



## CONSIDERING RESTORATIVE PRACTICES AT PRINCETON UNIVERSITY SPRING 2020 REPORT SUMMARY

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Submitted by the Working Group on Restorative Practices

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In summer 2019, the Faculty-Student Committee on Sexual Misconduct and the University Student Life Committee, meeting jointly, established a Working Group on Restorative Practices. The working group, including administrators, undergraduate and graduate students, met during the fall 2019 semester and focused primarily on the applicability of restorative practices (trust building, conflict resolution and community dialogue, etc.) at Princeton University.

Restorative practices (RP) is an emerging social science that studies how to strengthen relationships between individuals as well as social connections within communities (IIRP, 2019). Restorative practice is grounded in restorative justice, a philosophical approach that embraces the reparation of harm, healing of trauma, reconciliation of interpersonal conflict, reduction of social inequality, and reintegration of community members who have caused harm (Skidmore, 2019). The four tenets of restorative justice include inclusive decision-making, active accountability, repairing harm, and rebuilding trust, etc. (Zehr, 2015). Restorative practices refer to specific responses within a community that aim to build capacity for members to engage in community-building.

In its review of restorative practices, the working group considered their applicability for many forms of community conflict, including but not limited to bias, disciplinary, student group, and sexual misconduct concerns. Research indicates that it is critical that universities establish a strong foundation of restorative practices prior to integrating them into any adjudicative processes.

Part of the working group's efforts to explore restorative practices at Princeton was to consider several strategic questions regarding need, community support, potential challenges, and implementation, among others. The working group met several times over the fall 2019 semester to address these specific areas, and it also consulted more broadly with others across the University community for additional input, insight, and perspective. Additionally, other institutional models and structures were reviewed. The group also consulted, through video conference, with the President and Director of Research and Program Evaluation of the International Institute for Restorative Practices about their new Restorative Practices in Higher Education Collaborative, which includes 15 institutions. The Collaborative acknowledges restorative practices as a well-established strategy to mitigate and repair harm and is curious to explore the proactive aim of restorative practices.

As a result of this work, the working group has created a set of strategic directions and recommendations for consideration, as follows:

### **1. Training and Development on Restorative Practices**

The working group recommends that potential training programs are identified for the University community. Facilitated train-the-trainer models are offered by the [International Institute of Restorative Practices](#) and [USD Center for Restorative Justice](#), among others. It is important to identify communities to be trained (and possibly prioritized). The working group recommends individual and group training for student leaders (e.g., RCAs, peer educators {SHARE Peers, Fields Fellows, etc.}), student organization leadership (e.g., USG, GSG, etc.) and structured ongoing training for student-facing staff

Considering Restorative Practices at Princeton University - Spring 2020 Report

and administrators (and incorporating faculty leaders/ heads of colleges/DGSs). Wintersession may pose a unique opportunity for more in-depth training opportunities.

The working group suggests considering multiple training and restorative models to address potential conflicts and power dynamics (student-to-student, staff-to-student, staff-to-staff, faculty-to-student, etc.). Additionally, the group proposes training for student-facing staff and administrators during Summer 2020, in preparation for the upcoming Fall elections, a time at which community dissent and conflict are anticipated. It is imperative to have properly trained and skilled facilitators to assist the student and broader community to productively engage in conversations and provide support, if and when needed.

## **2. Incorporating Restorative Practices into Existing Structures**

The working group recommends that potential avenues for incorporating restorative practices into existing structures be explored. Introduction of restorative practices concepts could be integrated into existing training and /or leadership opportunities, such as Outdoor Action, undergraduate and graduate student orientations, student organization training, and the Pre-Read discussions.

Language in University policies and documents could also be amended to reflect the principles of restorative practices. For example, language in the housing contract, RRR or other university policy documents could propose restorative practices as an avenue for resolving interpersonal or community concerns. To that end, a restorative practices option could be considered a viable official alternative to resolving conflicts that do not rise to the level of a disciplinary issue. Students with low-level conflicts that might otherwise result in a No Contact Order could be offered an opportunity to address the conflict through restorative practices. The group recommends that a cadre of trained facilitators be assembled to assist with this work (somewhat akin to Title IX advisers). This group could also serve as a point of contact for other community issues that do not rise to the level of discipline.

## **3. Framework and Outreach**

The working group believes that this work will need to begin by exploring language and making clearer to the community the intent of this work and to educate the community on what restorative practices are. Emotional intelligence is a framework that may resonate with the community and that could be used to help explain these concepts initially when introducing this work to the community.

Once the concepts have been introduced, a starting point for these conversations could be about norm-setting and culture. The group proposes that the concepts of accountability and acknowledging wrongdoing are the initial concepts to address. These concepts could teach others how to give grace to allow for growth and understanding and to enable accountability for people to learn from mistakes.

It will be important to have students engaged from early on in the development of this framework and the introduction to the community. Students should be equal partners in this work, and we should aim to find areas to be more transparent in decision-making around these structures.

#### **4. Determine a Structure and Support for Restorative Practices**

The working group proposes that the focus of a restorative practices program, as a service and resource, is prioritized with students and eventually scaled up to more intentionally include faculty/staff/administrators. Many questions arose around *who* specifically would be responsible for the work. There must be a delineated office where restorative practices reside, where efforts can be tracked, maintained, and assessed. In this way, the initial groundwork is proposed to be coordinated through a term role in Campus Life, specifically the Office of Diversity and Inclusion-Campus Life. As the scale and scope of responsibility and outreach expands, this proposed structure may have to be re-considered.

The committee recommends hiring a full-time 1 or 2-year term coordinator position (similar to time bound project roles in the Office of Institutional Equity and Diversity). This person could give focused attention and effort to exploring and implementing restorative practice models, practices, and processes that could work within the Princeton context. The coordinator will conduct detailed focus groups, meet with University stakeholders, review current institutional policy and structures (to incorporate alternative processes), develop and facilitate restorative training modules, maintain a database of trained facilitators/trainees, create a communication and outreach plan (i.e., website, resource guide, requests, etc.), create a structured restorative practices program, and provide long-term recommendations for scope of the initiative.

## SOURCES

Karp, D. (2013). *The little book of restorative justice for colleges and universities: repairing harm and rebuilding trust in response to student misconduct*. Intercourse, PA: Good Books

Zehr, H. (2015). *The little book of restorative justice*. Intercourse, PA: Good Books

Institutional Models:

*Brown University:*

Source: <http://www.browndailyherald.com/2018/01/31/university-implements-restorative-justice-program/>

[International Institute of Restorative Practices](#)

*Skidmore College:*

Source: <https://www.skidmore.edu/campusrj/aboutrestorativejustice.php>

*Stanford University:*

Source: <https://communitystandards.stanford.edu/student-accountability-process/restorative-justice>

*University of Colorado Boulder:*

Source: <https://www.colorado.edu/sccr/restorative-justice-0>

*University of Pennsylvania*

Source: <https://www.osc.upenn.edu/mediation-conflict-resolution-meditation>

*University of San Diego*

Source: <https://www.sandiego.edu/soles/restorative-justice/>

*University of Vermont:*

Source: <https://www.iirp.edu/news/university-of-vermont-in-second-year-of-restorative-practices-implementation>