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**President's Message to the Community:
Our Commitment to Safe Campuses**

As the Fall term begins, I would like to welcome warmly all new students, staff and faculty to York University, and to welcome back to campus all returning community members.

We at York University are committed to creating an environment where all people feel welcome, valued and safe. It is only when these conditions are satisfied that each of us can perform optimally and make full contributions as members of the York community.

As recent safety-related threats and incidents on or near our Toronto campuses underscore, the safety and security of our campus communities is paramount, and we must do all that we can to bring an end to violence and discrimination of all forms. At York, we are working closely with our partners to ensure that our plans, policies and procedures continue to be reviewed and enhanced, and to build on the major enhancements achieved over the last few years.

The issue of sexual violence on campuses across North America has been highlighted in recent months in provincial discussions, and a provincial action plan has helped to bring focus and awareness to this important social issue. Our Vice-Provost of Students, Janet Morrison, is a member of the Council of Ontario Universities' Working Group on Sexual Violence. Every campus across the country has reaffirmed its commitment to addressing sexual violence. York has been a leader in this area, and we will continue to be proactive in our initiatives and our communications.

As part of a comprehensive approach to addressing sexual violence on campus, the development of a sexual assault awareness and prevention policy is one important step in achieving that goal for our community. York's Sexual Assault Awareness, Prevention & Response Policy Working Group, with representation from across the University, has been in place since 2013, and its members have been working towards the development of the policy and related procedures. In February 2015, our Board of Governors approved the University's Sexual Assault Awareness, Prevention, and Response Policy. This is a significant step for our community and a vital part of our ongoing commitment to addressing sexual violence on campus. The development of a formal procedural document is underway through a collaborative process. Our priority is to ensure that all related procedures meet the needs of our community, with a strong survivor-centric approach. Over the coming months, we will continue to advance this work through education and awareness campaigns. The Centre for Human Rights has launched a 'Did You Know' awareness campaign, and will be working with Residence Life to offer training and information on sexual assault and gender-based violence awareness and prevention for residents and staff in the residences. We welcome input and feedback from community members on the response process and all safety-related initiatives.



Over the past few years, we have significantly shifted the way we address safety on campus. York was the first university of its size to complete a comprehensive and holistic safety audit, and we have implemented over 80% of its recommendations. We have taken a leadership role in the education and awareness of consent culture by holding an annual event, You Had Me at Consent, which has reached a significant portion of our undergraduate student population over the last five years.

Our commitment to these issues will be furthered this coming year with the addition of a Learning Specialist and Advisor of Sexual Assault Prevention Education, who will expand on our training offerings. Through the expansion of our Active Bystander Program, we will increase the engagement of our community in understanding the important role we each play in preventing sexual violence.

We continue to raise awareness about our many campus services and resources. The [York U Safety App](#) has been downloaded by 20,000 community members. If you have not already done so, I encourage you to download this important safety resource and tool.

Working collaboratively is key to building safer campuses. To learn more about the work we are doing together, visit York's Safety website: <http://safety.yorku.ca/>.

Thank you for sharing in our commitment to ensuring that our campuses are safe, secure and free of violence in all forms, and to fostering a campus culture that reflects our core values of respect, equity, tolerance and inclusion.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'mshoukri', with a small dot at the end.

Mamdouh Shoukri
President and Vice-Chancellor