Sexual Harassment Policy

Introduction

Respect for others is an important part of any civilized community and an absolutely essential element in a caring community of learning. Sexual harassment violates our belief in the dignity and value of each member of our community. Sexual harassment brings into the campus environment conduct that is neither conducive nor related to learning or job performance. Georgia Southwestern State University will not tolerate sexual harassment of any type on this campus. This policy applies to academic relationships as well as employment among faculty, staff, and students of Georgia Southwestern State University. These policies, which are consistent with the policies of the Board of Regents, are intended to comply with the law on sexual harassment.

Sexual Harassment Policy Statement

It has always been the policy of Georgia Southwestern to maintain the best possible working environment for all faculty, staff, and students. This includes the right of all employees and students to be free from sexual and all other forms of unlawful harassment of any kind in the workplace, including harassment because of someone's race, color, religion, gender, national origin, age, disability, or any other characteristic protected by applicable federal, state, or local law. Georgia Southwestern will not tolerate such harassment. This subject is also part of our Equal Employment Opportunity policy which protects the right of every employee to be free from unlawful discrimination of any kind.

Definition of Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment is an unwelcome advance, request for sexual favors and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature when:

1. submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term of condition of an individual's employment;
2. submission to or rejection of such conduct by an individual is used as a basis for employment decisions affecting that individual; or
3. such conduct has the purpose or effect of substantially interfering with an individual's work performance or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive work environment.

Sexual Harassment Can Take Many Forms Including, but not limited to:

Remarks of a sexual nature concerning a person's body or clothing. Sexually explicit slurs or words which are used to describe a person. Unnecessary and unwelcome touching, patting, pinching or fondling. Unwelcome propositions or requests for social dates or sexual activity. The circulation or displaying of sexually oriented cartoons, pictures, or other potentially offensive materials while on campus.
Remarks exchanged by two consenting adults that may be offensive to other individuals.

**What should you do if you think that you're being subjected to Sexual Harassment?**

First, make it clear to the harasser that his or her behavior is unwelcome, and firmly request that it be stopped. It is all too common for someone accused of sexual harassment to say, "I didn't realize that she/he would be offended by that." Whatever the intent, however, the effect of harassment can be devastating. Sensitivity to the impact of one's actions on others is essential.

**Reporting Procedures**

If you feel you are a victim of sexual harassment, you should bring your concerns to your supervisor or the University's Affirmative Action Officer in the Human Resources Department. The earlier you report it, the earlier University officials can investigate your concerns. You are assured that any complaint will be handled confidentially and fairly. **No reprisal or retaliation will occur because of the report of an incident of suspected sexual harassment.** Any information gathered during the investigation will be kept separate from the employee's personnel file. Information will be disclosed on a need-to-know basis in order to investigate and resolve the matter. The seriousness of this type of complaint dictates that each incident be examined impartially and resolved promptly.

**Grievance Procedures**

Refer to Page 9.

**Preventing Sexual Harassment**

All faculty, supervisors, and administrators who are employed by the University are obligated to take appropriate action to prevent sexual harassment. Any behavior that might be construed as sexual harassment, including apparently consenting sexual relationships with subordinates or students, is to be avoided. All members of the University community should educate themselves about the range of behavior included within the definition of sexual harassment. Departments are urged to hold their own discussions of the policy. Training sessions will be arranged through the Affirmative Action/Human Resources Department.

**Responsibilities of Supervisors**

Supervisory personnel have special responsibilities regarding sexual harassment. Supervisors are charged with promoting and maintaining an atmosphere that properly deters sexual harassment. Supervisors are expected to actively discourage all behaviors that might be construed as sexual harassment as stated in this policy.

**Penalties for Sexual Harassment**

Each incident will be handled on a case-by-case basis. Any employee who is found to have engaged in inappropriate conduct or harassment of another employee or student will be subject to
appropriate action, according to the severity of the incident up to and including termination of employment.