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Mandatory Title IX Training for Employees on the University of Tennessee's Campus

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Mandatory Title IX Training for Employees on the University of
Tennessee's Campus

A thesis presented to the faculty of the Chancellor's Honors Program
University of Tennessee, Knoxville



THE UNIVERSITY OF
TENNESSEE
KNOXVILLE

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Introduction

Sexual assault is one of the most prevalent, yet stigmatized, issues surrounding college campuses today. Statistics say 1 in 5 women will be sexually assaulted. (Black, 2011) Among all graduate and undergraduate students, 11.2% of students experience rape or sexual assault through physical force, violence, or incapacitation during their time at college. (RAINN, 2018) At the University of Tennessee, where 28,000 students are enrolled, this estimate would translate to about 3,136 students. This is an issue that must be addressed in a systematic way to make long term progress. In order to ensure campus wide adoption, University faculty and staff must be engaged in the prevention of and response to sexual assault, relationship violence, stalking, and sexual harassment.

Title IX is a federal civil rights law that prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex in any education program or activity that receives federal funding. ("Title IX and Sexual Assault", 2018) It requires universities to respond appropriately to reports of sexual harassment and violence against students. This was further reinforced in the Dear Colleague letter written in 2011 that stated, "sexual harassment of students, including sexual violence, interferes with students' right to receive an education free from discrimination and, in the case of sexual violence, is a crime". (Breiding, 2014) It is the university's responsibility "to take immediate and effective steps to end sexual harassment and sexual violence". (Breiding, 2014) Because of these regulations, schools across the United States are striving to make their campus safe by preventing sexual assaults. Offices specifically intended for resolving Title IX issues are becoming more prevalent. Faculty and staff are being trained on resources and the reporting process, and now, mandatory training programs for staff are becoming the new norm.

These training programs teach about the prevalence of sexual assault on college campuses and train and equip staff to deal with it.

The University of Tennessee at Knoxville made the switch from optional training to mandatory Title IX staff training in the Fall of 2017. Mandatory training was made available through Haven. Haven is a learning management system which was made by Everfi. This paper reviews that program and looks at the big picture of why the program exists and what can be done to make it better.

Why Does it Matter?

The primary purpose of mandatory Title IX staff training is to educate faculty and staff about Title IX issues and make them aware of their roles on campus. Training is used to engage staff in an interactive way and teach about University policy related to sexual misconduct, relationship violence, stalking, and retaliation. The primary purposes of the University of Tennessee policy, according to the handbook, are, “to: (1) define, eliminate, prevent, and remedy the effects of Prohibited Conduct; (2) identify care, support, and reporting options for students and employees; (3) explain the obligations of employees to report Prohibited Conduct to the University; and (4) identify the procedures the University will follow to thoroughly, equitably, and promptly investigate and resolve reports of Prohibited Conduct”. (The University of Tennessee, 2017) By the end of the training, staff should know information such as if they are a confidential employee or if they are a mandatory reporter. They should also be able to tell students and other staff members their reporting options. The training should teach employees

about what constitutes prohibited conduct. Full policy can be found online at <https://titleix.utk.edu/university-policy-procedures/>.

What are Other Schools Doing

The goal of this research is to figure out ways to improve or modify the training that was given at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville in Fall 2017. In order to figure out the best and most effective ways to train staff on college campuses about Title IX issues, a survey was sent out to Title IX coordinators at other universities. In order to narrow down the sample size and get institutions that are close in size and similar in policy, the surveys were sent out to coordinators at Southeastern Conference schools. The schools represented in the collected data include: Louisiana State University (Baton Rouge, LA), Mississippi State University (Starkville, MS), University of Arkansas (Fayetteville, AR), University of Georgia (Athens, GA), Texas A&M University (College Station, TX), Auburn University (Auburn, AL), University of Kentucky (Lexington, KY), and the University of Alabama (Tuscaloosa, AL). The survey asked the following questions:

1. Do you have mandatory training?
2. If not, what resources does your staff have to look at Title IX information?
3. Is it online or in person?
4. When did you implement this?
5. If online, what program do you use?
6. What is the format of this training?
7. What information is emphasized in this training?

8. Have you seen an effect on your campus after this training was implemented? Or do you have any additional comments about it?

The consensus of the survey was that most SEC schools use online mandatory training programs. Most schools also offer an option of a supplemental in person training session, if requested. Online programs included both university made programs and training sessions set up through learning management systems. Some schools prefer to use a learning management system, so participation is more easily tracked, but the schools who use their own training system noted that it was better for them because they were better able to tailor it to what their employees needed. A summary of each school's program is shown below:

LSU: Mandatory online training on Homegrown Platform. Began mandatory training 4 years ago. They prefer using a learning management system.

Mississippi State: Mandatory online training called SHARP. It is an in-house program that replaced Haven learning management system.

