



The Impact of *Mustangs for Consent*

Western's Mandatory GBSV
Incoming Student Training Suite

October 2024

- » Western is setting a national precedent in GBSV prevention, both in training scale and innovative content.
- » Western provides a mandatory two-pronged training suite for incoming students. While other universities have followed in providing e-learning modules, Western continues to innovate through provision of live-facilitation of content to engage students and achieve greater impact.
- » There is an emerging evidence base supporting the content and approach, through a research partnership.

Sections

How Western Got Here

The Nuts and Bolts of
Mustangs for Consent

Program Scale

Program Impact

Facilitators' Impact

The Way Forward

Gender-based and sexual violence (GBSV) is pervasive across Canada and across postsecondary institutions. From a 2019 provincial survey, up to 30% of Western students experience sexual violence, and more than 70% experience sexual harassment¹. While students are at Western there is an opportunity to make a change and shape the next generation. The goal is to eliminate GBSV on campus, but also to set standards and beliefs that students will carry into the world upon graduation.

Since 2022, the Mustangs for Consent training program has been leading the way in GBSV education, setting a national precedent both in terms of scale of the rollout and in time invested by Western students. Other institutions look to Western as a leader in developing their GBSV curricula, indicating that Western is leading the way in Canada by offering mandatory online and in-person training for incoming first year students. This programming has been gradually augmented to create a scaffolded GBSV education plan that is accessible to students in all years of study and equips student leaders with population-relevant skills².

How Western Got Here

In 2021, following allegations of multiple sexual violence incidents during Orientation Week, Western University invested in enhanced efforts to prevent sexual violence on campus (McQuaid & Wathen, 2022³). Working from a foundation of relationships between Western's Centre for Research and Education on Violence Against Women and Children (CREVAWC), Anova (London's sexual assault centre and local gender-based violence expert), Western Housing and Western Student Experience, there was an immediate response including new public education posters, updates to e-learning provided in residences, and the creation and initial piloting of a live-facilitated program called Undressing Consent. A GBSV Action Committee was also formed, and this committee developed a series of recommendations targeted at developing a safer campus committee (see Promoting Transformation Change at Western: Report of the Action Committee on Gender-Based and Sexual Violence) including continued development of, and investment in, GBSV prevention education and training to all students and staff on campus (McQuaid & Wathen, 2022).

Accordingly, since 2022, all incoming first-year students are required to complete Mustangs for Consent. The two-and-a-half hour training consists of an online asynchronous module, Consent 101, and a live-facilitated module, Undressing Consent. Students living off-campus must complete Consent 101 and are strongly encouraged to complete Undressing Consent. Students living in residence (approximately 80% of first year students) must complete both sections of Mustangs for Consent. Both sessions equip students with the tools to navigate consent, pleasure and rejection. Instead of relying on lectures, facilitators use discussions and youthful language to engage students with the content.

¹ <https://www.ontario.ca/page/student-voices-sexual-violence>

² <https://www.uwo.ca/health/documents/GBSV-generaledplan.pdf>

³ McQuaid, T., & Wathen, C. N. (2022). Promoting transformative change at Western: Report of the Action Committee on Gender-Based and Sexual Violence. https://www.president.uwo.ca/gbsv/gbsv_pdf/acgbsv-report-2022.pdf

The Nuts and Bolts of Mustangs for Consent

Consent 101

- » Asynchronous e-learning
- » Informational
- » Mandatory for all incoming first year students (receipt of their Western ONEcard contingent upon completion)

Consent 101 covers the following content:

- The definition of GBSV and how it operates in society
- The concepts of consent, sexual coercion, desire, and pleasure
- The process of how to handle a disclosure, understanding the impact of GBSV on campus, and where to seek support
- A brief introduction to bystander intervention with the ability to recognize how to safely respond to incidences of GBSV

While this information is important to convey to students, over 90%⁴ of Western's incoming students can identify consent and what constitutes sexual violence. The behaviour that persists is not an issue of a lack of information. What Western students need is a new subset of skills, a space to reflect on their beliefs and norms, and a shared language across campus that promotes safety. This is the goal of the second part of Mustangs for Consent, Undressing Consent.

