Our project was initially proposed as less of a project, but as more of an acknowledgment of a general need in Nashville—for more information and better discussions about Interpersonal Violence (IPV). Our group first considered interviewing undergraduates from the main universities and colleges in Nashville—Vanderbilt, Belmont, and Lipscomb—to learn their experiences with IPV, what IPV resources existed at their school, and what they knew about them/if they used them. This however, was deemed too daunting of a project given our time limitations and our minimal knowledge of not only the other universities, but also undergraduate life in Nashville.

We then began to focus only on Vanderbilt—as we were all students there—and also on graduate students—as we knew that population better, being among it. We met with staff from the Margaret Cunnigim Women’s Center—Vanderbilt’s existing IPV resource—to see if we could compliment and/or extend any of their current IPV initiatives. Our group thought it important to discuss our possible project with the Women’s Center because we wanted to make sure that our work was relevant to the needs of the University—which they knew far better than we—and for our project to not re-create anything Vanderbilt was already trying to do. The Women’s Center had just unveiled a large IPV program entitled the “Green Dot”, which was widely publicized with the undergraduates, but not with the graduate schools. As such, the Women’s Center was very supportive of our idea to try to reach the graduate students to not only discuss IPV, but also to improve the visibility of the Women’s Center in the various graduate programs (because before our group members started this project only one of us knew about the Women’s Center or the vast amount of resources it has to offer).

With the support of the Women’s Center and Carol Etherington—our Cal Turner faculty advisor—we eventually developed the idea of having a round table discussion for graduate students and faculty. We wanted to use the Cal Turner initiative—students from various professions working together on a complex social issue—to present IPV in a new light, rather than just under the moral guise that IPV is “bad”. Additionally, our group wanted to emphasize the fact the IPV is an issue that one profession cannot tackle on their own, but that through collaborations and an understanding of available resources, the professions can work together to prevent and address IPV. We reached out to professors within the main graduate schools and were able to have five dedicated and motivated practitioners—representing Law, Medicine, Nursing, Divinity, and Counseling—who were willing to be on our panel for our roundtable discussion.

Our forum “A New Look at an Old Problem: Your Professional Role in Responding to Interpersonal Violence” took place on April 13, 2011. The panelists discussed how IPV is seen in their profession and described how they would address the needs of “Rebecca”, a woman involved with IPV from a fictional scenario we developed. Our group felt that the event was well received, and very informative. Not only did graduate students and members of the Vanderbilt community come to talk about IPV and learn about the Women’s Center’s resources,
but we were able to connect our panelists together, helping to increase their knowledge of important IPV resources—each other—within Vanderbilt.

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Nursing