Arkansas: Mandatory online training through Haven learning management system.

Georgia: Training is not mandatory but is an option and is conducted online through Haven learning management system.

Texas: Mandatory training but provide an option as to how it will be conducted. Can be in-person, online, or through a paper format.

Auburn: Mandatory online training program through Haven learning management system.

Kentucky: Mandatory training on a department to department basis. They use the Homegrown platform, but it is also an option to do in-person training.

Alabama: Mandatory online training program through Haven learning management system.

Mandatory Training

When analyzing the best ways to modify the training program that was given, it is essential to look at the individual components of the training. Here, it is determined how making the training “required” affects staff, how the term “mandatory” can have negative connotations, and how to facilitate mandatory training.

One obstacle when administering mandatory training is how to facilitate it, or actually make it mandatory. Keeping records of thousands of staff completions can be a nightmare. After examining the amount of schools that also require mandatory training, research was done on how to actually make something “mandatory” and ways to better facilitate mandatory training on such a large campus. This was done by doing literature reviews on mandatory training across multiple disciplines.

Most information on making a training program mandatory comes from human resources departments. These departments aren’t necessarily research from an office but rather a compilation of suggestions that have been tried within their offices. The articles suggested that the best ways to make something mandatory are to put it in the contract, sign acknowledgements at the beginning of the year, or to provide incentives. Another suggestion was that calling something other than “mandatory” will make

employees more likely to want to do it. (Falls, 2014) When the word mandatory is used it makes it seem more like a chore or extra work.

In order to be called “mandatory”, the training must be something that can be completed during the work day, so the staff is paid for it. Another way of encouraging mandatory training is to hold leader’s or department heads responsible for their team’s completion rates. When you hold someone in charge responsible, it motivates them to encourage their team to get it done.

The opposite way of going about mandatory training is if the staff does not complete the training, they could receive disciplinary action. In researching the ways that other universities promote mandatory training, it was found that certain schools use guidelines such as “failure to comply is a violation of the ethics code and employees can be removed, suspended, or fined” (Louisiana State University, 2018) or “employees who do not complete annual mandatory training by the published deadline will not have met their job expectations and will not be eligible for merit increases” . (University of Houston, 2018) This type of action will indeed influence faculty and staff to complete mandatory training, but that approach may be met with ethical uncertainties. Further research is needed to test this approach when it comes to mandatory training.

In-Person Training vs. Online Training

There are two principle options for Title IX training on college campuses. These options are an online training program or an in-person training session. When looking at ways to best facilitate mandatory training at the University of Tennessee, it is easy to see that online training has the benefit of ease and convenience to the faculty and staff,

but it also has its cons. Technical difficulties were an issue for many users. Online programs like the one that was used require certain browser updates and software. In addition, online training programs can be boring, impersonalized, and time consuming. When participants are presented with a long slideshow that they are not engaged in, they are more likely to skip through slides and not actually retain material. User friendliness must also be considered when contemplating the options of online and in person. What is user friendly to some may not be user friendly to others.

When using an in-person training option, these technical difficulties are greatly reduced and lead to a better experience for the participant. However, the problem with in-person mandatory training is getting groups to show up and be willing participants. In-person training does come with its other perks though, including room to tailor the training to a certain group's needs. In-person training is also more interactive and more likely to keep a group engaged in what they are hearing.

The two training programs offered at the University of Tennessee differ slightly in content. Example outlines and descriptions of each training program option are given below:

Online Training

The program used on the University of Tennessee's campus in Fall 2017 was Haven, by Everfi. Haven is an online program addressing the critical issues of sexual assault, relationship violence, stalking, and sexual harassment – among students, faculty and staff. Haven reaches 700,000 individuals at over 650 institutions across the country. (EVERFI, 2018) This training, while online, includes a range of interactive skill building activities and relatable scenarios. (EVERFI, 2018)

The online training begins with an introduction that tells everything that the training will consist of. It displays a warning that the training will cover sensitive topics. After the introduction there is a survey about what past training the participant has on sexual assault, and one asking about the demographics of the participant. Following the surveys is a quiz called “Pre-Course Attitudes”. This quiz asks staff questions about how familiar they are with sexual misconduct terms, how comfortable they feel in their ability to help others, how adequately they feel their institution prepares them, etc. (Actual quiz questions can be seen under “Where does the University of Tennessee stand compared to similar Institutions”)

The next section of the online training program is called “Understanding the Issues”. It helps users to understand that sexual assault is something that jeopardizes the welfare of everyone. It’s an issue that not only affects the victim, but anyone who is connected to the victim. The section contains several videos that encourage supporting survivors, believing victims, being an active bystander, and recognizing signs of violence and perpetrators. This section is also where Title IX laws and definitions are contained.

