



PREVENTION BROCHURE

SEXUAL  
HARASSMENT



UNC CHARLOTTE



## COMMITMENT STATEMENT

The University of North Carolina at Charlotte is committed to providing an environment for all employees and students which is fair, humane, and respectful—an environment that supports and rewards employee and student performance on the basis of relevant considerations such as ability and effort. Conduct that inappropriately calls attention to sexuality, especially when it asserts that sexuality is relevant to employee or student performance, is damaging to that environment.



We understand that recognizing and stopping sexual harassment is often a challenging, confusing and frightening experience.

- Sometimes the target of harassment is unsure that what he or she is experiencing is actually harassment.
- The person accused of harassment may not realize that what he or she is doing is harassment.

### **WE'RE HERE TO HELP YOU...**

The law and University policy have been designed to prevent sexual harassment and to provide prompt university help should harassment occur. Because targets of (and witnesses to) harassment are present during the harassment, they have a unique opportunity to educate others using real world examples. Often, the first step toward ending sexual harassment is understanding the definition.

IT'S NOT ALWAYS EASY

### **WHAT IS SEXUAL HARASSMENT?**

**IN THE WORKPLACE:** Unwelcome verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature, when submission to such conduct is made a term or condition of employment; submission to or rejection of such conduct is used as the basis for employment decisions; or such conduct unreasonably interferes with job performance or creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive work environment.

**IN THE CLASSROOM:** Unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, or other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature when academic performance (e.g., grades) or participation in an educational activity or program is conditioned upon submission to such conduct; the conduct unreasonably interferes with academic performance or creates an intimidating, hostile, abusive or offensive educational environment.

#### **VERBAL OFFENSIVE BEHAVIOR:**

- sexual innuendos and comments
- whistling in a suggestive manner
- jokes about sex or gender in general
- spreading rumors about a the sexual activity or performance of a student or employee
- sexual propositions, invitations, or other pressures for sex
- implied or overt threats

#### **PHYSICAL OFFENSIVE BEHAVIOR:**

- patting, pinching, tickling or other unwanted touching
- brushing against the body
- attempted or actual kissing
- attempted or actual fondling
- coerced sexual intercourse

#### **NON-VERBAL OFFENSIVE BEHAVIOR:**

- public display or sharing of pictures or photographs of a sexual nature
- e-mails or websites of a sexual nature
- Love notes or letters – suggestive comments on memos
- Graffiti
- Gag Gifts (sex toys, games)

## WHAT IF I'M NOT SURE?

*"I don't like what was said or done, but I'm not sure if this is actually sexual harassment."*

Each situation is unique. If you're not sure, ask yourself these questions:

- Was the behavior unwelcome and did/does it make you uncomfortable?
- Was the behavior or comment of a sexual nature?
- Was the conduct done by someone who can affect your grade or your job?
- Was the conduct initiated by another party and not by you?
- Do you fear that reporting the conduct will have a negative effect on your professional or educational goals?
- Does enduring the behavior impact your ability to perform your job or operate in the classroom effectively?

If the answer to any of these questions is "yes," the conduct may constitute sexual harassment.

## WHAT SHOULD I DO IF I BELIEVE IT'S SEXUAL HARASSMENT?

Once you have decided that the behavior(s) may qualify as sexual harassment, you may not be sure about what to do next or how to do it. The following are some options and suggestions.

### OPTION 1

Contact any of the resources listed on the bottom of this brochure for advice, guidance, clarification and support.

### OPTION 2

Meet/Discuss the situation with the offender.

Depending on the seriousness of the behavior and whether you have been intimidated or threatened, you may want to speak with the person who has acted inappropriately. Sometimes, the other party is unaware that their behavior is offending you and the discussion may alert the other person and end the unwelcome behavior. The following are suggestions for such a meeting. (If you don't feel comfortable meeting with the individual, consider writing them a letter. The following can also serve as a guideline to help you draft your letter).

### 1) PREPARE FOR THE MEETING

You will probably want to gather your thoughts and have an idea of what you plan to say before you schedule a meeting. You may want to write your thoughts down and identify the specific behaviors you would like to address and how you would like

to see the behavior changed. The Director of Employee Relations and Compliance or the Sexual Harassment Prevention Advisors may also be of assistance to you. You may also contact the Assistant Dean of Students for Women's Programs in the Dean of Students Office or the Dean of Students.

### 2) SCHEDULE THE MEETING

Confronting someone who you believe is harassing you may be intimidating and frightening. If you feel safe speaking with the person in private, you may want to establish a meeting time to discuss the situation. If you do not feel safe discussing the situation in private, you have the option of getting assistance from the Sexual Harassment Prevention Advisors.

*Classroom:* "Professor Green, I'd like to talk to you after class if you're available."

*Workplace:* "Dale, I'd like to schedule a time to speak with you about an issue."

### 3) THE MEETING

Sample Conversation: "You may not be aware of this, but when (describe the specific behavior) occurs, it makes me feel very uncomfortable."

**Describe:** As clearly as you are able, describe the behavior or event that you find offensive: What was said or done? Focus on descriptive rather than evaluative terms.

*Example:* "When you told that off-color joke..."  
Rather than "When you harassed me..."

**Communicate Feelings:** If you are willing, share how you feel; among other things, you may feel bad, vulnerable, uncomfortable, afraid, or angry.

**Your needs:** If you are willing, explain what you need.  
*Example:* "I need to be treated as an equal in the department."

