

Student starts national anti-harassment network

By Jean Lee
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 Columbia U.

Columbia U.'s Columbia College will soon be the base campus for a new national college network of information about racist, sexist and homophobic harassment incidents, if the plans of the network's founder succeed.

Senior Jeff Rake, chair of the Columbia College Student Council, launched the project in September. The National Student Clearinghouse on Harassment, a network of support information, will share reports of harassment and ways to battle harassment, Rake said.

The clearinghouse will be completely student-run.

Rake said he created the program after perceiving a need for colleges nationwide to share tactics for fighting harassment.

"The idea crystalized in my mind when I attended a forum on racism in Washington, D.C.," he said.

Several incidents of harassment occurred at Columbia last year. Racist graffiti appeared in Barnard dormitories, leaders of the Columbia Gay and Lesbian Alliance received death threats, and the same group's office was vandalized.

Sharing information on incidents will make it easier to combat harassment, Rake believes.



Jeff Rake

"All kinds of incidents of harassment aren't given significance because people think the incidents are isolated problems," he said.

Twenty-seven other schools have expressed interest in participating in the clearinghouse, including Harvard, Cornell, Yale, Princeton, Stanford, Amherst and Wesleyan, according to Rake.

Initially, all participating colleges will be asked to submit a short history of harassment issues which have been of concern on campus in the past. Member schools will continue to forward information on new harassment incidents to the clearinghouse, which then will be com-

plied into a packet and mailed to all member schools. Rake said mailings will occur monthly or twice a semester, depending on the number of submissions.

"Participating colleges will have the ability to learn from students at other schools about effective ways to combat harassment, and will have the ability to share their own successful methods with other participating colleges," Rake said.

If respondents desire to keep the identity of their schools confidential, they will identified in mailings only by region, Rake said.

The committee has received a grant of \$750 from the dean of Columbia College, which will fund the first mailing. Additional funding is being sought from other departments and colleges of Columbia U.

Church

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all these sins you've told them about and they say, 'This is what it did to Jesus.' They teach you that each time you sin, you are physically putting Jesus on the cross. This leads to a lot of guilt.

"They read through a lot of passages, and everyone gets so emotional about it, you (the newcomer) literally start to break down and cry," Kunz added.

Long also refuted these statements. "The idea of the study is something like that, but I believe that's a misrepresentation of it."

The mainstream Memorial Church of Christ in Houston published a report in 1986 alleging that the Boston church and its adherents manipulate new members into embracing the church by using a fixed Bible study. A discipleship partner — usually the member bringing in a potential convert — finds out something private about the inductee's life and secretly tells it to the leader of the Bible study, the report claims.

The topic then is casually introduced into the session, and the potential convert is encouraged to draw a higher meaning from the personal reference or "revelation" brought forth by the leader, the report says. The leader then is seen as a prophet of sorts.

When a member leaves the church, Hohman said, remaining members are told that, "So-and-so doesn't believe in God anymore. That person went to a cold, bad place where bright lights were shined in their faces and they were just told that 'church is evil' over and over until they believed it."

Hohman said he is convinced that this is another C-U Church tactic to make members afraid to leave the group.

Former members' damning statements about the Boston and C-U churches are usually the result of brainwashing, Long claimed.

"Most of the former members go through some kind of deprogramming where they teach that, 'This is how you should feel about your experience in the church.' They are told that over and over until they believe it."

It's almost not worth it for C-U Church members to defend themselves against various charges, Long said, because "everything we say gets taken out of context."

"Why should you explain parts of your practice truthfully to people when they aren't going to believe your answers anyway?"

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