The rest of the training program contains scenarios that faculty and staff might come across on campus. A video is shown of a scenario and the user clicks through an interactive slideshow of what they would do were they to be put in the situations. Scenarios include a student telling a professor about sexual harassment, a graduate student telling a professor someone in the department is making them uncomfortable, a coworker acting strange and being upset when they talk to their partner on the phone at work and having a supervisor that makes the participant feel uncomfortable. After the

participant works their way through the scenarios, there is a course summary and a post-course attitudes quiz for the participant to complete. There is also a place for comments on the most important thing that the user believed was in the training and suggestions on how to improve the training. (EVERFI, 2018)

In-Person Training

In-person training at the University of Tennessee is an optional supplement. It doesn't follow a strict outline but begins with introductions and definitions of a few common terms used in dealing with Title IX and sexual assault. It explains the laws that deal with Title IX and talks about the size of UT's campus and statistics about sexual assault on campuses of its size. It then moves into bystander intervention and how sexual assault can happen to anyone. Etiology is discussed, along with the issue of how people look at themselves differently than victims because they want to feel like they're safe and it could never happen to them. Participants are encouraged to do exercises where they close their eyes and imagine a situation where their body kicked into a fight, flight, or freeze response. They are then encouraged to look at sexual assault survivors in this same way and think about if they have ever victim blamed someone in this situation. The session ends with information on the reporting process and different roles on campus, and then there is time for questions at the end.

Statistical Analysis of Mandatory Training

Completion dates of the Fall 2017 mandatory training were documented by department which allowed analysis of: dates with the most completions, the best times to send out reminders, and which departments had the best completion rates. The initial

email telling staff to complete training was sent out on September 25, 2017. The training was to be completed by December 1, 2017. The dates with the most completions were September 25, 2017 with 453 completions, September 26, 2017 (217), November 21, 2017 (153), November 29, 2017 (244), November 30, 2017 (253), and December 1, 2017 (190). Email requests for the training were sent out on October 7th, October 20th, November 2nd, and November 17th. There was a postcard reminder distribution on October 2nd, and a note was sent to supervisors on October 24th with incomplete lists from their departments. Completion dates suggest that email reminders are the most effective way to remind people of the training and get them to get it done. Dates with heavy completions were also more likely to fall right before University holidays. The dates with the most completions fell across all five days of the work week. None of the dates with the most completions were over the weekend. Further research can be done on effective reminder strategies.

Program data also tells that most people completed all of the training in a single day, and they have not logged back into the learning management system since completion. After analyzing the completions by department data, it can be seen that on average the completion rates are much lower for professors and lecturers in the large academic departments than the completion rate of those individuals in administrative offices on campus. Most administrative offices on campus had 100% participation in the online training. Some academic departments on campus had as little as 50% completion. This could be due to a greater sample size, or attributable to less communication within the departments. Further research can be done on how to better facilitate mandatory training in larger departments. Future mandatory training should

work to target the larger academic departments and work toward achieving higher completion rates.

Where Does the University of Tennessee Stand Compared to Similar Institutions?

The surveys at the beginning of the online training, and the pre and post-course attitudes quiz following the online mandatory training that was implemented this year, allowed for analysis of how the faculty and staff actually performed and felt about the training program. Not only were the pre and post course attitudes quizzes and surveys analyzed from the University of Tennessee's program, but they were compared against the results from universities across the nation that used the same program from Everfi, other Tennessee institutions that used the program, and other SEC schools that used the program. This data was used to see where The University of Tennessee was falling behind or where they were in the lead compared to other similar institutions. The survey about prior training asked: "Prior to this program, have you ever received training on the following topics?". The participant was to answer yes or no. The topics were: sexual assault, dating violence, domestic violence, stalking, and sexual harassment. The demographics survey asked questions about gender identity, role on campus, length of employment, time of interaction with students, and age.

The questions on the pre-course attitudes quiz and post-course attitudes quiz were put into the format of: "To what extent do you agree with the following statement?" The participants were then asked to respond with a number 1-7 with 1 meaning strongly disagree, 2 - disagree, 3 - somewhat disagree, 4 - neutral, 5 - somewhat agree, 6 - agree, and 7 - strongly agree. The following are the statements that were given:

1. My institution has appropriate resources to support victims of sexual assault, relationship violence, stalking, and sexual harassment.
2. My institution adequately prepares staff and/or faculty to prevent sexual assault, relationship violence, stalking, and sexual harassment and respond to disclosures.
3. I can identify warning signs of abuse in relationships.
4. I think sexist jokes and language contribute to the issues of sexual assault, relationship violence, stalking, and sexual harassment.
5. I have a good understanding of what constitutes sexual assault, relationship violence, stalking, and sexual harassment.
6. I plan to play an active role in addressing sexual assault, relationship violence, stalking, and sexual harassment at my institution.
7. I am confident in my ability to intervene if I witness abusive behavior.
8. I have a good understanding of my institution's policies and procedures for responding to sexual assault, relationship violence, stalking, and sexual harassment.
9. I am confident in my ability to respond to disclosures of sexual assault, relationship violence, stalking, and sexual harassment.
10. I am aware of resources at or around my institutions related to sexual assault, relationship violence, stalking, and sexual harassment.
11. I am aware of strategies for preventing sexual assault, relationship violence, stalking, and sexual harassment.

