

Preventing Sexual Harassment: Some Experiences with a Program at Auburn University

Nicholas Giordano, Dean of Sciences and Mathematics

- Some thoughts about sexual harassment
- Motivation of a new program at Auburn University
- Initial target audience: Graduate students
- Impact on Faculty and Staff
- Where do we go from here

Sexual Harassment Really Happens

- More common / pervasive than most want to believe
- One major factor: Power “imbalances”
 - Professor/Grad student
 - Senior/Junior faculty
 - Grad student/Undergrad student

Auburn Experience

- Developed presentation/discussion
- Content:
 - Origin/need for Title IX
 - Real experiences on our campus – it does happen here!
 - What to do when you see it or experience it
- Initial target: All graduate students

Auburn Experience 2

- Program started in my college several years ago
 - Grad students first
 - Now all faculty and staff in my college
- Has now spread “organically”
 - All grad students at Auburn
 - Many other colleges and departments
 - Many support units (HR, etc.)
- Next likely steps:
 - Requirement for all faculty and staff
 - Special training for administrators in dealing with harassment

Lessons Learned

- Must get the process right
- Auburn process pre-2016 was flawed
- Our new process copies exemplars with help from outside counsel

Lessons Learned 2

- Process must respect both victim and accused
- Investigations take time but
- Must act quickly when allegations surface
 - Separate victim and accused immediately
 - Provide counseling to both
- Investigators and other officials must be well-trained

Does our Program Work?

- Impact will likely not be with the harassers
- Simple message of the program:
 - If you see something say something
 - We will not tolerate harassment
- While cases are kept confidential

Outlook

- Progress is being made
 - Institutional processes are improving
- Old cases will be re-surfacing (#MeToo) – these will be challenges
- Leadership must stay strong and set proper example