A *TapShield* White Paper

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A Mobile Solution to Campus Sexual Assault: Resiliency & Prevention

It wasn't long ago when sexual assault was a silent crime at college campuses. Issues like fraternity hazing and mental health among students took most of the limelight. A young woman who was sexually assaulted may have felt her experience was unique and uncommon. The culture that was all too common on colleges perpetuated the silence, some even downplaying and underreporting rape allegations.

Today, it would be difficult for a student or administrator anywhere to be in the dark about campus sexual assault. Campuses large and small, public and private are faced with new challenges over how to address sexual assault in a meaningful way.

The role of college administrators is to provide a safe learning environment – collaborating with campus and local law enforcement, students and parents to promote and enforce a culture of openness and transparency. When an incident of sexual assault does occur, administrators must act swiftly to enforce student codes of conduct and offer support and services to students who say they've been assaulted, all while balancing the rights of the accused.

Universities are increasingly challenged to prevent sexual assaults, with at least 80% of all sexual assaults being committed by an acquaintance of the victim. It is very common for a victim of assault to experience devastation, shame, and guilt, complicating the reporting process. Universities have fragmented reporting channels, and women report assaults in various ways – they may call the police, tell a friend or faculty member, go to the hospital or seek counseling at a sexual assault center. Victims sometimes say the schools' handling of their cases compounded their trauma, and point to insensitive handling that ranged from inappropriate questioning to being required to go through mediation sitting near the man they had accused.

What if there was a system that women felt comfortable using to open dialogue with campus safety officials and administrators after a traumatizing incident took place? Could an effective technology that resonates with students actually deter would-be wrongdoers if they knew it was commonly used among all members of the community? This white paper offers insights on how gaps in critical communication can be bridged by engaging with today's students on their terms. We will also explore how a solution might reinforce positive behaviors and

encourage bystander responsibility, specifically as it relates to campus sexual assault and the social settings where incidents typically originate.

President Barack Obama announces the White House's "It's On Us" Campaign against Campus Sexual Assault in September 2014.

COMMUNICATE WITH STUDENTS ON THEIR OWN TERMS TO PREVENT INCIDENTS AND ENCOURAGE REPORTING

Researchers have spent recent years documenting specific behaviors, attitudes, and preferences that embody the millennial generation's life experiences. Undoubtedly, the most written about influence on the characteristics of the Millennial generation is the integration of technology in their lives.[1] Today's 18-22 year old demographic is entrenched in technology; they consider technology as the norm; a way of life. Millennials view technology simply as a means for getting things done. Millennials thrive on instant gratification. They live in a mobile world, which facilitates their multitasking nature.[2]

They take advantage of the in-between moments in their schedule to accomplish a variety of tasks, such as simultaneously walking home from class, emailing, texting, and listening to music. Smartphones, which they cringe at the thought of leaving home without, allow them to stay in uninterrupted contact with the world around them. This generation is not defined by the digital lifestyle they lead. Researchers Howe and Strauss describe Millennials as being team-oriented.[3] This generation

exceedingly prefers participating in activities with others: socializing, studying and traveling. Millennials are high achievers and pride themselves around preparing for and being successful. Since they are achievement-oriented, they tend to avoid activities or become disengaged where they do not see a clear path to their goal.[6]

There is a great generational divide among today's college students and college administrators who are significantly composed of Baby Boomers. Baby Boomers prefer one-on-one communication, do not like being rushed, and prefer a human touch in their interactions.

Comparison: Communication Tools Have Changed:

Baby Boomers:
- Fax
- Memo
- Call
- Handshake
- Office

Millennials
- Email
- Tweet
- Text
- E-Sign
- Virtual Conference

In order to prevent incidents of campus sexual assault and to encourage a culture of reporting, campus safety officials and administrators must bridge the communication gap characteristic of campuses today. College leaders must seek new ways to communicate with students on their own terms. Because Millennials use mobile applications in many parts of their lives, a personal safety app can be an effective tool to lower critical barriers to communication. However, any technology is only useful if it is used. The safety application must be designed to be user-friendly, and with use-cases and features that encourage frequent usage so that it molds to the millennial lifestyle.