12. I am aware of whether or not I am a mandated reporter (e.g. Responsible Employee, Campus Security Authority) in my role at my institution.
13. I know how to report a sexual assault at my institution.
14. A person should never be blamed for being the victim of sexual assault, relationship violence, stalking, and sexual harassment.

The participants were asked to answer these questions before and after they took the online training. There was then a course evaluation survey that was set up in the previous manner but gave the following statements:

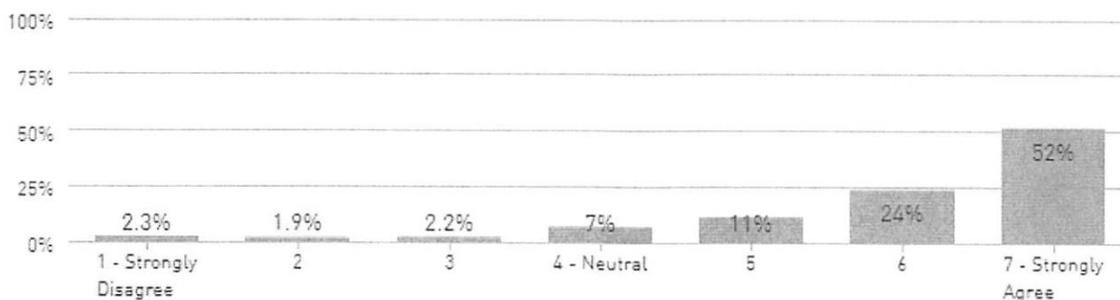
1. This course helped me identify characteristics of healthy and unhealthy relationships.
2. The course taught me where to find resources for sexual assault and relationship violence.
3. The course made me more confident in my ability to intervene when I see concerning behavior.
4. The course provided me with the skills to better support someone who has experience sexual assault.
5. The course increased my understanding of key concepts related to sexual assault, relationship violence, stalking, and sexual harassment.
6. The course adequately met my expectations.

The following sections examine how the University of Tennessee performed compared to the National Aggregate, other SEC schools, and other Tennessee institutions.

National Aggregate

Around 66,700 people took the training nationally. (EVERFI, 2018) About 4,700 staff from the University of Tennessee participated in the training. UT had a significantly lower number of strongly agree responses than the national aggregate in most cases. This included saying that the institution has appropriate resources, adequately prepared staff, knowing what constitutes assault, identifying warning signs, thinking sexist language contributes to sexual assault, saying they would play an active role in addressing the issues, confidence in their ability to intervene, having a good understanding of policies, are aware of strategies to prevent, confidence in their ability to respond, knowing how to report, and saying a victim should never be blamed.

The only category that University of Tennessee employees responded more confidently in was knowing whether or not they were a mandatory reporter and 52% of UT staff were confident as compared to the 50% from the national aggregate (as shown in Figure 1 below).



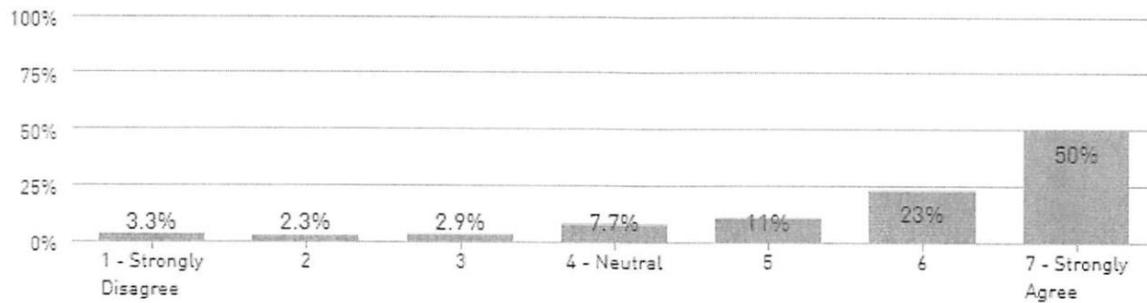


Figure 1: Results of “I am aware of whether or not I am a mandated reporter (e.g. Responsible Employee, Campus Security Authority) in my role at my institution.” 52% of UT staff strongly agreed, compared to 50% of the National Aggregate.

