Creating Relationships of Justice and Care:
Transforming Sexual Culture at Xavier University

Proposal for Women of Excellence Grant
Creating Relationships of Justice and Care:  
Transforming the Sexual Culture at Xavier University

Amount Requested: $6,235

Abstract

Given the success of the fall 2009 and 2010 “Hooking Up?” programs sponsored by Xavier University’s Women of Excellence, there is widespread support from Student Life and Leadership to repeat this program and require all first year students in fall 2011 to attend. The Theology department seeks funding to sponsor the third annual “Hooking Up?” program for first year Xavier students and also for any student enrolled in Theological Foundations in fall 2011. Despite attempts to recruit GLBT students to interview last year, the “Hooking Up?” video thus far has only heterosexual male and female students. Women of Excellence funding would enable Jennifer Beste and a graduate student assistant to interview GLBT Xavier students about hookup culture, and revise the video so that it is no longer heterosexist and exclusionary. Funding would also enable the Theology Department to co-sponsor the actual program with Student Life and Leadership, and recruit and train 90-100 Xavier juniors and seniors to facilitate small group discussion during this program.
**BUDGET**  
**Fall 2011 “Hooking Up?” Program**

**Cintas Center** AV fees for the 2 evenings (Cintas can only accommodate 600 students in small group discussions each evening)  
$2000 \times 2 = $4000

**Honoraria** for 2 undergraduates to MC the program  
$150 \times 2 = $300

**Publicity**  
- Bulletin Board Posters to be distributed in Residence Halls  
  $275
- Flyers to be distributed around campus  
  $50

**Supplies**  
- Discussion Question Forms, Information Resources Forms, Evaluation Forms, Student Handbook handouts  
  $425
- Notecards for tables (so students can write their names and questions)  
  $25
- Small pencils for tables  
  $60
- Chex Snacks and water for each table for 2 evenings  
  $250 \times 2 = $500

**Training for 80-100 Upperclass student facilitators for small groups**  
(2 evenings) Training will include dinner for students to thank them for committing to three evenings (one for training and two for the program)  
$500 \times 2 = $1000

**Graduate Assistant**  
Graduate Assistant to Help Interview GLBT students about hookup culture and help edit video clips\(^1\)  
$1000

**Dvds needed for the Multiple Editing Process**  
(For the last two years, the dvd went through 10-12 revisions)  
$50

**Hookup Culture Survey Drawing Prizes**  
1 iPod and 10 $20 Chipotle gift cards as Incentives for 2011 first year students to complete the survey analyzing the program’s impact in April 2012  
$550

**Project Direction**  
Stipend for project coordinator  
$1000

**Minimal Budget Needed**  
Student Life and Leadership has committed to $3000 to the “Hooking Up?” program.  
-$3000

**TOTAL BudgetRequested**  
$6235

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\(^1\)Interviewing Xavier students and editing and revising the dvd is a very time-consuming process; during the last 2 summers, completion of the dvd has required 10-12 editing versions. Also, it is invaluable to have a young graduate student share feedback on which video clips will be most effective and elicit the best responses from students.
Narrative

A. Building on the success of the fall 2009 and 2010 “Hooking Up?” programs sponsored by Xavier University’s Women of Excellence, my proposed project is to revise the “Hooking Up?” dvd to include GLBT student perspectives and offer this program in fall 2011 for all first year students. Despite attempts to recruit GLBT students to interview last year, I was not successful in doing so, and the “Hooking Up?” video thus far portrays only heterosexual male and female students. Failing to acknowledge the presence of GLBT students in the video is heterosexist, sending an inaccurate, exclusionary message to GLBT first year students during the “Hooking Up?” program. Funding would also enable me to recruit and train 90-100 Xavier juniors and seniors to facilitate small group discussions during this program.

This project, which offers Xavier students the space and opportunity to assess critically their sexual culture and identify concrete ways to make their culture more just and caring advances the mission and purpose of the Women of Excellence Giving Circle in the sense that it seeks to value women’s and men’s experiences of sexuality and empower them to make a constructive impact on their community at Xavier and beyond. Furthermore, many social theorists argue that a lack of agentic control over one’s body and sexual behavior undermines one’s sense of control over one’s life. My experience teaching sexual ethics (and reading student reflections) over the past eight years has convinced me that many college women lack a sense of agency over their body and sexual decisions, which obviously undermines a healthy sense of self-esteem and empowerment. A significant percentage of women I have taught write about how their college social environment, which objectifies them as sex objects and reduces their value to their capacity to attract men, assaults the self-esteem they developed in high school and leads to unhealthy cycles of eating disorders, hooking up, and/or “settling” for dysfunctional relationships. This project, which aims both to reduce the prevalence of risky hookup behavior and sexual violence on campus and to foster critical dialogue about sexual respect and justice, directly and indirectly fosters female students’ agency.

B. Behind the statistic that 1 in 4 college women is a victim of sexual assault lies a powerful culture that includes pervasive and easily accessible pornography, social narratives that discourage female agency and define masculinity in terms of aggression and sexual “scoring,” and the use of alcohol to enable sexual coercion and violence. In this context, according to many of my students, sexual coercion has become normalized and the line between consensual sexual behavior and sexual violence becomes blurred. After interviewing students at multiple colleges, Donna Freitas concludes in Sex & the Soul: Juggling Sexuality, Spirituality, Romance, and Religion on America’s College Campuses (Oxford, 2008) that most students are dissatisfied with this sexual culture and yet struggle to find healthy alternatives.

