

Sexual Harassment: Everybody's Problem

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In the seven years since *The Lecherous Professor* was first published, experience has taught me that intelligent discussion and understanding of sexual harassment depend as much on asking as on answering questions. I learned this six years ago when I walked into a university auditorium filled with male students and discovered that I was part of the educational and/or punitive process that had been instituted following a gang rape in one of the fraternity houses. On that occasion, as so often in the past, I was prepared to pontificate to the already converted; instead I found myself facing an audience that was not only unfamiliar with the topic but also hostile to discussing it. The experience taught me to approach the issue of sexual harassment in new ways and also to recognize that before accepting invitations to write or speak, I must ask fundamental questions about the audience I will be addressing.

When I posed questions about who the members of NACADA are and what they know about sexual harassment, I was fairly intimidated by the answer the editors of the *NACADA Journal* gave me. I discovered that the 2500 members "run the spectrum of college and university personnel" and that to reach all of them I would need to cover "the whole arena of what sexual harassment is, how to have an impact on institutional policy, how to work with students who experience it, how to educate university personnel about it, what happens as a result of it, what its legal implications are, and various related matters."

Given that the second edition of my book had just been published and that I felt that even a book length study hadn't covered the subject as extensively as I wished, this charge seemed imposing. But the most thought-provoking comment I received in response to my inquiries about the NACADA membership and its interests and needs was that the organization's "members are aware that sexual harassment is an issue but may need a more sophisticated grasp of the problem and where we fit in."

That statement reminded me that even now,

almost two decades after the seminal work on sexual harassment began, the need to know "where to fit in" remains among the most compelling needs facing those in higher education. From students to professors to counselors to provosts and presidents, the temptation to retreat into passivity on the issue has evolved as much or more from confusion about appropriate roles as it has from indifference or denial. Faculty, administrators, and student affairs personnel still struggle to define their responsibilities in institutional environments that send conflicting messages about professional allegiances and obligations. Student victims still agonize over whether they "fit in" well enough to withstand the risk of speaking out. In many, if not most, institutions, the rules, regulations, and programs are in place; but there is, nevertheless, no widespread, gut level understanding that sexual harassment on campus has not been appreciably curbed, that it is not exclusively a women's or an administrative concern but rather a problem that demands attention from everyone in the institution.

It is not difficult anymore to inform people about the basics of sexual harassment. Early on, those who were interested in the problem felt constrained to prove its existence. Typically this meant cataloging studies from the nation's campuses, most of which reported surprisingly similar statistics despite their various sizes, types, and locations. For almost a decade, at least 20% of female students have responded affirmatively when asked if they have experienced some form of sexual harassment. (Actually, the range most frequently cited is 25%—40%). Although the statistics clearly indicate that sexual harassment exists in epidemic proportions in higher education, the real numbers are probably considerably higher. Those that are available to us do not take into account students who do not recognize or refuse to acknowledge sexual harassment when it occurs, and because research has concentrated on females and heterosexual contacts, the statistics are limited even further. Nor do they reflect the damage inflicted upon students who are witnesses or indirectly affected parties to sexual harassment.

Another of the basics about which we now feel more comfort is the term's definition. When

the issue first attracted national attention, there was considerable sound and fury regarding the need for inordinately precise definitions because some claimed that sexual harassment could be any behavior that a student wanted it to be and that students would use claims of harassment to excuse their shortcomings and failures. Bitter—and embarrassing—experience has taught us that not only do students refrain from capricious complaints; they also resist complaining at all, no matter how sensitive and protective institutions believe their grievance mechanisms to be. Nor do they wildly assume every touch, look, and word on the part of professors to be lecherous or demeaning because, despite our attempts to educate them about what sexual harassment is, most still are unwilling or unable to apply theoretical definitions to their own experiences. The most often repeated phrase with which victims in colleges and universities across the nation preface standard descriptions of sexual harassment is, "I've never been sexually harassed, but I had this professor who . . ."

The behaviors they describe almost inevitably fit the categories and descriptions proposed several years ago by various national organizations. Most of the definitions employed in institutions' policy statements are modeled on the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission's sex discrimination guidelines, which are legally applicable to both employees and students at educational institutions. Some, like Nancy ("Ann") Davis (1990) in her thought-provoking essay, "Sexual Harassment in the University," argue that this and similar definitions emanating from it are too "inclusive . . . because [in lumping] together many different kinds of behaviors, they blur distinctions that may have moral, psychological, and practical relevance" (p. 154). Her point is, of course, well-taken—though not from the victim's point of view. The difficulty against which institutions should be cautioned is becoming mired in endless and inevitably futile attempts to recreate the wheel and arrive at definitions that will avoid all the pitfalls and please everyone.