The biggest difference in response was in saying that the institution has appropriate resources. Only 28% of UT staff strongly agreed whereas 40% from the national aggregate agreed (Figure 2). An interesting trend was that in cases of asking about the school, the staff were more likely to say that the school didn’t offer things, but were a lot more confident when the question was asked in an individualized form.

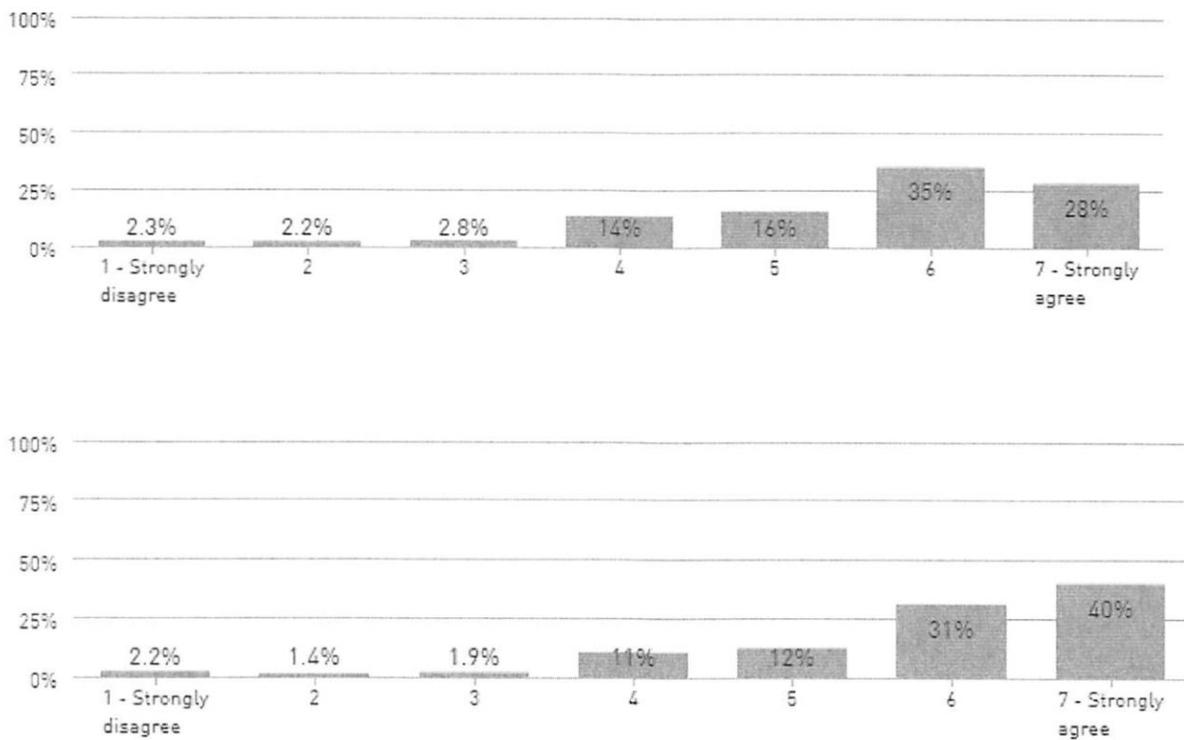


Figure 2: Results of “My institution has appropriate resources to support victims of sexual assault, relationship violence, stalking, and sexual harassment.” 28% of UT staff strongly agreed, compared to 40% of the National Aggregate.

In the prior training section UT employees said they had previous training in the following subjects at lower rates than the national aggregate: sexual assault, dating violence, domestic violence, stalking and sexual harassment. Prior training could also have a lot to do with the staff agreeing that they did not feel adequately prepared or trained to deal with sexual assault issues on campus.

The biggest difference in this survey was the comparison of dating violence where 47% of UT employees said they had been trained and 66% of the national aggregate said they were trained (Figure 3).

