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

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• 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