Consequently, definitions like that of the National Advisory Council on Women's Education Programs have worked well for most institutions. The Council described sexual harassment as:

- (1) generalized sexist remarks or behavior; (2) inappropriate and offensive, but essentially sanction-free sexual advances; (3) solicitation of sexual activity or other sex-linked behavior

by promise of rewards; (4) coercion of sexual activity by threat of punishment; and (5) assaults. (Till, 1980, p. 7)

The Council's report noted that sexual harassment occurs when objectionable acts:

- (1) are directed toward students of one gender; and (2) [their] intent or effect . . . is to limit or deny full and equal participation in educational services, opportunities, or benefits on the basis of sex; or (3) the intent or effect of the objectionable acts is to create an intimidating, hostile, or offensive academic environment for the members of one sex. (Till, 1980, p. 11)

The Association of American Colleges Project on the Status and Education of Women provided a more specific list of behaviors that, when evaluated *within* the context and "totality of circumstances" ("Guidelines on Discrimination," 1980) in a complaint, might constitute sexual harassment. These include:

verbal harassment or abuse; subtle pressure for sexual activity; sexist remarks about . . . clothing, body, or sexual activities; unnecessary touching, patting or pinching, leering or ogling; . . . constant brushing against [an individual's] body; demanding sexual favors accompanied by implied or overt threats concerning one's job, grades, letters of recommendation; [and] physical assault. ("On Campus With Women," 1978, p. 2)

Although we've become fairly adept at defining the term, today we know little more about perpetrators than we did two decades ago, and I, at least, occasionally wonder if academe's disinclination to learn more about this group is as much the result of inability to conceive a methodology for doing so as it is disinterest or unwillingness to escalate examination of the issue. Nevertheless, the primary point on which most seem to agree is that sexual harassers are people who have inordinate power needs. Just as rape is essentially an act of violence, sexual harassment is an **expression** of desire to wield power. "The thing I hated most," a chemistry student at a Big Ten university told me, "was the way he **kept trying to prove he had control over me**. He would stand there and stare at my breasts while I was working on a project and just sort of dare me to say anything."

Although there is not now and probably never will be an accurate means of measuring the number of academicians who engage in sexual harassment, anecdotal evidence reveals an enormous discrepancy between the high vic-

timization rate and the number of perpetrators. The statistics on victimization are shocking not because the academic profession contains large numbers of sexual harassers but rather because a few offenders claim multiple victims over long periods that may span entire careers.

The damage, whether to primary or indirect victims, is considerable. Studies have documented a range of adverse effects on students who are the objects of harassers' behaviors. These students drop classes, change majors, and leave school. Their academic performance suffers. They are beset with guilt that they are somehow responsible for their predicaments, and many experience recurring physical and emotional problems as a result of their encounters with perpetrators. One of our greatest difficulties is that the few studies that have been done expose only the tip of an iceberg because we have no way of measuring the long-term effects on victims. Thus we can only guess at the ways in which students' gender relations, self-images, and attitudes toward higher education are permanently influenced by experiences with offenders.

Equally disturbing is that we have no measures of the damage to indirect witnesses to sexual harassment. Legal precedent from other workplaces has established that those who are not direct victims of unwelcome sexual advances may nevertheless have claims if the behaviors of perpetrators are so pervasive that they could reasonably be said to create hostile or offensive work environments. We have not given enough thought to what hostile and offensive academic environments do to students who observe sexual harassment.

This is especially true for males, who are in many respects academe's forgotten victims. Their gender, like that of females, places them in precarious positions:

1. If they view offending professors as role models and/or mentors, they may assume that sexual harassment is acceptable behavior, and we will send into the work force yet another generation assuming that it is acceptable to offend and abuse women.
2. Males may recognize inappropriate advances by professors but may conclude that the majority of their female peers deliberately use their sexuality to advance their academic interests. Thus the collegiate experience will become an impediment to advancing better relations between the genders.
3. As male students across the country have

often told me, they recognize inappropriate behaviors and empathize with victims, but they feel a similar combination of frustration, fear, impotence, and inertia in responding. John Smith, a 19-year-old political science major, is as unlikely to complain about Professor X's treatment of John's friend Carol Schear as she is, and both they and the institution will be poorer for their refusal to do so.