Prevention starts with the culture of your campus community. An effective top-of-mind personal safety application that is highly adopted means your campus is layered with a virtual safety network, where everyone's smartphone becomes a social safety tool. An effective safety solution makes it easy and risk-free to share information on potential threats or incidents of sexual assault. In assessing options for safety apps for campus, it is important to offer students an opportunity to submit anonymous tips to safety officials. Doing so facilitates risk-free and honest information sharing, which are critical components to preventing and deterring sex

crimes on campus. Students must feel comfortable reporting sexual assault incidents, too. An effective personal safety app becomes a catalyst to quick reporting of incidents, which can reduce the victim's emotional devastation, reduce organizational risk for colleges, and lead to the swift resolution of crimes.

A CAMPUS CULTURE OF BYSTANDER INTERVENTION AND REINFORCING POSITIVE BEHAVIOR

The role of the bystander is one component of sexual violence prevention that can be effective on college campuses. Common goals of campus bystander programs are to:
1. Develop ways to increase awareness of sexual assault, such as learning to make observations and recognizing warning behaviors that may require intervention;
2. Teach the appropriate skills to intervene safely and effectively, in both direct and indirect ways.

Effective bystander programs foster an encouraging environment for others to speak out against sexist attitudes, rape-myth beliefs, and sexual violence itself. Confronting sexual violence can help change the social norms of a community and society as a whole. A campus community thrives when bystander intervention becomes a culture that is top-of-mind among students, faculty, and staff.

Effective mobile safety solutions can encourage positive behaviors between everyone in the community. Campuses can facilitate a pervasive culture of bystander intervention with a social safety network where everyone in the community can collaborate or step in when they see or hear of sexual violence. The safety network's existence alone acts as a deterrent to would-be offenders. Since sexual aggressors are repeat offenders, this becomes even more important. Highly adopted safety apps can prevent would-be aggressors because "everyone has it" or "it's so easy to report." A personal safety app with crime reporting capabilities can aid in Clery Act Compliance since it keeps all campus safety issues top-of-mind in the community.

MOBILE STRATEGY TO REDUCE RISK AND IMPROVE READINESS FOR CAMPUS SEXUAL ASSAULT

The millennial lifestyle of today is such that students are less likely to call their parents, but they will text them; it's easy, and it's fast. TapShield makes sharing information about incidents just as easy and fast. TapShield is a student-centered safety solution built with the latest in smartphone and cloud technology. It facilitates discreet and risk-free communication from community members through information sharing to campus safety officials. Patented features and collaborative design logic ensure persistent student engagement – necessary to ensure the app is top-of-mind and not something students have to look for in case of an emergency.

Through an easy to use personal safety app, students can report GPS-tagged information with added pictures, video, and audio clips. Safety officials can respond to students via a cloud-based dashboard. TapShield also allows users to make GPS-tagged calls for help or message authorities in distress situations. With TapShield, safety officials can better identify threats, prevent crimes, and save lives – improving safety to individuals and the community.

Benefits:
- Empowers students to take responsibility for campus safety by turning smartphones into social safety tools;
- Encourages students to become the eyes, ears, and cameras for public safety officials;
- Facilitates frequent, easy, and risk-free communication between students and safety officials;
- Makes students more aware of safety issues every day;
- Helps the University fight campus sexual assault reporting challenges and improves Title IX compliance.

About TapShield

TapShield provides a student-centered mobile safety solution that encourages information sharing to prevent and deter crimes. Through a safety app connected to a cloud-based dashboard, TapShield creates a new two-way channel of communication that empowers students and safety officials to identify potential threats quickly. TapShield also provides users the ability to make GPS-tagged calls for help to dispatchers in distress situations. With TapShield, safety officials are able to identify and assess threats, prevent crimes and save lives. For more information visit www.tapshield.com.

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1. Oblinger, Diana G. Educating the Net Generation. Edited by Diana G. Oblinger and J. L. Oblinger. *EDUCAUSE*, 2005, 2.9, e-book (Available at http://www.educause.edu/content.asp?PAGE_ID=5989&bhcp=1).
2. Ibid.
3. Ricks, Persis C. "Make Way for Millennials! How Today's Students are Shaping Higher Education Space." *Planning for Higher Education*. 37 No. 2 (2009):10

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