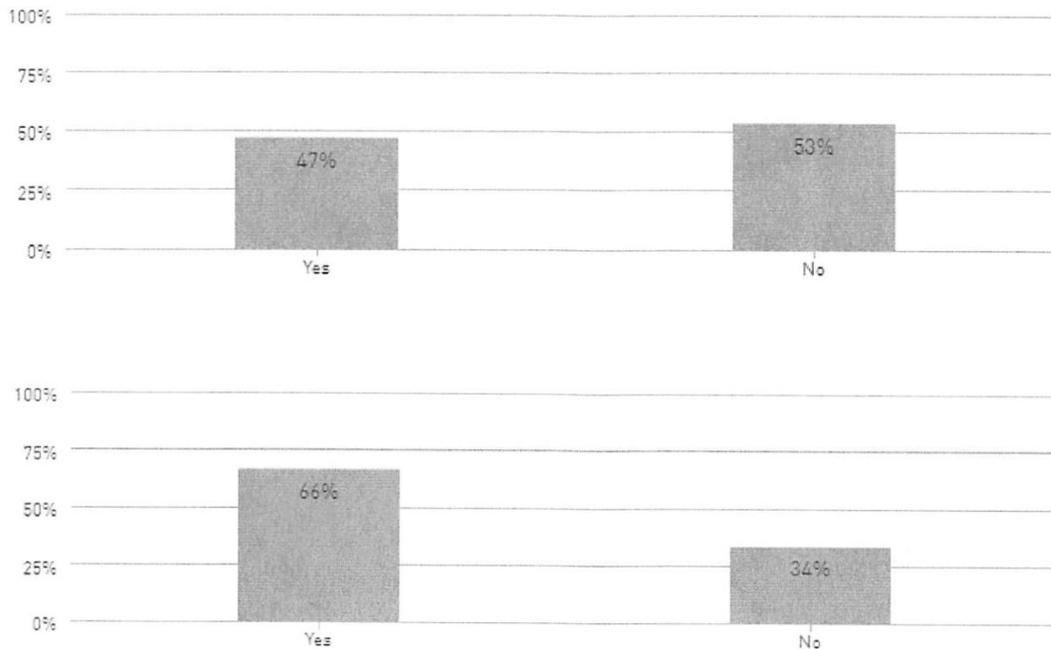


Figure 3: Results of “Do you have previous training on Dating Violence?” 47% of UT employees said they had been trained, compared to 66% of the National Aggregate.

When it came to the demographics portion of the survey, staff at the University of Tennessee seem to be older and have worked at the institution longer than the national aggregate average.

After the training, more UT employees said they still aren’t confident intervening than the national aggregate and that the course did not meet their expectations. The other post course questions seemed to follow the same trend for both UT employees and the national aggregate. These results are a good indicator that mandatory training needs some work on campus at UT.

Sec Schools

Around 6,200 people took the training from SEC schools. (EVERFI, 2018) SEC schools showed about the same trends for the pre-course perceptions as the national aggregate. Again, the University of Tennessee employees answered a little less confidently on all questions. Staff at UT were also more likely to say they didn't have training on title IX issues as other SEC school staff. The demographics for the two groups trained were almost exactly the same. The post course attitudes survey displayed some results that were different than the National Aggregate. On many questions UT's answers stayed about the same as the pretest, whereas at other SEC schools their confidence levels went drastically up. This is true for the questions about the institution having appropriate resources, the institution adequately preparing, identifying warning signs of abuse, and being aware of resources. The reason for this needs further research. This shows that training needs to be facilitated for UT's staff in a way that makes employees more engaged and aware.

Tennessee Institutions

Around 8,300 people took the training from Tennessee Institutions. (EVERFI, 2018) Yet again, the University of Tennessee staff had lower percentages for the pre-course attitudes quiz in the strongly agree category for every question except whether or not they were aware they were a mandatory reporter. On average UT staff said again that they had less training in categories of Title IX than other TN institutions. Our demographics were the same and course perceptions were the same.

Some things that stood out on the post course evaluation were that after the training UT staff still answered that they didn't strongly agree that the institution

adequately prepares faculty and staff so that's something that could be worked on. Also after the training, staff answered less confidently that they were able to identify warning signs of abuse in relationships and less confidently that they would be able to intervene if they witnessed abusive behavior than they did before the training. (Figures 4, 5, and 6) This could be a result of the training program making these issues even more unclear for the staff.

