

Student Who Posted ‘The List’ Faces Discipline

By CATHERINE POLLACK and ELAINE VELIE

The student who posted a “List of Men to Avoid” on Facebook last month, Elizabeth Dunn ’18, is now facing disciplinary action after the list prompted a judicial investigation into potential violations of college policy.

According to Dunn, administrators said it was “highly likely” that Dunn would face official college discipline, which entails a letter in a student’s permanent file and is seen as one step before suspension.

The list included the names of 33 current and former male students who were labeled with sexual misconduct charges ranging from “emotionally manipulative” to “serial rapist.” Dunn said the list was compiled from “a group of 30 to 40 survivors,” and that none of them had given Dunn consent to reveal their names to the school.

Dunn said the charges stem in part from not sharing the names of those survivors with the judicial office. The college’s Respect for the Authority of Middlebury Officials policy says that students are expected to “cooperate fully” in the disciplinary process and “any student, whether a party or a witness, who refuses to cooperate” in the disciplinary process may be “subject to discipline.”

The college’s spokesman, Bill Burger, responded on behalf of several administrators who were asked to comment on the college’s action since Dunn posted the list on Facebook.

“Students are required to cooperate with conduct investigations once they have been identified, by themselves or others, as having relevant information,” he said.

Although Burger would not comment on whether the judicial office requested a list of names from Dunn, when asked why the office would want to know the names of the students who provided names for the list, he said: “Middlebury is committed to supporting survivors of sexual assault and other sexual misconduct and to reducing sexual violence in our community.”

The Respect for Persons charge was addressed in an email sent to the community on Dec. 15. The email addressed students placed on the list, encouraging them to reach out to judicial deans if they felt they were falsely accused. The email mentioned that the college had received many questions in regard to violations of the Respect for Persons policy.

The policy states that “Middlebury expects all students, as members of the College community, to respect the dignity, freedom, and rights of others.” This policy prohibits defamation and “violation of another’s privacy.”

When asked questions about the nature of the college’s investigation, Burger said, “It would be inappropriate to discuss a specific conduct investigation. It is important that all aspects of our investigations are conducted thoroughly, fairly and confidentially.”

When asked what jurisdiction the college has over allegations made online, Burger said, “Middlebury’s written policies are very clear that our community standards apply broadly and not only to actions that physically occur on our campuses.”

While the college has begun to take action in this case, Dunn said, “There isn’t a precedent for a situation like this, so there are a lot of directions Middlebury could go in with the judicial process. Maybe that looks like me being suspended or expelled; maybe that looks like community conversations facilitated by the college; maybe that looks like restorative justice.”

Speaking to the college’s current judicial system, Dunn said, “The question I have is whether the current approach Middlebury uses fulfills the needs of students in the safest, healthiest and most respectful way possible. I think the list itself is an indicator that a large number of people are disillusioned with the processes Middlebury currently has in place to deal with allegations of sexual misconduct.”

Burger said: “We know that challenges exist on our campus and at all colleges and universities and we will continue to work with students, faculty, staff and outside organizations to do more and to continually improve our efforts to make Middlebury safer for all members of our community.”

Dunn said the list should not be viewed as an isolated incident but in the context of current events.

“We exist in a political and social moment in which survivors are pushing back against a culture of silence, violence, and invalidation. The list could and should be contextualized as part of broader movements against sexual violence, such as the shitty men in media list, the Me Too hashtag, and other forms of activism.”