Undressing Consent

- » Live-facilitated 90-minute Zoom session
- » Small gender-separated groups of no more than 45 students per session
- » Mandatory for students living in residence, as written into their housing contract
- » Over 200 sessions offered from the end of June to the end of September
- » Facilitated by over 20 highly trained GBSV facilitators who join Student Experience's Wellness & Equity Education team
- » Experiential rather than informational, students are facilitated through a variety of activities, self-reflections, and breakout chats, that discuss the topics in the following graphic

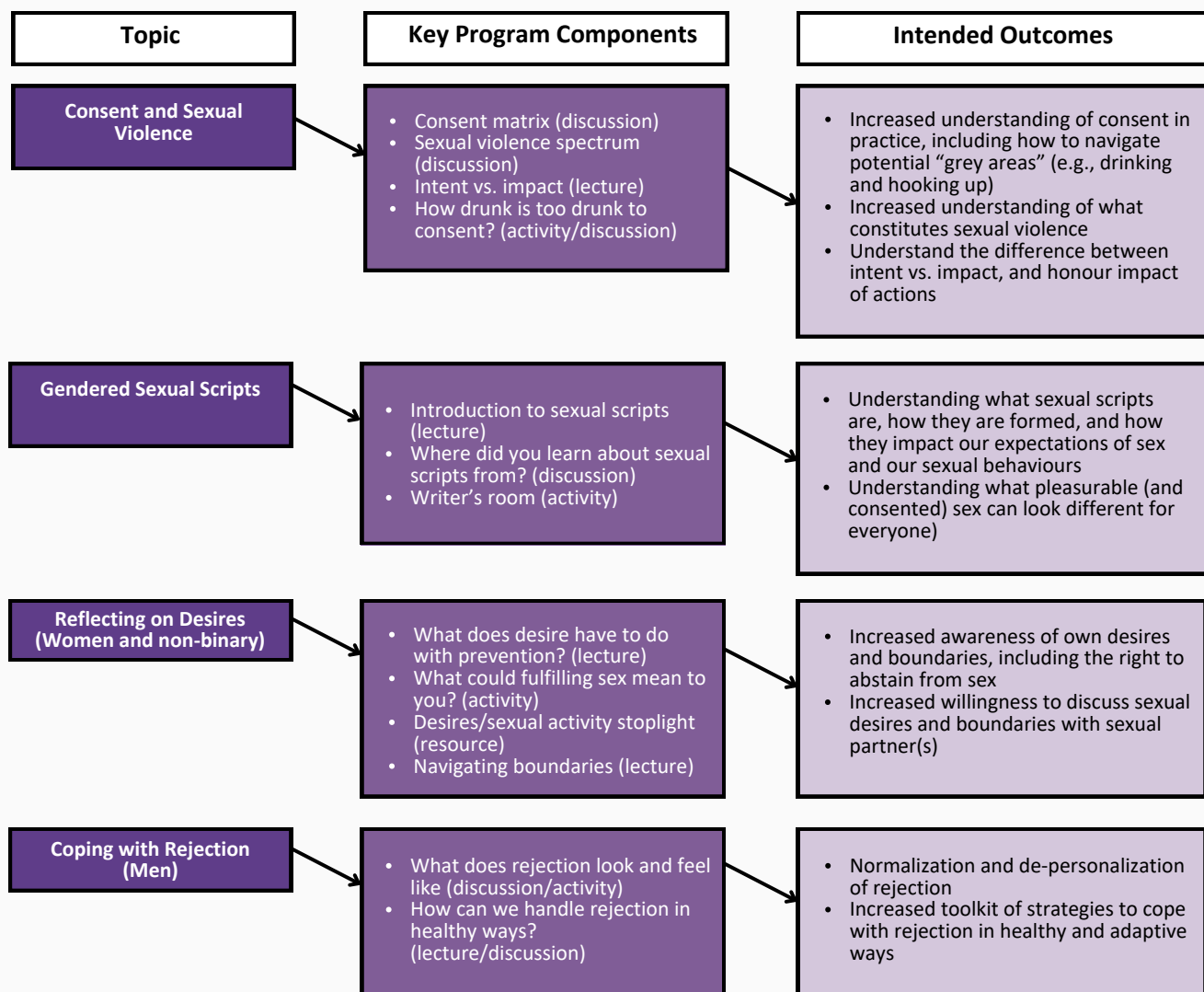
Each section and learning outcome for the Undressing Consent curriculum was developed by pulling on a robust body of evidence as well as decades of experience running anti-violence prevention programming. See next page for an overview of the content⁵.

