

Editorial

Harassment policy demands evaluation

Sexual harassment on campus impairs the educational atmosphere for students who are the object of harassment, and degrades the professional standing of the University. Recent Emerald articles have raised fears in many of the University community that harassment complaints are not being addressed adequately.

We strongly recommend that an independent committee be appointed by the administration to investigate the current sexual harassment policy and its implementation.

Several women who have gone to the Affirmative Action Office to file a sexual harassment complaint feel the office acted to diffuse their concerns rather than address them. Many members of the University community are amazed that former Professor Stephen Reynolds might have a fourteen-year history of sexual harassment, as related in the Emerald last week.

Students and faculty need to know what sexual harassment is, and there must be procedures short of firing or prosecution to let faculty members know when they are getting out of line.

Sexual harassment is a very personal concern, and different people will react to it differently. However, for the University it is primarily a question of professional ethics, and must be addressed as such.

The committee should pursue several aspects specifically:

• Does the University keep an adequate paper trail to prevent future problems with sexual harassment?

Every complaint brought to the Affirmative Action office should be written down and filed, although they should be kept indefinitely rather than the required three years.

Affirmative Office Director Ben Comrada, who handles all harassment complaints herself, says now a record is kept only for certain levels of action and often at Comrada's discretion.

If a faculty member has a record of sexual harassment, the problem could be identified, and the individual could be approached by a member of the administration or faculty to avoid further problems.

If permissible, more than one person in the Affirmative Action Office should have access to this file, to allow individuals who have filed complaints to see their complaint in the file any time they come into the office.

• The complaint process should be more accessible.

A student/faculty harassment-support group should be formed with appointees from the University and student body presidents. This volunteer group would meet to help individuals as needed, but more importantly, a list of members of this group to contact should be given to anyone walking in to the Affirmative Action Office to make a complaint.

Harassment victims, who already feel confused and intimidated, might find such a group, or a member of the group, easier to approach than the Affirmative Action Office. A student member of the group might even keep work-study office hours in the Affirmative Action Office.

• The University should ensure the director of the Affirmative Action Office is accountable.

Since the director is on the University payroll, and is pursuing action against other faculty members, it is correct for control to come from the President's office.

Currently, since many of the complaints are not recorded, Comrada is the only one who knows of some complaints. Thus the current review mechanism cannot sufficiently ensure claims in the office are being pursued consistently.

A complete list of complaints and actions taken should be reviewed by the president's office annually.

The fear is that harassment victims will be too afraid to complain to the president after having approached the Affirmative Action Office. Students should be made aware they can take their complaints to the ASUO student advocate's office.

• The committee should draw up a specific set of guidelines for action to be taken.

A graduated series of actions, ranging from telephone calls to initiating prosecution, should be drawn up, based on severity and frequency of harassment. All actions short of prosecution should remain the discretion of the individual filing the complaint.

Moreover, a series of in-house workshops would dramatically improve faculty's understanding of harassment, and prevent many problems.



Letters

Bird in hand

Reagan doesn't seem to understand that a nuclear arms negotiation in hand is worth several nebulous Strategic Defense Initiatives in the bush. To come so close to a dramatic and successful agreement only to let an irrational, unproven concept like Star Wars jeopardize world safety is beyond comprehension.

I think that everybody that feels like they want to do something should call their favorite news source and tell them that Reagan made a mistake at the Iceland summit; forget Star Wars!

This approach has several nice features: it gets your vote directly to the people who report the news, it can't be brushed under the rug by a politician, it prevents getting one of those form letter responses from your senator or congressperson that insults your intelligence, and it's easy.

A few possible news sources are the Register Guard, KVAL-TV, KEZI-TV, KMTR-TV, KLCC, etc. Why not take advantage of the opportunity to use these organizations that are designed to serve the public?

Mark Van Order
CIS

Viable option

Not everyone believes that life begins at conception; not everyone chooses to become pregnant; not everyone who is impregnated chooses to change previous life plans to include parenthood. Neither does society choose to change its plans to include assisting rearing children; we don't provide affordable prenatal or postnatal health care; we don't pay for child-care; we don't provide adequate nutrition for children of the poor; we don't pay women a living wage equal to

what we pay men. Yet we want to tell these poor women that they cannot abort, that we know what is best for their lives — and the lives of their children (whom we neglect once they are born).

We must not remove the only viable option open to women with limited resources. In no case is the decision to have an abortion an easy one. It is, however, the most responsible choice in many cases.

Vote no on 6.

P. Rohrer
Graduate, public affairs

Correction

Our editorial on the El Salvador Sister University Project (ODE, Oct. 20) incorrectly identified ASUO President Steve Nelson as a member of that recognized ASUO group. Nelson has not been a member of the group since he became a candidate for ASUO President last winter.

Nelson travelled to El Salvador with members of the group on a fact-finding mission and to "strengthen and formalize our ties with the University of El Salvador," he said in the September/October issue of The Record.

The Sister University Project had withdrawn its original request, which was for \$750, of which \$150 was fundraising credit.

We apologize for any misunderstanding these errors may have caused.

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