Another often overlooked point is that sexual harassers' victims include not only students but also the academic profession as a whole because we are all, whatever our genders, affected by harassers' behaviors. At worst, we are stereotyped as being like them. At best, we are regarded as irresponsible for having tolerated their transgressions or as ineffectual for having been unable to control them. The cost to the profession—from student affairs staff to professors to administrators—has been enormous. If our protestations of commitment to students are regarded with mistrust and skepticism by our various constituencies, our paralysis around sexual harassment has surely been part of the dilemma.

This is not to suggest that we haven't made advancements. For several years a significant segment of higher education was as intrigued with the issue of sexual harassment as we now are with multicultural diversity (into which it has by somewhat strange osmosis been absorbed). Our initial accomplishments were notable. To greater or lesser degrees, depending upon the institution, we wrote policy statements, developed procedures, and educated our various constituencies. From within higher education itself, we raised national awareness of the problem. We are far better for having engaged in that effort. The institutions that did so, especially those that were serious and persistent, told their constituencies and colleagues where they stood and what they stood for.

But once the sound and fury of having made a stand had died away, things returned more or less to normal. Too often this meant having procedures that looked good on paper but that had somewhat less than overwhelming significance in the lives of sexual harassment victims because the ugly truth is that despite our efforts, students do not have a great deal of faith in us when we say we're eager to help them with this problem.

One of the best studies done of this phenomenon occurred at the University of Illinois at Champaign-Urbana (Allen & Okawa, 1987). In the survey, 95% of respondents indicated that

they would be reluctant to report harassment to a university office or official unless certain conditions were met. These included assurance that their complaints would be taken seriously and thoroughly investigated (98.3%), assurance of confidentiality (98.2%), protection from retaliation (97.4%), knowledge that the person to whom they reported the incident would have the authority to take action (96.1%), and clear and uniform consequences for specific behaviors of perpetrators with severity of punishment increasing with the severity of the incident (88.9%).

The disturbing point about these conditions is the disparity they suggest between students' desires and needs and academe's willingness and ability to respond to them effectively. With the exception of assurances that complaints will be taken seriously and investigated thoroughly, we probably cannot or will not guarantee any of the remaining four. The diffused authority system of higher education makes it extremely difficult, if not impossible, to respond positively to even the simple demand that intake sources be granted power to take definitive action on sexual harassment complaints. We can promise confidentiality to only a limited degree, so is it any wonder that students choose silence and endurance—or changing majors or schools—over reporting abuse? We like to believe we can protect grievants from retaliation, but we are foolish if we assume that we are 100% capable of doing so because they and we are able to detect only the most blatant ways in which a perpetrator and his/her friends might "repay" a complainant. Last, but not least, even the most elementary familiarity with academics tells us that they would never, under any circumstances, agree to "clear and uniform consequences for specific behaviors of harassers." We are not, as individuals or a profession, given to simple judgements and solutions—except perhaps when we are applying them to others.

If all of this is true, if we face an epidemic problem and have severe limitations in coping with it, are we and our students without hope? Not really. Not, at least, if we admit that controlling sexual harassment on campus is an endeavor that will demand constant attention, energy, time, and creativity. Whether we are counselors, professors, provosts, or presidents, we must recognize that higher education will never be free of individuals who act inappropriately with students, but this does not mean that we should allow them to hold us hostage.

To curtail sexual harassment and influence institutional policy, we must begin by doing what higher education does best—educating. The popular consensus is that effective change in the institutional environment can occur only when there is a top-down mandate from the president. Originally, I thought that this was true, but hearing experiences of colleges and universities that do not exist in the best of all possible worlds, I learned that it is also possible to advocate from within or from the bottom up. If concerned student affairs personnel determine to educate students, faculty, and administrators, seeds of change can be sown.

We have impressive resources to guide us in this effort. First of all, there is the law: Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, Title IX of the 1972 Education Amendments, a variety of state laws, and an ever-growing body of case law, most of it from the workplace, make it impossible for even the most uninterested college or university administration to ignore the issue. The law prohibits even those who dismiss harassment as myth to disregard the responsibilities it invokes.

I have never forgotten a statement made several years ago in a deposition from a college administrator who was testifying in a case on which I was consulting. Asked why his institution had established no procedures for hearing sexual harassment complaints, he replied indignantly, "Because it wasn't that important. If we had had rules about sexual harassment, we would have had rules about everything from mother to apple pie." Several months later when his very small college was forced to pay the complainant \$250,000 and that administrator's contract was not renewed, I suspect that sexual harassment seemed at least as important as apple pie to him and the trustees of his institution.