⁴ <https://www.ontario.ca/page/student-voices-sexual-violence>

⁵ Image taken from CREVAWC's *Impact of the Undressing Consent Program: On Attitudes, Knowledge, and Behaviours that Contribute to Sexual Violence on Campuses*, published in April 2024 and authored by Katreena Scott, Anushka Khanna, Aadhiya Vasudeva, Amber Di Paolo, and Seema Hooda.

Figure 1

Key Program Components and Intended Outcomes for *Undressing Consent*



Program Scale

There are now other campuses offering or looking to offer mandatory e-learning similar to Consent 101. Most within the field of GBSV prevention are unified in their understanding that this type of informational e-learning approach will not be enough to significantly change behaviour, however pragmatically most institutions are unable or unwilling to devote the resources needed to provide the in-depth experiential small group trainings. In other words, there is sectoral agreement on the information, skills and approach needed to achieve change, but the hurdle comes in terms of willingness to invest the resources required for these live-facilitated experiences, as well as institute a system of compliance (e.g., mandating the training).

While initially driven by a moment of crisis, Western stepped in to innovative leadership in providing Undressing Consent. This approach is evidence-informed, research driven, and precedent setting in time dedicated by both incoming students (over 2.5 hours with the combined Consent 101 and Undressing Consent) and by the institution in terms of staffing and rollout.

The Mustangs for Consent training suite is provided by Western’s affiliate university colleges (King’s, Huron, and formerly Brescia). The numbers below reflect only main campus, with the exception of Undressing Consent 2022 which includes the affiliate colleges.

Consent 101	2024	2023	2022
Number of Student Completions	8,180	8,000	5,154
Undressing Consent	2024	2023	2022 (includes HBK)
Number of Sessions	196	269	324
Number of Student Completions	5,186	5,504	9,509

Program Impact

Starting in 2023 and occurring again in 2024, CREVAWC conducted a program evaluation of Undressing Consent⁶. The evaluation aims to better understand student perspectives of this program and this program’s effectiveness in changing student knowledge, attitudes, and self-reported behaviours related to GBSV.

Key findings, as summarized by CREVAWC:

1. Almost 90% of the students were satisfied with Undressing Consent. They found it to be important and valuable.
2. Material in Undressing Consent was relevant and helpful to students during their first few weeks of university, leading them to make choices and take actions that are GBSV preventative.
3. Students had greater explicit knowledge and more positive implicit attitudes about consent after completing Undressing Consent, though explicit endorsement of consent myths remains unchanged.
4. Most female and non-binary students reported a high level of comfort in having conversations about desires and boundaries despite retrospectively reporting that Undressing Consent helped them better communicate their boundaries. New measurement strategies are needed.

⁶ CREVAWC’s *Impact of the Undressing Consent Program: On Attitudes, Knowledge, and Behaviours that Contribute to Sexual Violence on Campuses*, published in April 2024 and authored by Katreena Scott, Anushka Khanna, Aadhiya Vasudeva, Amber Di Paolo, and Seema Hooda.