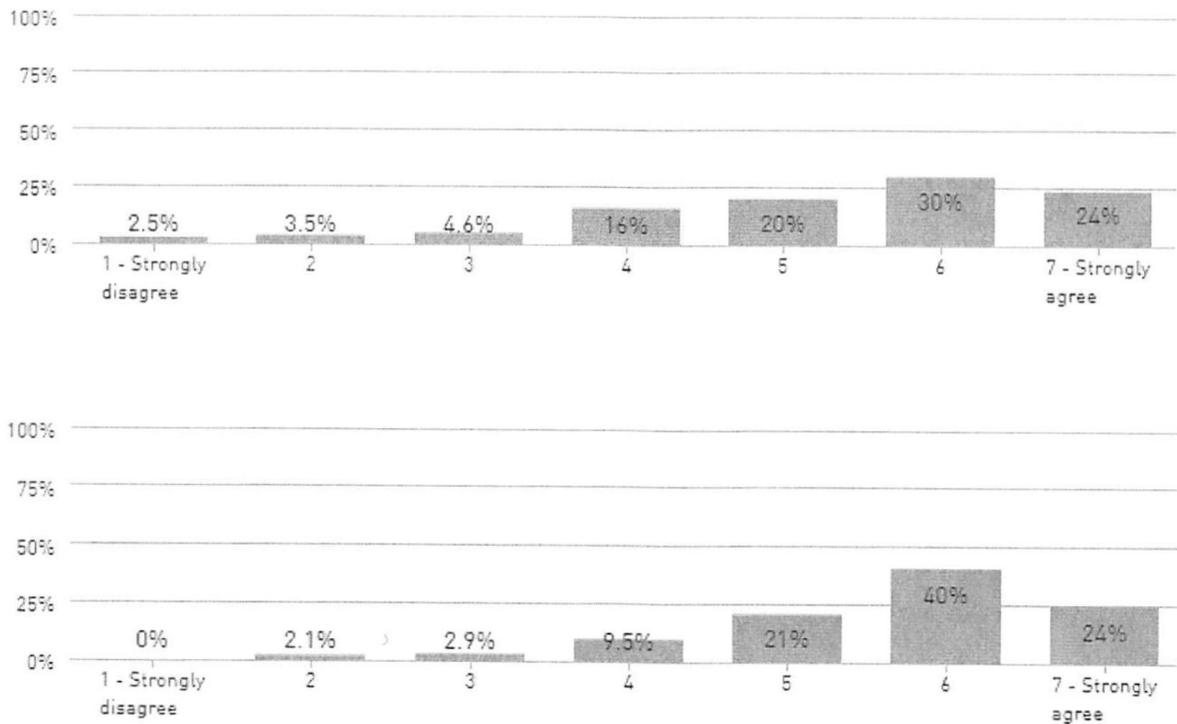


Figure 4: UT staff's results of "My institution adequately prepares staff and/or faculty to prevent sexual assault, relationship violence, stalking, and sexual harassment and respond to disclosures," from the pre-course attitudes quiz versus the post-course attitudes quiz. 24% of staff strongly agreed before the training and after the training.

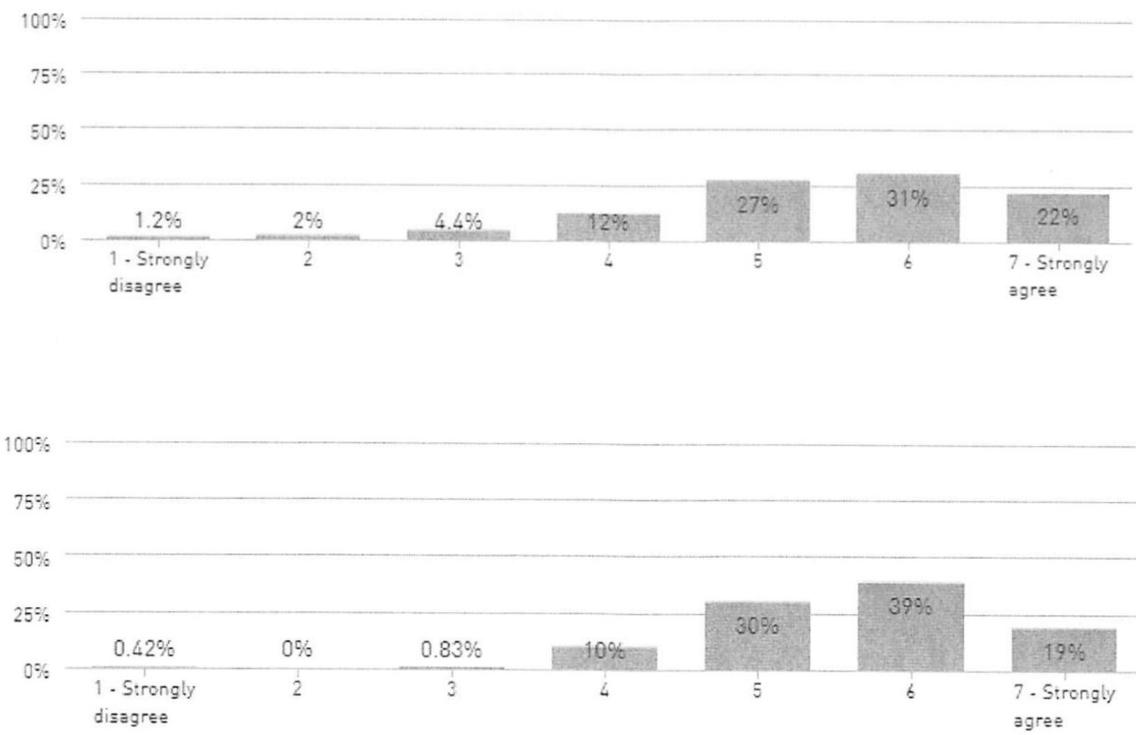


Figure 5: UT staff's results of "I can identify warning signs of abuse in relationships," from the pre-course attitudes quiz versus the post-course attitudes quiz. 22% of UT staff strongly agreed before the training, whereas only 19% of UT staff strongly agreed after the training.