Whether one believes in sexual harassment or not, the reality is that violation of laws governing the issue places institutions at risk in two areas that they all understand: money and public opinion. If top management hasn't gotten that message by 1991, it will not be difficult for institutional personnel, parents, college freshmen, or alumni to communicate the need for legal compliance. At the very least, it is possible to do what I remember half-jokingly advising a frightened, untenured history professor to try when she said that no one at her college understood the need for grievance mechanisms and that she was "afraid to make waves." I suggested that she gather all the legal information she

could and send it "in a plain brown wrapper, if necessary," to the school's legal counsel. A few months later she called to say that less than a month after she sent the materials, the president had established a task force to deal with the issue.

Administrators are likely to be especially sensitive to the larger legal, economic, and media concerns raised by sexual harassment. To some extent, faculty may share their perspectives, but in order to have a serious impact on this most crucial group, it is necessary to shift the emphasis somewhat. The specter of law suits, adverse publicity, and withdrawn financial support looms much less heavily over the typical faculty member's mind than that of the college president.

One way to encourage faculty interest in the issue is to personalize it so that they visualize themselves or their friends in the ugly glare of lawsuits that threaten their careers and livelihoods. Fear and the instinct for self-preservation have, in fact, led some, especially males, to inquire, "How do I protect myself?" But we pay a high price when we seek people's support on such grounds because we imply that their primary concern should be not students, the institution, or the profession but rather themselves. More important, the vast majority of faculty know there is little likelihood they will ever have to face sexual harassment charges, and they will not be persuaded on the basis of fear.

What can move the faculty of the 1990s to action is a truth most already recognize — that when it occurs, sexual harassment is a grave betrayal of trust and professional ethics. However much some may insist on splitting hairs in defining the term and in setting policy, the majority today are better prepared than ever before to engage in meaningful discussion of the issue. Most professional organizations and groups such as the American Council on Education and the American Association of University Professors have condemned the behavior and, insofar as possible, attempted to distance themselves from perpetrators. Their positions have not been ignored or disputed by faculty. Most have long since passed the stage of denial, and, correctly approached, a majority will commit themselves to discouraging sexual harassment because they believe it is inappropriate and immoral.

The correct approach is not all that difficult for student affairs personnel to effect. Some faculty are indifferent to initiatives from student

services units because faculty regard these units as peripheral to the mission of higher education. Most faculty, however, acknowledge student affairs' importance and will be responsive to their exhortations about sexual harassment if what many institutions failed to accomplish in the 1980s is achieved. This is to convince faculty that sexual harassment is as much their concern as it is that of college presidents and student affairs vice-presidents. One of the difficulties we have had thus far is that many faculty have bought into the issue intellectually and ethically but not actively because it has too often been presented as the province of administration or student services.

Ironically, while administrators and student services staff interact with students, they almost always do so on intermittent and selective bases. Only the faculty have consistent contact with the entire student body, and only the faculty can effect lasting, day-to-day change in the academic environment. An institution can boast the most sophisticated policy and the best educational program in the country, but if its faculty does not take sexual harassment seriously, its students will be equally apathetic.

One of the most forceful ways for student affairs personnel of the 1990s to have an impact is to identify respected and influential individuals or groups within the faculty and to convince them that eradication of sexual harassment begins as much in classrooms, offices, and hallways as it does in posters, pamphlets, and presidential edicts. We must achieve what so many of us hoped — and then failed — to accomplish years ago. We must encourage universal education of faculty, and it must be carried out by faculty themselves.

In this case, the task of student affairs units, like administrative units, is to act as a resource, to supply information about the issue, about institutional policies and procedures, and about nationwide efforts to combat sexual harassment. But faculty must design the education of their colleagues on their own because only they have the credibility and mutual bonding to make such education work. The process often involves engaging an external consultant, but whether faculty hire someone from outside or attempt the education themselves, males must, in my opinion, be visible and active. Without respected males to lend the issue credibility and to distance themselves symbolically from perpetrators, the educational process can be disparaged as simply more female sermonizing.

In 1991, all of us would benefit from less talk and more action. Student affairs personnel must inspire faculty to realize that not only can they serve as role models of appropriate gender behavior but that many can also use the classroom itself to educate students about the challenges of being male and female in an increasingly complex world. If professors of literature, psychology, sociology, philosophy, and education have not urged students to think about the implications of discrimination, who will? If professors of chemistry, architecture, medicine, and law act as if sexual harassment is acceptable behavior, who will teach students otherwise?

