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Harrassment on Campus

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A professor with tenure propositions a freshman woman, promising her an A on the final. A student DPS officer consistently flirts with the women he works with, teasing about getting them "into the sack." Two professors are dating, one calls it off and the other continues to beg for another chance, and when refused makes the other's work life a living hell. An Asian student, new to the university, is threatened every day by three guys on the CyRide route he takes to and from the university.

Harassment takes many forms, and each is potentially devastating to a life. The above examples of sexual and racial/ethnic harassment, although hypothetical, could happen on the ISU campus. The offenses are serious, and the victims can be left with a feeling of helplessness and fear. Iowa State is taking steps to stop and even prevent harassment, and the effort is a continuing one.

Three separate policies are in place at ISU: a racial and ethnic harassment policy; a sexual harassment policy; and a non-discrimination and affirmative action policy. The main differences between the three are that both on-campus residents and off-campus visitors can file racial/ethnic harassment complaints, whereas sexual harassment complaints are filed within

"Students should not have to tolerate harassment, They should bring it to the attention of the appropriate administrator and get it addressed."

— David Hopper
Faculty Senate president
the university system.

Efforts to increase student awareness of the policies in particular have recently increased at ISU. Students may have noticed an addition to the scheduling process this year. Along with the familiar yellow, perforated sheets that contain the registration access numbers, they are all given a pamphlet titled "Sexual and Racial/Ethnic Harassment Prevention: It’s Your Responsibility!"

This is the first time that ISU has distributed pamphlets informing students of these policies, says Evy Myers, associate director of affirmative action. The university wanted to let students know there was a place they could turn to if they felt threatened, and reaching them through their advisers and the necessary registration process seemed the smartest way to go.

The pamphlet outlines the definitions of sexual harassment and racial/ethnic harassment, and includes a list of unacceptable behaviors according to the policy. Various steps an individual can take if they feel harassed are outlined, including trying to end the problem person-to-person, filing an informal or formal complaint with the university, or taking outside action and filing a complaint with the Iowa Civil Rights Commission, The Equal Opportunity Commission, or the Office of Civil Rights.

Another option students are given is contact with an on-campus sexual harassment assistor. Assistors are defined as "persons designated to help anyone who believes she or he may have been subjected to sexual harassment, or harassment."

ISU assistors are placed in departments throughout the university, and Myers says there is a reason for spreading the assistors around. Many victims may feel awkward about speaking to someone within their own department, so they can feel free to contact someone in another area, Myers says.

In the years that Lynn Sandeman, liberal arts and sciences adviser, has been a sexual harassment assistor, she's dealt mostly with victims in her own department. Sandeman has been contacted by victims three or four times.

Sandeman was asked to be an assistor when the program was first started, and every following year, she has expressed interest in continuing with her duties as an assistor.

"I'm responsible for listening and presenting the individual with some options of what he or she can do next," says Sandeman. "I'm not advocating what they should do, but objectively presenting them with a possible next step."

Claudia Baldwin, associate professor of veterinary medicine, has also held the position of assessor since the onset of the program, and has had several opportunities to work with the system. She recalls having about half a dozen contacts with victims, and says she also had the opportunity to discuss policy and the handling of situations with administrators.

Baldwin believes that sometimes what a victim needs is a good listener. "The biggest thing is that I am there for them when they need me, when they need to talk to someone. Moral support is the most important thing for them."

Assistors go through training before working with victims, and Myers periodically sets up what she calls "brown bag lunches," where assistors can come, eat, and learn more about any new developments in cases of sexual harassment.

Sandeman remembers the initial training as "pretty thorough."

"They provided us with a good opportunity to get information and understand our roles as assistors," says Sandeman. "They presented us with possible scenarios and informed us of the options we would have in that type of situation."

"They go through a power point presentation on what they should and shouldn't do as faculty, and what constitutes harassment," says Myers. Since the training, Myers has noticed a slowing down in the reporting of cases. She says people are now more concerned about their behavior and are aware and conscious of what they're doing.

The university is also being careful not to infringe on anyone's rights with the new policies. The pamphlet reads, "As a public universi-