

Harass

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they did not allow themselves permission to get help.”

In the past, cadets were instructed to question victims about what happened and how to report the crime. Now, students don't question victims — they tell them how to get help from counselors, call centers, medical centers and police.

“My freshman year, it was, ‘This is how you report it,’” Mair said. “Now it's more elaborate: ‘Here's who you call.’”

Four cadets counted off places they could turn for help: counseling centers, local women's groups, the chaplains' office and the Internet.

As soon as they walk through the gates, cadets get wallet cards with a list of resources — and those same resources are listed on bulletin boards around campus.

“The most important thing is how to seek help, not assigning guilt or asking questions,” Maybee said.

When the four seniors arrived at West Point, the counseling center was all male. During a feedback session, cadets complained. Within a month, a woman worked at the center. Soon after, when cadets asked for a civilian counselor, one arrived.

After the 2003 scandal at the Air



HOLLEY MEISTER

Marjana Mair, a West Point senior, gets into formation in August. When she was a freshman, academy officials advised cadets to question victims of sexual harassment. Now, cadets are instructed to direct victims to counseling.

Force Academy, Congress mandated confidentiality for cadets who wanted to seek help for assault but not necessarily report it.

“The stigma of reporting it has gone away,” said Tari Glowacki, a senior cadet. “They've stressed sexual assault since we got here, but now it's how to help. People are no longer afraid to get help if they need it.”

Each company has a “respect representative” who handles complaints from racist comments to

equal opportunity issues and sexist remarks. The cadets have had respect representatives for years, but it used to be an additional duty. A student may have been a respect representative as well as his company's public relations representative or fire safety representative. Now it's a cadet's only duty.

“Making it an only duty shows it's as important as athletics or military development here,” senior cadet Adam Harmon said.

As for prevention classes, those 68 PowerPoint slides have disappeared. An officer and a cadet now lead an interactive class meant to spark discussion about what people are thinking and feeling.

“Any time you stimulate conversation, that's good,” Harmon said.

He gave an example. “You used to hear, ‘Wow, that test really raped me.’ I had never really thought about it from a woman's point of view. Now you don't hear that so much.”

Cadets also can log into the academy's internal judicial Web site to watch the progress of cases on campus. For example, if one student accuses another of sexual harassment, cadets will see how the case is handled and what the punishment — judicial or nonjudicial — will be.

The site gets 1,000 hits a month, McMahon said. Because they can face military punishment for conduct unbecoming an officer or nonjudicial punishment, cadets may see harsher judgments for harassing behavior on the Web site than students see at civilian institutions.

“Even sexist behavior can be punished, but that doesn't go to the courts,” McMahon said.

The four cadets agreed the education — 70 hours' worth of discussion about personal beliefs, leadership, morals and ethics —

that began last fall has made the most difference.

Another possibility for working on prevention this school year is separate sessions for men and women.

“Research shows the single-gender stuff is more effective,” Breton said.

She said men tend to act macho in front of women rather than dig deep to talk.

“With the war in Iraq, you can't have internal issues,” Mair said. “But you also have to learn how to make it so your enlisteds will want to pay attention.”

McMahon and Breton said they don't know what to expect when the results of the spring 2006 survey arrive in December. If the numbers of complaints go up, it could be because the programs make people feel comfortable reporting incidents.

But if they go down, they fear it will be because recent scandals at the Naval and Air Force academies have made cadets afraid to speak up because they don't want to have their names and reputations dragged through the media.

“I think we have guarded optimism,” McMahon said. “We've made so many changes, it will be hard to assess the program, so our reaction — no matter what the statistics say — will be, ‘Let's just let it work this year.’” □

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