The direct impact that student affairs units can have on students is enormous. The law requires that institutions inform students about the issue and about grievance policies and procedures. Student affairs divisions are typically responsible for this educational function, and the majority of colleges and universities have done an excellent job of publishing regulations and printing pamphlets and posters that alert campuses to the problem. Effective education, however, involves more than reading fine print. Students do that every day, and most of us glumly acknowledge that reading may be one of the least effective means of reaching them.

Perhaps the best approach is a combination of methods that includes publications, speakers, and programs for dormitories, campus organizations, and classes. The point that can never be overlooked is that these must be more than one time shots. A consultant who visits the campus in 1991 will be what students would call "history" to the freshmen who arrive on campus in 1992. The dormitory or sorority/fraternity workshops the institution conducted in the fall of 1991 will have no meaning to these students. The posters that commanded so much attention in 1987 are about as exciting in 1991 as McDonald's french fries. Juniors and seniors hardly notice them, and freshmen and sophomores may have no educational reference points from which to respond to them.

The point is that because sexual harassment is a difficulty that can never be eradicated and because higher education's constituency constantly changes, education and prevention are continual tasks. Among the most valuable tools we can offer the institution and students are our vigilance, enthusiasm, and creativity. Every year offers new opportunities for reaching students and for gaining new insights into ways of discouraging this seemingly unending problem. If,

as so many have done, we assume we have taken care of things by engaging one speaker or holding one discussion group, we are kidding only ourselves.

The education/prevention effort demands human and financial resources that no institution can afford to withhold, but commitment, determination, and ingenuity can fill the gap when money is scarce. Although speakers/consultants are costly, many will accept lower fees when hired by two institutions, and such an arrangement effectively halves travel expenses. With encouragement and proper training, student affairs personnel and faculty can accomplish the educational mission as well as high-priced outsiders, and the advantage is that these campus personnel can continue to do so without expense year after year as student constituencies change. As in the case of educating faculty, this process must include both male and female presenters because students will respond most effectively to role models of both genders.

Students themselves are one of the most overlooked and yet most valuable resources. It is impossible to underestimate the impact that they can have on their peers. They listen to and trust one another far more readily than they do us. This is the reason they report sexual harassment to one another more rapidly and more often than to us, and we must learn to respect and rely on them to help us teach their friends and educators about the issue. They can help design and implement programs that are far more responsive to students' needs than any we can conceive, and we can benefit from their support and insight.

There is yet another way that students can aid us in the education process, and while seemingly unorthodox, it deserves consideration. As I write this in May of 1991, national controversy rages over the propriety of releasing the name of an alleged rape victim in a highly visible case, and while I fervently believe in victims' rights to privacy, there is truth to the contention that society would have greater understanding of the horrors of rape if people knew more about its costs. It strikes me that the same principle applies to sexual harassment. If it had not always been, if it were not still a closet issue in the nation's colleges and universities, we might have done far more to discourage it. There is no national figure, no faculty member, however esteemed, who could speak to a campus with the force of sexual harassment victims themselves. Some are willing and eager to tell their stories,

and we must help them discover appropriate ways of doing so.

This is a wholly new concept, this challenge to end institutional stonewalling and hiding behind claims of concern about image. We must work to convince presidents and boards of trustees that no one benefits when we deal with sexual harassment in secret. Institutions can maintain open and honest communication about sexual harassment on campus without publishing names and details of grievances or jeopardizing recruitment and public image. As they have designed individualized policies and procedures, they can and should establish disclosure mechanisms to fit their particular needs and circumstances.

Student affairs personnel must lead the way in this process. What unit is better prepared to explain victims' needs? We must persuade our colleagues that when an accusation is judged credible, grievants deserve at least basic information about how the institution plans to deal with the perpetrator. Without such knowledge, the victim may assume that the risk of coming forward was worthless. Equally important, others who are aware of the grievance may suppose, as they so often do, that nothing was done. Without adequate feedback, supposition and rumor triumph, and there is no incentive for students to report sexual harassment.