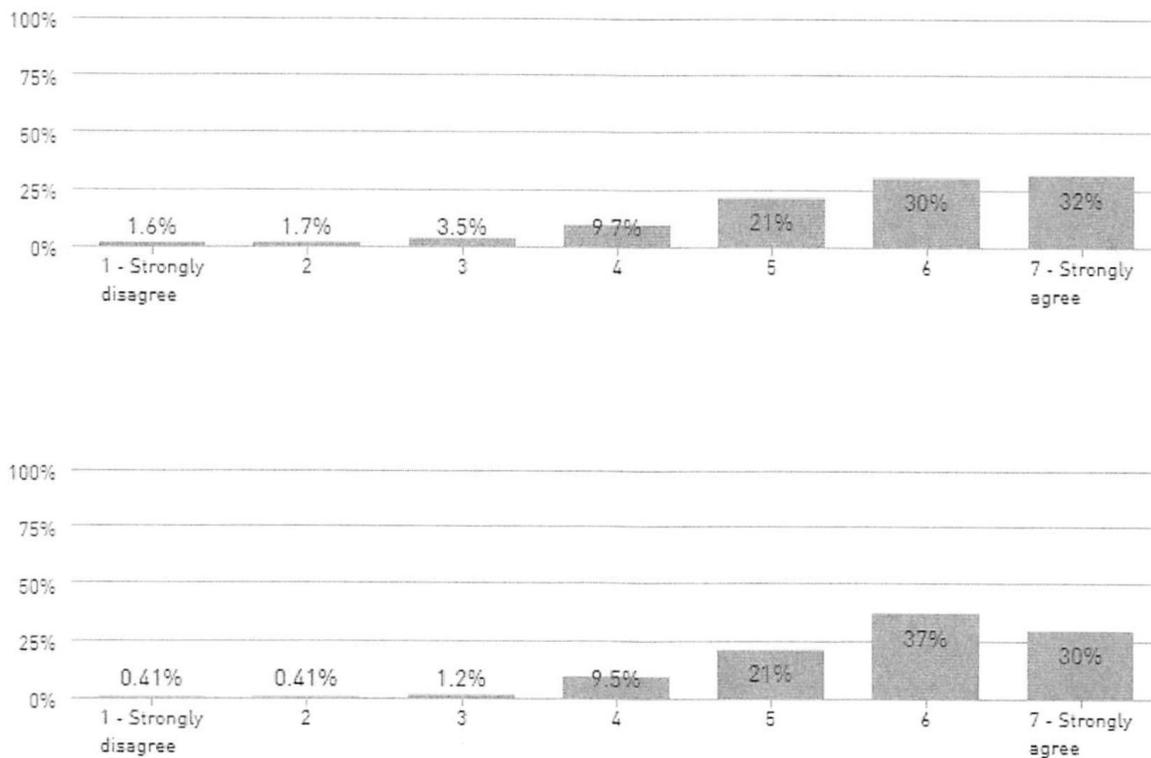


Figure 6: UT staff's results of "I am confident in my ability to intervene if I witness abusive behavior," from the pre-course attitudes quiz versus the post-course attitudes quiz. 32% of UT staff strongly agreed before the training, whereas only 30% strongly agreed after the training.

Ways to Improve Mandatory Training

There were many complaints about the duration and format of the online training. When looking at ways to improve mandatory training a few of the suggestions included not using just an online program with a slideshow and a few interactive parts, but using an online program that showed videos of people from the University of Tennessee doing, more or less, the in-person training that is used on campus. The duration of the training could be cut down to a manageable time and participants would feel as if the training was more tailored to them and not just a mandatory requirement that was put

into place with no regard to the faculty and staff's needs. Further research could look at how implementing a new online training program that is specifically tailored to the University of Tennessee could improve statistics and improve the amount of confidence staff have in their university and in themselves concerning Title IX issues.

Further Research

Further research is needed in the area of mandatory training and effectiveness of training. Time is needed to see the effectiveness of one type of training versus the other. It could take years to actually see the effects of switching training from one platform to another. After analyzing the effects of mandatory Title IX staff training at the University of Tennessee, it is clear to see that more work needs to be done on how to best facilitate something that is labeled as mandatory. Next steps include making a mandatory Title IX staff training program that is specific to the University of Tennessee's campus. It will hopefully include all of the information and techniques that proved to be useful and leave out the cons of both types of training. It will be online for ease of access but will include videos of real people from campus speaking. It will be brief and to the point. This will be done in effort to encourage attention from the participants.

Conclusion

The goal of this program review is to influence universities to research and choose the Title IX training program that is the most effective for their staff. Convenience should not outshine effectiveness. Many other universities use the same learning management system that was used in Fall 2017 at the University of

Tennessee. This review was meant to shed light on the pros and cons of the program and give other options that may be more suitable for the faculty and staff audience that is being trained. Using a training program that is geared toward a specific audience's needs is key to the prevention of and response to sexual assault matters on college campuses across America.

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