existing policy demonstrates why sexual misconduct persists at the University of Michigan regardless of the

¹ [Michigan Daily - Issue Archive from 9-19-2013](#)

² [New York Times - "University of Michigan Fires Its President Over Inappropriate Relationship"](#)

³ [Michigan Daily - "Public Policy students walk out of class to protest admission of master's student found guilty of Title IX violations" - 11-15-2021](#)

⁴ [NBC News - "University of Michigan reaches \\$490M settlement with sexual abuse accusers"](#)

⁵ [Inside Higher Ed - "Tenure and Misconduct"](#)

⁶ [Inside Higher Ed - "University of Michigan Faculty Calls for Changes"](#)

⁷ [New York Post - "\[UofM\] president fired after employee relationship, 'inappropriate' emails surface"](#)

policies, educational requirements, trainings, and resources meant to combat it. If the leadership instituting these measures is unwilling to comply with existing policy and change the existing culture, then how can they expect the university at large to follow? We encourage the Board will continue to rapidly and transparently respond to any potential future cases of sexual misconduct within administration, athletics, and their own organization. However, the frequency and severity of these scandals has shaken university members' confidence that the Board has the public's interest at heart. We ask that the Board of Regents hold monthly meetings to update the public on the steps they're taking to address sexual misconduct at the University of Michigan. Additionally, we would like the Board to consistently send out a summary of progress being made, available resources, and relevant policy. This collection of information should be distributed widely and frequently. Making this information readily available will help the University rebuild its relationship with students, staff, and faculty.

We also ask that The Board of Regents creates a two year action plan to dramatically reduce the frequency of sexual misconduct on campus. This plan should include establishing an independent monitor to ensure policies are being followed at every level at the university, a strategy for identifying sexual misconduct internally, a culture initiative that highlights the severity and seriousness of sexual misconduct, and a [plan to meet every recommendation given to the university by Wilmerhale](#)⁸ within the next two years.

As the Board creates this action plan for the next two years, we ask that they keep in mind the university's complicated relationship with marginalized identities. This mindset should also extend to their search for a new President. SMRP also explicitly aims to prioritize the unique challenges that international students, non-traditional students, and cultural, ethnic, and racial minority students face on campus when it comes to sexual misconduct and we hope that the next President of the University of Michigan will bring this value to all aspects of their work. Students identifying as [trans, queer, non-binary, or disabled](#) are especially at risk for nonconsensual sexual interactions (reporting non-consensual sexual touching at a rate of 26% and non-consensual penetration at a rate of 13.5%⁹). Furthermore, a lack of structural intersectionality at large universities like the University of Michigan directly affects the way [women of color access and interact with resources provided for survivors](#)¹⁰. Financial barriers, like a lack of health insurance, prevents many women of color from seeking support. The free mental health services at the university are extremely overwhelmed and unable to promptly or effectively assist survivors. Women of color at large universities have also expressed frustration with the lack of therapists with cultural competency who are equipped to deal with the historical and contemporary traumas associated with being a person of color.

As we move through our first semester as a task force, SMRP's goal is to conduct a complete review of the university's Sexual Misconduct Policy. One of our main focuses during that process will be to [examine the policy for colorblindness or "racial neutrality" which normalizes whiteness and prioritizes the needs of White Women](#).¹¹ In addition, we plan to help students navigate the intricacies of sexual misconduct policy, which can

⁸ [Office of Public Affair Update on Wilmerhale Recommendations](#)

⁹ [Vice President of Communications UMich Data](#)

¹⁰ [Women of Color Undergraduate Students' Experiences with Campus Sexual Assault](#):

¹¹ [Taylor and Francis - Online - "Revealing a hidden curriculum of Black women's erasure in sexual violence prevention policy"](#)



be particularly challenging for students who are unfamiliar with the American legal system. We ask the Board of Regents to share these priorities as they go about choosing the next President of the university and creating change for the university. Throughout both processes, students should be involved each step of the way.

We believe that the disgraceful events involving Former President Schlissel can be used as a catalyst and become an opportunity for significant change, and SMRP is prepared to work with the Board of Regents and future university Presidents towards progress. We will hold the current and future administration to the highest standard and will work in the best interest of university community members. As a tool for university staff and students, we move forward with hope and vigilance.

At the Service of University Members,

Members of the Task Force for Sexual Misconduct Response and Prevention

Tyler R. Watt, President of LSA Student Government

Zackariah Farah, Vice President

Lydia Kado, Chair of SMRP and Elected Representative

Abigail Nighswonger, Elected Representative, Vice-Chair of SMRP, and Vice-Chair of Subcommittee for Student Technology, Advising, and Academic Resources

Caroline Slack, Elected Representative, Chair of Committee Advocating for Traditional, Non-Traditional and International Students, and Vice Chair of LSA Annual Scholarship Task Force

Tyler Fioritto, Elected Representative

Magda Wojtara, Appointed Representative, Chair of Health Committee

Maria Wajahat, Elected Representative, Vice Chair of Health Committee

Max Stoneman, Elected Representative, Judiciary Oversight and Election Code Subcommittee Chair & IRC Vice Chair

Corrigan Knittle, Appointed Representative

Claudia McLean, Elected Representative, Appointments Subcommittee Chair

Dylan Bernstein, Elected Representative, Appointments Subcommittee Vice-Chair

Abby Ochs, Elected Representative

Sayoni Bandyopadhyay, Appointed Representative

Jordan Juliao, Appointed Representative, Subcommittee on Technology, Advising, and Academic Resources Chair & Committee Advocating for Transfer, Non Traditional, and International Students Vice-Chair

Sarah Salino, Student Life Relations Officer

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Peter Tam, Elected Representative, Judiciary Oversight and Election Code Subcommittee Vice Chair

Sayoni Bandyopadhyay, Appointed Representative

Mollie Berglund, Elected Representative and Vice-Chair of Committee on Communications

Yaqub Ahmedfiqi, Elected Representative

Ihsaan Yasin, Elected Representative

JJ Niskar, Appointed Representative

Rashmi Nair, Appointed Representative

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Brandon De Martinez, Appointed Representative and Chair of Committee for Diversity Affairs