We have obligations not only to victims but also to the entire campus community, which has an investment in learning about the number and types of grievances heard and the penalties allocated. Such information does not have to be distributed in a manner that encourages identification of victims or perpetrators or that creates an impression that sexual harassment is rampant. The process can instead involve conscientious documentation of the institution's attempt to recognize, resist, and eradicate unacceptable behavior. We must convince our colleagues and supervisors that our students will be far more secure in an environment that admits its problems than in one that cloaks them in secrecy. We must persuade our colleagues that reducing sexual harassment to a professional discipline issue prevents the media from magnifying it into titillating scandal and allows us to maintain control over our public images.

Finally, we must become more adept at counseling harassment victims. There is anecdotal evidence to indicate that many, possibly most, approach faculty first if they seek help from institutional personnel. Most faculty probably

have little formal training in counseling and less education about sexual harassment, and student affairs staff could provide invaluable service by offering workshops to increase their counseling skills and knowledge of the issue. Thus it is crucial that we be educated about the issue. There are more published materials and more experts in the field than ever before, so education should not be difficult.

Nor does counseling of victims require extraordinary training. It is true that counselors must be cautious in attempting to differentiate upset or angry students from those who have been genuinely traumatized by harassment. This is not easy, partially because the nature of an offender's action is only one measure of the victim's response. A behavior that might simply frustrate one student can be deeply distressing or frightening to another whose background and values might elicit a heightened reaction. We must take care to notice when our expertise has been exhausted and when the guidance of one more experienced in therapeutic techniques is demanded.

Nevertheless, most sexual harassment victims are no different from any other students with problems or complaints, and they should not be treated as if they were somehow unusual. This will only increase their stress and alienation. They may feel more frightened, frustrated, impotent, and endangered than others who seek counseling, but they almost always ask for the same responses from us—validation, advice, support, and, when necessary, protection.

In these, of all cases, we must learn to listen objectively and well. We must not allow our own needs, opinions, and fears to predominate. Counseling is always, at best, a dexterous juggling of student, institutional, and personal interests. In sexual harassment cases we must obviously take care to protect the rights and reputations of the accused. But once a complaint has been validated, we have, in my opinion, an ethical imperative to place the interests of the student above all else. Victims seldom ask for much. They do not envision themselves relating their humiliation to Geraldo, Oprah, or the *New York Times*. They do not seek serious retribution for even the most heinous behaviors. What most want is simply for the behaviors to stop.

There can be no compromises on this point. Whether we are faculty, administrators, or student affairs staff, we must work to devise a system that guarantees that, once identified, sexual

harassment ceases and that the perpetrator receives appropriate sanctions. In instances in which the behavior has been especially troublesome, sanctions should be followed for a time by periodic monitoring of and meeting with the offender. If we hope to convince students and institutional personnel that we are serious about curtailing sexual harassment, we must begin to act as if we are serious.

We must not be so eager to do good, however, that we overlook the best interests of victims. Students must be carefully informed of the differences between formal and informal grievances, and they must be advised about the potentially great costs of the formal process. A one-on-one meeting between the student and the accused or use of an intermediary to effect a resolution may eliminate the pitfalls of the formal process. For all concerned, the informal process is less costly in time, energy, money, embarrassment, and anxiety. Most will prefer this approach because their primary motivation, regardless of their suffering at the hands of perpetrators, is to get on with their lives. And however much we might wish to strike a blow against harassment, we must never encourage students to subordinate their needs and desires or to sacrifice their anonymity and well-being to accomplish what institutions have failed to do on their own. Students attend college to be educated, not to reform higher education. That is the responsibility of educators.

It is a responsibility we all share. If genuine reform is to come, it will be the result of total commitment from all areas of higher education. The policies and procedures, the pamphlets and posters we developed almost a decade ago were a laudable beginning. But they were only a first step.

In 1991, the issue is not whether we have had education and prevention programs in the past but whether we have had them recently enough to encourage contemporary students to come to us when they are troubled by sexual harassment. The issue today is not whether we have published grievance mechanisms but whether those mechanisms have actually deterred har-

assers. The issue now is not whether presidents have made inspirational declarations of support but whether those who work in the offices and classrooms and laboratories of higher education have sent messages through words and actions that they know what sexual harassment is, that they disapprove of the behavior, that they understand its costs, and that they are determined to prevent it from occurring.

Everyone on campus fits into the effort to curtail sexual harassment. There is no way to eliminate every sexist remark or every inappropriate look or gesture that occurs on the campus in the course of a year. It is impossible to identify all the serious offenses, the propositions and threats that terrify and alienate students. We will never be able to promise them that academe is a perfect place. What we can and must guarantee is that, individually and collectively, we will seek to make it a better place.

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