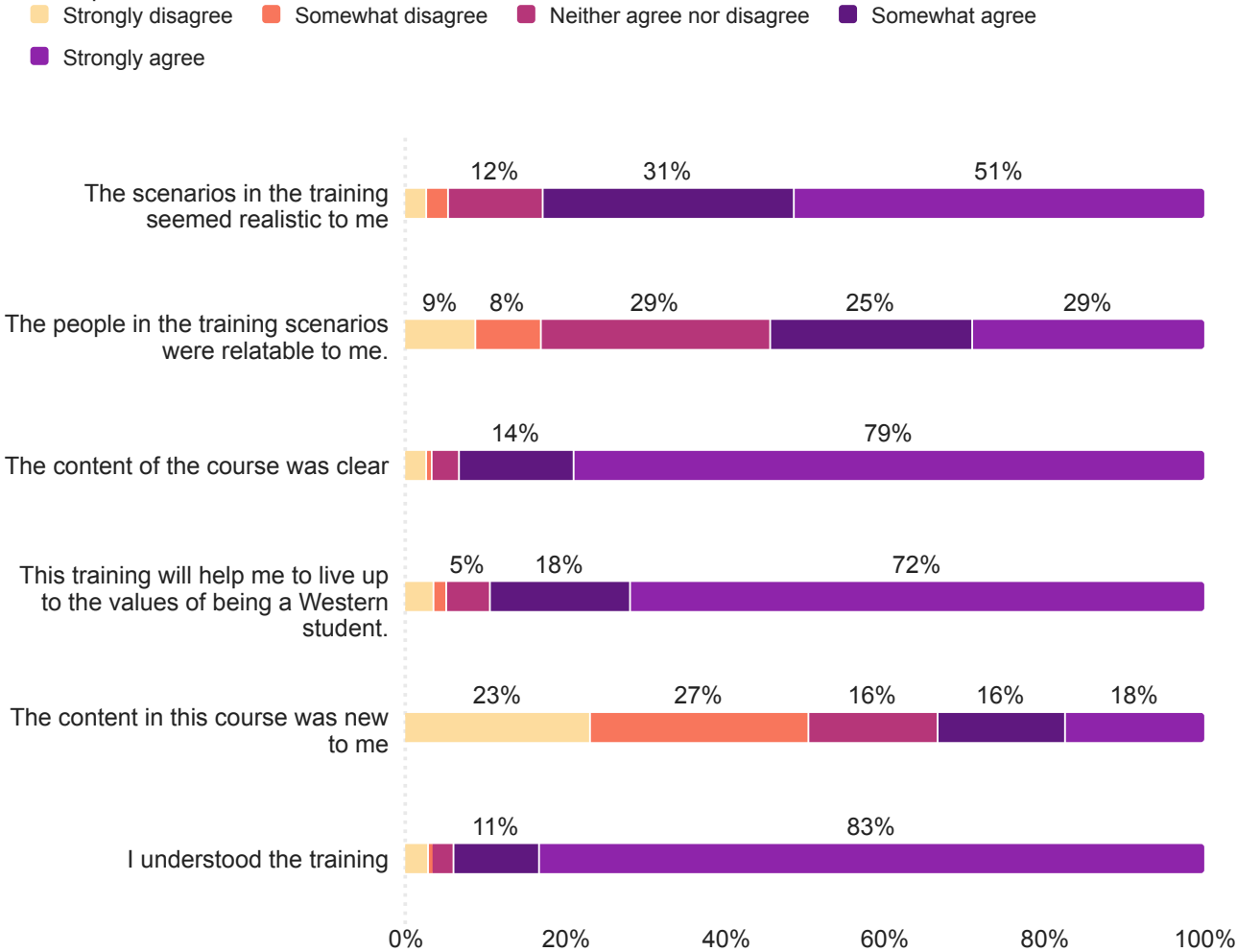
5. Male students had less knowledge of what constitutes sexual violence and the nuances of consent in practice, and they were more likely to endorse consent myths and implicit victim-blaming attitudes than female and non-binary students.

Ongoing research on the efficacy of Western's GBSV prevention programming, along with feedback provided by students and program facilitators, has allowed for a program improvement approach with annual curricular updates. For example, in 2024, the Wellness & Equity Education Team increased content related to alcohol consumption and implemented a more intentional approach to delineating how to successfully plan for rejection. In addition to the research being conducted by CREVAWC, each year Student Experience has offered a feedback survey for both Consent 101 and Undressing Consent. In 2024, there were 776 feedback reports on Consent 101 and 534 on Undressing Consent.