**Request Resolution:** Finally, as clearly as you are able, tell the individual exactly what behavior you want to stop, what amends (if any) you would like, and how you would prefer the person act in the future.

*Example:* "I want you to stop calling me 'baby' or 'dear' or 'sugar'. In the future, I would like for you to call me by my name, 'Ms. Smith.'"

**Listen:** The individual may offer an explanation for their behavior. If you are willing and able, you may listen to what they have to say. There might be ways for them to meet their needs (as in the case of offensive instructive material) without offending you.

#### 4) AFTER THE MEETING

Document the Conversation: Type up the conversation—the date, time, location and a description of the conversation (Who said what? Who did what? Focus on descriptive rather than evaluative terms). You may also wish to reflect on how you feel about the conversation—are you satisfied with it? Frustrated? –but this should be separate from the objective description of what happened.) In the next few weeks, keep a journal and document if the behavior has continued or stopped.

#### 5) IF THE BEHAVIOR CONTINUES

If the behavior persists—the Dean of Students Office, the Sexual Harassment Prevention Advisors, the Human Resources Office, and others at the university are prepared and trained to help you. Please know that the degree of confidentiality that can be offered depends on who you speak to, with counseling services providing the greatest degree of confidentiality available. If confidentiality is a concern for you, you are encouraged to ask what measures will be taken to protect your identity, and what actions might be taken that might jeopardize your confidentiality before you share information about the incident or behavior at issue.

Some targets and witnesses may choose not to report. While this may be the easiest option for the individual, it does not allow the university to address the individual to prevent such behavior in the future or to recognize a repeated pattern of behavior from a harasser. The university has an obligation and a desire to end sexual harassment. Therefore, we ask that all harassment be reported so that we may assess the nature and scope of the problem to better address the issue and take appropriate steps to prevent future problems.

#### IS MY BEHAVIOR OFFENSIVE?

Because harassment is defined in part by the reaction of the victim, all members of the University community are expected to honor reasonable requests to stop offensive behavior.

Those who wish to continue such conduct on the grounds that they believe it to be a valuable or necessary component of the work environment are expected to seek mediation (with the offended party if the offended party is willing) to see if alternative, non-offensive behavior can be substituted for the offensive behavior, or to clarify the purpose of such conduct.

### WHAT SHOULD I DO IF SOMEONE CONFRONTS ME?

#### DO

- Do listen. In particular, listen for the answers to the following questions: What did you do or say that the other person found offensive? How did your behavior make them feel? What do they need? What changes in your conduct would they like you to make?
- Do apologize. Whether you intended it or not, you have offended someone. Saying “I’m sorry” does not mean that you intended to be offensive; it is a gesture of good will that can help heal the relationship.
- Do seek clarification. If you are unsure what part of your conduct was offensive, why it was offensive, or whether it is harassment, invite the person to talk further with you. You may want to discuss the situation with a third party present (e.g., a counselor, a member of the Dean of Students or Human Resources Office, a Sexual Harassment Prevention Advisor, etc.)
- Do seek help. If you have been told several times (by the same person, or by different people) that your behavior is offensive or harassing, you may need help changing your behavior. There is help available at the Counseling Center, through the Human Resources Department or through the Dean of Students Office.

#### DON'T

- Don't dismiss the concern as a joke or minimize the person's complaint. Doing so is insulting and exacerbates the situation.
- Don't accuse the person of being overly sensitive or politically correct.
- Don't attempt to explain or justify your behavior. The other person needs to know that they have been heard. You may offer an explanation when and if they ask for it.
- Don't continue the objectionable conduct. Not only is this disrespectful of the other person, but it makes you vulnerable to formal charges and disciplinary action.



# RESOURCES

## **WHAT SHOULD I DO IF SOMEONE ASKS FOR MY ADVICE?**

You can direct the individual to one of the resources listed in this brochure. It is important for the individual involved to be aware of their options, even if they do not wish to take any action or file a formal complaint.

## **WHAT SHOULD I DO IF SOMEONE CONFRONTS ME ABOUT THE BEHAVIOR OF A SUBORDINATE?**

As a supervisor, you are responsible for addressing reports of inappropriate conduct regarding subordinates (whether or not the person directly reports to you).

For guidance on handling such situations, contact the Director of Employee Relations in the Human Resources Department.

## **SEXUAL HARASSMENT PREVENTION ADVISORS**

Check website for most current list:  
[http://www.uncc.edu/humanres\\_is/employeerelations/prevention.htm](http://www.uncc.edu/humanres_is/employeerelations/prevention.htm)

## **DEAN OF STUDENTS OFFICE- OFFICE OF WOMEN'S PROGRAMS**

119 King  
**(704) 687-2541**  
[www.dso.uncc.edu/women](http://www.dso.uncc.edu/women)

## **THE COUNSELING CENTER**

158 Atkins  
**(704) 687-2105**  
[www.uncc.edu/counseling\\_center](http://www.uncc.edu/counseling_center)

## **HUMAN RESOURCES- AFFIRMATIVE ACTION OFFICER**

Second Floor, King  
**(704) 687-4269**  
[http://www.uncc.edu/humanres\\_is/](http://www.uncc.edu/humanres_is/)

## **DEPARTMENT OF POLICE AND PUBLIC SAFETY**

113 King  
**(704) 687-2282**  
<http://www.police.uncc.edu/>

## **WOMEN'S STUDIES-**

103 Macy  
**(704) 687-4312**  
[www.uncc.edu/womens\\_studies/](http://www.uncc.edu/womens_studies/)