

2021 AMNH-RGGS Sexual Assault and Related Misconduct Survey – Summary of Results

The Richard Gilder Graduate School (“RGGS”) at the American Museum of Natural History (“AMNH” or “the Museum”) recently undertook a climate survey of students enrolled in the Comparative Biology Ph.D. Program and the Master of Arts in Teaching Earth Science Residency Program. The survey was launched via email to students on May 21, 2021 and closed on June 7, 2021. This summary is provided in accordance with New York State law and in the interest of providing transparency to the larger Museum community.

The goals of the survey were to better understand students’ general comprehension of concepts related to gender-based discrimination and harassment, including sexual assault and all other forms of gender-based misconduct, the Museum’s policies and procedures addressing these topics, and students’ experience with sexual misconduct. The Museum engaged an independent third-party research firm, the Yasamin Miller Group (“YMG”), to administer the survey and ensure that the raw survey data remained confidential.

Survey Population and Confidentiality

All students enrolled in the Comparative Biology Ph.D. Program as well as the Master of Arts in Teaching Earth Science Residency Program (a total of 30 students, 15 Ph.D. students and 15 MAT students, respectively) were asked to complete the voluntary and confidential survey. Of those, 16 provided responses, giving an overall response rate of 53%. Given small sampling size for these surveys, and to protect confidentiality, YMG did not provide fine-grained analyses of specific subgroups or the “raw data” in its originating format. As such, additional analyses on the bases of gender, sexual orientation, or other characteristics were not provided to avoid the possible identification of individual students. Instead, results are presented in the aggregate.

Survey Components

The survey asked several questions pertaining to the following topics:

- The Title IX Coordinator’s role;
- Campus policies and procedures addressing sexual assault and other forms of misconduct;
- How and where to report domestic violence, dating violence, stalking or sexual assault as a victim, survivor, or witness;
- The availability of resources on and off campus, such as counseling and academic assistance;
- The prevalence of victimization and perpetration of domestic violence, dating violence, stalking, or sexual assault on and off campus during a set time period;
- Bystander attitudes and behavior related to these topics;
- Whether students disclosed misconduct to AMNH-RGGS and/or law enforcement, experiences with reporting and institution processes, and reasons why a student did or did not report the incident(s);
- The general awareness of the difference between AMNH-RGGS’ definitions of policy violations and the definitions found in the penal law in New York State; and
- General awareness of the definition of affirmative consent.

Summary of Survey Findings

- 80% of students indicated that they received information about the AMNH-RGGS definitions of sexual assault and other forms of gender-based misconduct, and 93% indicated that they received information on who they can talk to about these issues.
- 85% of students said that they know where to find help, information, and resources if they or someone they know experiences gender-based misconduct, and 93% said they know where to report it to the Museum if they choose to do so.
- All students (100%) indicated that they are aware of New York’s definition of affirmative consent.
- 80% of students indicated that they know how to contact the Title IX Coordinator, and 93% indicated that they know the Title IX Coordinator can receive and investigate reports of sexual assault and other forms of gender-based misconduct. Similarly, 89% indicated that they are aware that the Title IX Coordinator must provide trainings on these topics.
- No student indicated that a member of the Museum community sexually assaulted them while a student at AMNH-RGGS, and none of the responding students indicated that they experienced stalking, dating or domestic violence in the form of physical violence or threats.
- Four students indicated that they experienced inappropriate comments, made by a member of the Museum community, regarding their or someone else’s body, appearance, and/or sexual activities.
- No student reported these incidents to the Museum. One student indicated that they were ashamed/embarrassed to do so, and that student also didn’t think what happened was serious enough to talk about. The other three students indicated that they didn’t report because: (i) they were afraid of others’ reactions (25%); (ii) they were fearful of retaliation (12%); (iii) they did not want the person who did it to get in trouble (12%); (iv) they did not think that what happened was serious enough to talk about (37%); and (v) they did not think they would be believed or that the report would be taken seriously (12%).
- Two students indicated that an intimate partner “rarely” exhibited controlling behaviors, such as restricting their movements or conversations with others. One of those said that the behavior occurred in the previous year while the student was affiliated with AMNH-RGGS. However, no student reported experiencing other forms of dating and/or domestic violence, such as physical violence or threats of harm.
- 80% of students indicated that it was “very likely” they would say something to try to intervene if they saw one of their friends engaging in misconduct. Additionally, all responding students (100%) indicated that they would likely intervene if they saw one of their friends leading someone who was obviously drunk or high away to potentially have sex with that individual.

As always, the Museum strongly encourages individuals to report their experiences to the Title IX Coordinator, a trusted faculty member, or anonymously through the Compliance Hotline. In addition to investigating the matter, the Museum can provide support and resources to students affected by the type of misconduct described in the survey and above.

Conclusion

The Museum is grateful to all the students who participated in this survey, and will use the results to bolster its commitment to create an educational environment free from all forms of harassment and discrimination. This will include, but is not limited to, offering additional training for students, faculty, and staff within AMNH-RGGS to further educate the Museum community on things such as what to expect after a report is made, the accommodations and supportive measures that can be provided when misconduct occurs, and non-disciplinary resolution methods that may be available.

If anyone would like to discuss the results further or has any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact the Museum's Title IX Coordinator / Equal Opportunity Specialist, Benjamin Marzolf, at (212) 769-5316 or bmarzolf@amnh.org.