Some findings from Consent 101 feedback (*continued on next page*):

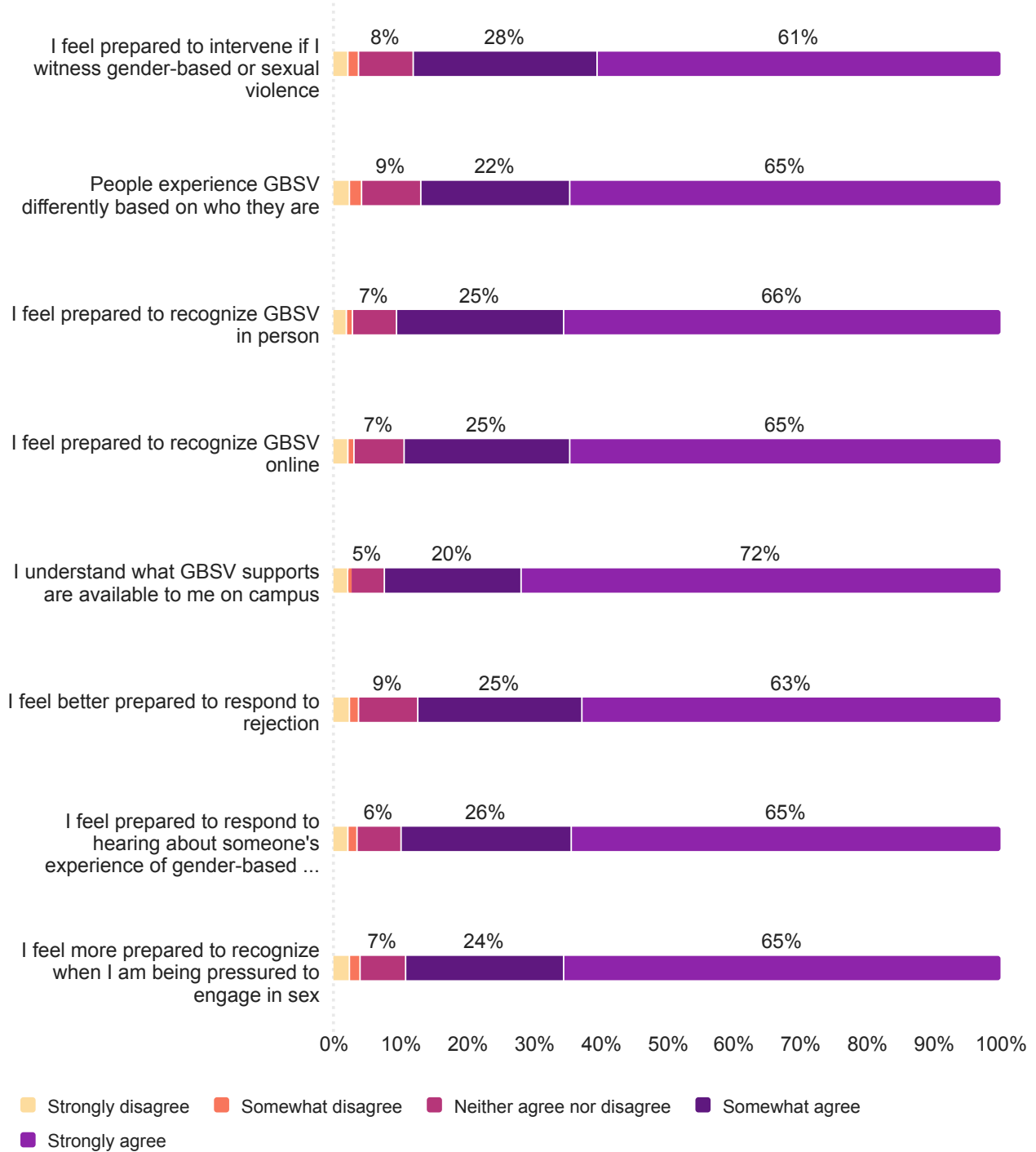
How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements about this online course?

769 Responses



How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements about this training?

721 Responses



When asked if anything should be added, changed, or removed, student feedback was overwhelmingly positive. A substantial number of students had short answers that called the training “perfect,” “great,” or “good.” No student suggested any removals.

