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University of Ottawa accepts 11 sexual violence task force recommendations

Formed after 2 high-profile incidents involving students last year

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uOttawa accepts 11 sexual violence task force recommendations 3:37

Sexual violence task force recommendations accepted 2:25

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The University of Ottawa will put in new training programs for administration, students and full-time coaches, launch a bystander intervention program and fund new courses on rape culture after the release today of a task force report into sexual violence.

The task force on respect and equality's report, which school president Allan Rock said he received Thursday morning, gives 11 recommendations after nine months of work.

Rock said the school **accepts and will implement all 11 "insightful and practical" recommendations.**

"Its findings are clear. We have work to do," he said at a news conference.

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Those recommendations include:

- Mandatory training on causes of and solutions to sexual violence for all members of the senior administration before the start of the 2015-16 school year.
- Give sexual harassment and violence prevention and response training to all student-athletes and full-time coaches, new faculty and people who oversee school residences.
- Create a school-wide bystander intervention program to educate people about what to do if sexual harassment or violence happens around them, led by two paid students and two paid senior administrators.
- Continue to develop an on-campus pilot project to service survivors of sexual violence in both English and French starting September.
- Collect and make public statistics on the number of sexual violence complaints.
- Conduct a "gender audit" of the school's sports services department and all varsity sports programs, including financing teams based on gender distribution in the student population and give priority to hiring women "in positions related to co-ordination, programming, facilities and coaching."
- Fund new undergraduate courses that address sexual violence and rape culture, in both English and French.

"Sexual violence is an extremely complex issue and one for which there is no quick fix," said task force chair and professor Caroline Andrew.

"For this reason, we have recommended several strategies that require a sustained and multi-pronged approach to fostering a campus culture that encourages respectful behaviour and prevents sexual violence."

"This task force has, in effect, led a conversation here on campus — a frank and sometimes difficult conversation, but one that we as a community had to have," Rock said.

"I speak for the university in saying that we are committed to ensuring what we learned from that conversation will lead to meaningful change ... by doing all we can on our own campus to make the environment safe, respectful and free to sexualized violence, we can become a beacon. We can create an example for others to follow."

Task force worked for 9 months

The task force was formed after a [leaked, sexually explicit online conversation about the head of the student union](#) in February 2014 was followed a month later by allegations of sexual assault during a men's hockey team road trip. [Criminal charges were later laid against two players.](#)

All 24 players from the 2013-14 Gee-Gees men's hockey team who weren't charged said earlier this month [they plan to file a \\$6-million class-action lawsuit against the school](#) for damage done to their reputations.

The lawsuit cites the task force report as a way the school continues to link the team's suspension for this season and next season to the creation of the task force and "rape culture" on university campuses.

University of Ottawa president Allan Rock said in early March that the task force, made up of students, faculty, alumni and people working in feminism and sexual violence fields, [would report back that autumn about ways to promote respectful behaviour on campus](#), especially toward women.

He said it would also examine training around sexual violence and harassment, look for areas of improvement, and work on sanctions for



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Greg Ellingson discusses his touchdown

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Greg Ellingson spoke to reporters Monday about his incredible touchdown on Sunday that won the Ottawa Redblacks their game against the Hamilton Tiger-Cats.

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students or employees who promote threatening behaviour.

On Thursday, Andrew said about 1,000 students were interviewed as part of their work, which lasted approximately nine months.

"It is a serious issue in that there is a percentage of people who answered the survey who do hold points of view that do not support a culture of equality and respect," she said.

"On the other hand, there certainly are some answers to the survey that indicate the University of Ottawa is not different from other institutions and there is very strong support for bystander intervention.... there certainly are a lot of students who answer that they don't support misbehaviour."

She said a group tasked with implementing and tracking these recommendations will give a preliminary report in six months, and regularly check in thereafter.



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