

MIDDLEBURY SRR

October 2018

Dear Barbara McCall,

We on the Sexual and Relationship Respect Committee have loved collaborating and learning from the programs you curate and run here at Midd -- and we want to help make them as robust and effective as possible! Recently, we have gotten some feedback concerning the efficacy and impact of Green Dot training from those who have undergone mandatory pieces of training as part of their orientation or athletic participation process. Students have brought up problems with the tone of the Green Dot video, the way it focuses on bystanders rather than perpetrators, and the sparseness of the trainings. We think it could be helpful to brainstorm more ways we can tweak Green Dot and integrate it into every day students' lives, so it can become more ingrained in campus culture. We'd love to work with you in thinking of some ways that might improve student reception and retention of Green Dot norms and, in turn, create a healthier campus environment for all!

We believe it is important to work together to change and improve Green Dot because of the way that it is received by the student body at Middlebury. Many first years reported that they were dissatisfied with the Green Dot education process that took place during this year's orientation. Many students were upset that the Green Dot video only used the term "power-based violence" instead of sexual assault and rape, as it appeared that the program is shying away from being explicit about what they are trying to combat. The light-hearted nature of the video made many students perceive Green Dot as something not to be taken seriously, and one student even noticed two male first years fistpound and laugh while the video was being played. We realize that the video's fun tone is probably to help make students more receptive, but many students feel hurt and discouraged that it is not presented as seriously as it should be.

We are concerned that the tone of the video can be interpreted as lighthearted or even humorous. While it is important to make sure students are engaged, we want to make sure that it is treated with the seriousness that its mission warrants. Green Dot being presented in such a manner has shifted campus culture in a way that allows students to view the epidemic of sexual assault on campus as a non-pressing issue as opposed to something that should be taken seriously. The terms "Green Dot" and "Red Dot" are commonly used on campus, but they are often mentioned in contexts that have nothing to do with emotional/physical violence. Instead, these terms are often used in a humorous or joking manner. By changing the way that Green Dot is introduced and presented to the student body throughout the year, and especially during orientation, we hope to see a change in campus culture that will encourage students to focus more on what Green Dot is trying to achieve and to take issues of consent and sexual assault more seriously.

Another issue we have heard is that the definition of sexual assault is perceived by most to be very narrow, with rape being at the forefront of this definition. We believe in Green Dot's potential to bring awareness to the wide scope of sexual assault on campus and to be a positive force that creates riptides throughout the Middlebury community. While the program already does this to an extent, we believe it can do more. Students want Green Dot to be more transparent, so they can know what it is that Green Dot actually does. By being more transparent, the program will be more effective and accessible in terms of allowing students to make suggestions about how Green Dot could be more useful on campus in students' everyday lives.

Another issue we see with Green Dot is that most students associate it with a singular workshop that they are forced to attend that one time at orientation. The mini-training is only incorporated as part of orientation, and nowhere else in the 4-year curriculum of the general student populace. Unless one elects to do the 6-hour trainings offered or is a member of student advocate groups, orientation is the only exposure many students receive to Green Dot training, and then only briefly. At the very base level, Green Dot should be a universal experience for orientation. But feedback tells us that there is a distinct sense of coerced attendance and a stiff, mandatory air about the entire experience for many students who undergo the orientation training. When people resent the fact that they feel forced to attend a training or event, they are much less likely to absorb the information being disseminated and are more likely to reject the very concepts being advanced. This creates an incidental dialogue, not a robust culture of safer sex practices and rejection of coercive sex culture. One of the deepest problems that we see with Green Dot is that the video fails to recognize students as active participants in the rape and assault culture of which they are part. Rather, the material paints the audience as a bystander, making them purely reactionary and preventative actors. It fails to recognize that they may be perpetrators of the very assault situations in which they are being trained to intervene. We must create more awareness and accountability if the program is to be successful, and stop perpetuating the narrative that other people are assaulters. We believe that Green Dot should not only include information about how to intervene as a bystander, but training about consent and how to not be an assaulter. We also think it should include information about resources on campus you can turn to if do experience sexual assault. The bystander experience is only a small piece of the wide range of experiences students have with sexual assault at Middlebury, so a sole focus on bystander intervention is not enough.

To help improve Green Dot's positive impact on campus we discussed various improvements that reflect what many students have expressed about the Green Dot presentation. One idea was making the process more involved and interactive for the first years, which could be done by changing the video and showing it in a more intimate environment. Also, a panel with the Green Dot interns would be a great opportunity to be interact more with the students and also address reporting red dot behavior, which many first years have shared as something they felt was missing. Another idea is to have Restorative Practices circles following the Green Dot video, to proactively address issues of sexual violence within smaller communities on campus. We also want to find ways to have mandatory Green Dot trainings throughout students' time at Middlebury, after orientation and beyond. These would ideally go beyond the focus on bystanders to also address students' complicity in perpetuating rape culture on campus. We are looking forward to meeting with you to brainstorm further about ways that we can improve Green

Dot together! We recognize these issues will not be resolved in one semester, but we suggest that the incoming feb class' orientation could be a golden opportunity to tests some improvements to the problems noted above.

Thank you so much for reading. We really appreciate all the work you are doing and your willingness to hear our concerns. We look forward to hearing your thoughts!

Sincerely,

SGA Sexual and Relationship Respect Committee