Students were also asked to name one thing they learned from the training. Many of the responses noted important, foundational aspects of consent and GBSV were absolutely integral to their full understanding. Some representative answers include:

- “[D]ifferent types of consent. I honestly thought it was limited to a yes and no.”
- “Consent [needs] to be clear and communicate[d] effectively”
- “I learned that GBSV is more common than I thought”
- “[T]he bystander effect”
- “It is not my fault to suffer from sex[ual] violence”
- “Some verbal expressions also belongs [sic] to GBSV”

Though few weaknesses have been identified, students are asking for more, not less. They want more videos and scenarios, or updates to existing ones, for more relatable, relevant, and representative content.

In terms of Undressing Consent, when asked what they liked most, a few aspects were repeatedly mentioned. The interactivity, “openness,” and “comfortable” discussions generated were highlighted frequently. The word cloud below, generated from student answers, gives a good indication of the character of their responses.

Q10 - What did you like MOST about the training?



Many students highlighted how effective those facilitating the training were. This was clearly a large part of the program’s success in being open, comfortable, and interactive. Multiple students noted that the ability to make contributions to discussion anonymously via chat as another important aspect to that “openness.” A few representative comments include:

- “I felt very safe and [I] enjoyed asking questions.”
- “Interactive and very knowledgeable.”
- “Safe environment to talk about sensitive topics.”

Facilitators' Impact

The facilitator team is hired in May, trained in June, and mentored through their first few sessions of facilitation. They are often Western graduate students or those who work in the community GBSV prevention space. For the 2024 season of Undressing Consent, the Wellness & Equity Education team strategically reduced both the number of facilitators hired and the number of sessions offered to provide more shifts to the summer staff and increase the average attendance for each session. This update allowed for less scheduling on behalf of the team while still reaching the same number of students (proportional to the number of incoming first-year students) from previous years.

	2024	2023	2022 (includes HBK)
Number of Facilitators	23	34	36
Number of Sessions	196	269	324

Facilitators are the front line of seeing the impact of this programming. After each session they fill out a form allowing them to reflect on their own growth as well as that of the students. Team meetings are held regularly to identify trends, shift the nuance of facilitation, and keep everyone connected to the values and pedagogical approach of the program.

In the comments from facilitators below, you can see another perspective on the impact of this program:

- Both our writer’s room and interactive padlet activities went super well today! There was a lot of thoughtful participation from students which not only made the activities go more smoothly but made them super valuable and engaging as well.
- Session went great! Students were kind, respectful, and engaged.
- This group was particularly insightful about the shortcomings of mainstream sexual scripts. I heard things from this group that I would expect from discussions in upper-year courses. We had a few moments where we could come together and share our frustrations, and I hope they left feeling as seen and understood as I did.
- There was an older man in the session who spoke beautifully and eloquently at the end of the session about what they took away from the session and how they felt it was meaningful content - particularly the rejection section. He spoke to how he felt his generation was never encouraged to feel their feelings in healthy ways, and he appreciated the impact of having the space to talk to about this in this training. Really lovely - so just want to extend my thanks and gratitude (as always) to the team and the work you have done to deliver this training.
- The guys were really great and receptive to the info being given!
- This was an amazing session! [Co-facilitator] and I received so many messages from students after the attendance thanking us and complimenting us! I think the session really resonated with them and they were very happy (so we were too)!
- In our last two sessions, [co-facilitator] and I had some great Padlet responses which we both felt were validating of the importance of these workshops :)
- I had a lovely moment where I shared about my queer (specifically asexual) identity and a participant said they related to that and asked about queer spaces on campus. I’m glad I get to show up in that way in these sessions, I feel like it really makes a difference.

The Way Forward

- » Western will continue to partner with CREVAWC to expand on the evidence base. Relatedly, the program has collaborated with Dr. Katreena Scott from CREVAWC in her submission for a Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) grant application to examine best practices around reducing GBSV on campuses.
- » In the coming year, the Wellness & Equity Education team is looking to share lessons learned and best practices in prevention education with other institutions through a community of practice model and through conferences.
- » The pilot offering of the GBSV graduate training program 'Supporting Safer Classrooms and Professional Practice' (13 departments in 2024) is undergoing an evaluation, with the intention to scale out further next year.

