

POLICY AGAINST SEXUAL HARASSMENT:

Implementing Statement

What is Sexual harassment?

Sexual harassment is a form of sex discrimination which is illegal under state and federal law and is also prohibited by the Board of Trustees' Nondiscrimination Policy. The Board's policy recognizes that sexual harassment undermines the integrity of employer-employee and student-faculty-staff relationships and interferes with the right of all members of the College community to work and learn in an environment free from harassment. Such conduct will not be tolerated.

Sexual harassment may be described as:

Any unwelcome sexual advance or request for sexual favors, or any conduct of a sexual nature when (1) submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of an individual's employment or education, (2) submission to or rejection of such conduct by an individual is used as a basis for employment or academic decisions affecting the individual, or (3) such conduct has the purpose or effect of substantially interfering with an individual's academic or work performance or creating an intimidating, hostile or offensive employment or educational environment.

Sexual harassment may be verbal, visual, or physical. It may be overt or implicit and may, but need not, have tangible adverse effects on the victim's employment or learning experience.

Example of conduct which may constitute sexual harassment include but are not limited to:

- sexual flirtation, touching, advances or propositions
- verbal abuse of a sexual nature
- pressure to engage in sexual activity
- graphic or suggestive comments about an individual's dress or appearance
- use of sexually degrading words to describe an individual
- display of sexually suggestive objects, picture or photographs
- sexual jokes
- stereotypic comments based upon gender
- threats, demands or suggestions that retention of one's employment or educational status is contingent upon toleration of or acquiescence in sexual advances.

The perpetrator of sexual harassment, like the victim of such conduct, may be a man or a woman. Sexual harassment may involve individuals of the same or opposite sex and, in the College environment, may involve an employee and a student, an employee and another employee or a student and another student. Harassment in any of these relationships is a violation of the Board's policy.

Because of the power relationship between faculty and student, and between supervisor and subordinate employee, freedom of choice may be compromised in such relationships. Accordingly, this policy holds that where a faculty member or professional staff member has responsibility for a student through teaching, advising, supervision or other obligation, romantic or sexual liaisons between such persons shall be deemed a violation of this policy. Romantic or sexual liaisons between supervisors and subordinate employees, while not prohibited, are strongly discouraged.

It should be noted, additionally, that retaliation against a person for complaining or being associated in any way with the resolution of a complaint of sexual harassment also violates Board policy.

What To Do If You Are The Victim of Sexual Harassment

When an employee or student feels that he or she has been the victim of sexual harassment, he or she should report such incident(s) to a College official.

- Employees may report incidents of sexual harassment to the Dean of the area of the College in which the individual is involved, the College Affirmative Action Officer, or another College official who has been designated by the President as a recipient of such complaints.
- Students may report incidents of sexual harassment to the Dean of Students or to such other College official as the President may have designated. Nothing shall prevent students from speaking to a college counselor about their concerns. However, such communication is not a substitute for filing a complaint of sexual harassment with an appropriate College designee.
- A claim that an employee of a third party contractor has engaged in sexual harassment on College premises or in connection with the performance of the third party contract should be reported immediately either to the President or to another appropriate College official as set forth in this document. The President will ensure that appropriate follow-up action is taken.

Depending on the nature of the complaint and the desires of the complainant, the College official to whom the complaint has been made may attempt to resolve the complaint informally. Any informal resolution of a complaint must be approved by the College President. No person shall be forced to pursue informal avenues of resolution before filing a formal complaint of sexual harassment.

If informal resolution is not possible or appropriate, a written complaint should be filed in accordance with the existing Affirmative Action Grievance Procedure for employees (see Board Policy 2.1.3) or Student Grievance Procedure for students (see Board Policy 5.2.2).

- For employees, a written complaint should be filed within fifteen (15) calendar days of the alleged harassment. This time frame may be extended by up to fifteen (15) additional calendar days if efforts at informal resolution have been made.
- For students, a written complaint should be filed within thirty (30) days of the date the grievant knew or should have known of the alleged harassment. However, a delay in filing a formal complaint will not be a reason for refusing to investigate such complaints. Although the ability to investigate may be compromised by delay, a written complaint will be treated in the manner prescribed by this policy if filed within 180 days of the date the student knew or should have known of the alleged harassment.

When a formal complaint of sexual harassment is received, it will be investigated by the College. The rights of all persons involved in the investigation shall be respected and every effort will be made to protect the confidentiality of both the alleged victim and the alleged harasser. Toward this end, only persons with a need to know shall be made privy to the complaint. However, complete anonymity cannot be assured, given the College's obligation under law to investigate and take appropriate action in all cases of sexual harassment. All complaints of sexual harassment shall be taken seriously. It is expected that complaints will be made in good faith; however, frivolous or vexatious complaints can cause irremediable damage to the reputation of an accused person, even though he or she is subsequently vindicated. Therefore, any person who files a false complaint of sexual harassment shall himself or herself be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination, if an employee, or expulsion, if a student.

In addition to invoking the available grievance procedure, an employee who believes he or she has been sexually harassed may file a complaint with the Connecticut Commission of Human Rights and Opportunities, 21 Grand Street, Hartford, CT 06106 and/or the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, One Congress Street, Boston, Massachusetts 02114, within 180 days of the date when the harassment occurred. A student who believes he or she has been sexually harassed may, in addition to the available grievance procedure, file a complaint with the Federal Office for Civil Rights, U.S. Department of Education (Region 1), John W. McCormack Post Office and Courtroom, Room 222, Post Office Square, Boston, Massachusetts 02109.

Publication of Sexual Harassment Policy

This document shall be distributed to all members of the College community. Notice of the Board's policy against sexual harassment also shall be given to any independent contractor with whom a College has a business relationship, as a mandatory part of that contract.

Training

Training in the implementation of the Board's policy against sexual harassment and in sexual harassment prevention shall be provided for all supervisory employees, in accordance with the provisions of State law. Attendance at such training sessions shall be mandatory. In addition, awareness and sensitivity training for all employees and students is strongly encouraged.

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