One of the most important ways that Xavier University can enrich students’ lives, exercise the Jesuit ideal of care for the whole person, and execute our mission to “form students intellectually, morally, and spiritually, with rigor and compassion” is to empower students to transform the sexual culture that has become the national norm. Authentic Jesuit education should enable each generation of students to examine and evaluate critically the social norms they have inherited and inspire empathy, care, and a desire for justice within students’ interpersonal relationships and their broader communities. Requiring all first year students to attend the “Hooking Up?” program will empower many of them to critique their own sexual culture and create an environment that respects both women’s and men’s bodily integrity.

C. Student evaluations from the fall 2009 and 2010 “Hooking Up?” programs and theology faculty feedback indicate that the program has been successful and is still much needed on campus. In 2009, 224 out of 261 first year students who completed the program evaluation (86%) said the program should be repeated next year for first year students. In 2010, 662 out of 708 students (94%) recommended that the program be repeated next year. Many students expressed that the video really caused them to realize that rape does happen at Xavier, and it raised awareness about the serious posttraumatic effects of rape on survivors.
Female students repeatedly wrote that they realized that they need to be a lot more careful when they are drinking and partying. Many also indicated that they were more critical of hooking up and hookup culture after viewing the video and talking in their small groups. (Please see Appendix I for repeated student comments on the 2010 evaluation forms.) Student comments clearly demonstrate that the program is meeting a need to provide education about the real dynamics of hookup culture and sexual violence.

D. Currently, this program is the only sexual violence program that students are required to attend at Xavier University; student feedback indicates that the video had a powerful impact on them and caused more female students to be cautious about drinking at parties and trusting male acquaintances. In 2010, 1165 students attended the program thanks to the Student Life and Leadership and Residence Life’s support and assistance. Besides first year students, a percentage of sophomores attended the program as a requirement for their Theology 111 class. If this program is funded in 2011, it will impact the entire first year class (approximately 1000-1200 students and other students taking Theology 111. Most Theology faculty teaching Theology 111 incorporate this program into their courses and also benefit from this program; they report that students have excellent class discussions about hookup culture and sexual violence after participating in this program. Finally, theology colleagues at other Catholic universities have requested a copy of the video and are also using it in their courses; they report that the peer education approach fosters critical thinking about students’ socialization and culture and enables their students to open up about these sensitive issues of hookup up and sexual violence.

E. If this project is funded, all advertising for the “Hooking Up?” program and subsequent salons will include acknowledgement that these programs are being funded by the WOX Giving Circle. I will also announce at the beginning of the “Hooking Up?” program and salons that these programs are being funded by WOX. Finally, I am interested in writing an article to be published in a pedagogy journal analyzing the impact of this first-year program (including the discussion salons) on students’ sexual culture; such publications will acknowledge that they were made possible by grants from the WOX Giving Circle. During my 2012 faculty developmental leave, I plan to write a theological ethics book on hookup culture and will acknowledge how my efforts to change the sexual culture at my institution were made possible by the WOX grants.

F. Especially since the vast majority of first year students recommended that “Hooking Up?” be repeated each year for first year students, I am particularly interested in determining the long term effects of this program. Since February 2010, I have been in the process of creating a survey to assess the attitudinal and behavioral impact of the “Hooking Up?” program on first year students in 2009 and 2010. Kim Daubman, a psychologist at Bucknell University who has done much research on hookup culture, has collaborated with me in this process. The survey received IRB approval and is fully supported and funded by Dr. Roger Fortin and Dr. Janice Walker. In February 2011, the survey was administered via email to Xavier juniors (who represent the control group) and Xavier sophomores who attended the 2009 program. At the end of April, first year students will also have the opportunity to take this survey. As soon as data analysis is completed, I will share the results with the Women of Excellence Giving Circle. Dr. Daubman joined this project because, despite hookup researchers’ emphasis on the need to create intervention programs, she does not know of a single, actual hookup culture peer education program. She is confident that many college campuses will be interested in this “Hooking Up?” video and program after we publish articles analyzing the program’s impact. If this project is funded and GLBT students are included in the revised video, it is likely that WOX funding of this program will have broad impact on the well-being of countless college women (and men) across the United States.

G. Theology Department faculty are eager and willing to present the results of our project.
Appendix 1: Hookup Program Evaluations, Sept. 27 & Sept. 28, 2010

1) Should the “Hooking Up?” Program be repeated next year for First Year Students?

Yes- 662

Why? – Informative, creates awareness, powerful, seeing the stories of the students, important to know what to expect, going to think about my choices now, unifying factor of having the whole freshmen class together discussing the video

No- 46

Why? - People should already know all of this, it is not going to change anyone’s mind

What was most interesting about the video?

- The rape stories
- Personal stories from Xavier students
- How often sexual violence occurs
- The male student who created a rally for men affirming respect for women
- Most people are negative about “Hookup Culture”
- “Hookup Culture” need not be the norm, as it’s more avoidable than people make it seem
- “Battle Buddies” clip
- Males get emotionally attached
- The stories were from real people and not contrived or clichéd

Did you learn anything from the video and/or change your mind?

- Don’t be passive about hookups
- Upperclassmen are against hookups
- Was okay with hookups, now not
- I had the same ideas that hookups were negative- they were just reinforced
- I need to be more careful when drinking and partying
- No, the hook-up culture is always going to be the same
- Watch friends when we go out
- No, I have always been against the hookup culture
- I need to protect myself and others
- Before was I against or neutral about hookups- now I am aware of the dangers
- That “hooking up” is not expected of all students at Xavier
- My decisions will affect how other people think about me
- Many people are raped
- I need to have more self-respect