

Dalhousie establishes sexual harassment grievance procedures

By WENDY COOMBER

Finally, there is a place victims of sexual harassment at Dalhousie can turn to.

One hundred and sixty years after its establishment, Dalhousie University had just now appointed its first panel to hear alleged cases of sexual harassment. A standard set of rules and regulations has been formed by the President's Advisory Committee on Sexual Harassment.

Committee chair, Dr. Toni Laidlaw, said the Committee and panel have only been formed now, "primarily because people have not been educated to recognise sexual harassment as a serious problem until the last 10 years."

The purpose of the Committee, she said, is to "make people in the university community understand that everyone has an absolute right to either work or study here without what they construe to be incidents of sexual harassment."

The Committee was set up two years ago to define sexual harassment, formulate policies to deal with it, and try to discourage it through education. Before this there was not formal body to hear complaints.

The Dalhousie Staff Association (DSA) Collective Agreement contains no definition of sexual harassment, and no committee to hear grievances. A harassed member could be fired for 'just cause' and not be able to launch a grievance until after they have lost their job.

Only the Professional, Research and Librarian members of the Dalhousie Faculty Association have a Hearing Committee which may hear grievances, but the instructors and counsellors do not.

In the past, grievances have been filed with the Ombud, psychological counselling, and heads of departments. However, there was never a specific, unified way of handling them.

The President's Advisory Committee on Sexual Harassment was set up two years ago after the results of a campus questionnaire showing sexual harassment to be a more common occurrence than most people thought. The questionnaire was distributed by a students' women's committee.

Laidlaw, as a member of the Dalhousie Women's Faculty Organization, said students were approaching her, concerned about the personal and academic problems sexual harassment created.

One complaint of sexual harassment this summer forced an emergency panel to convene. Caroline Zayid, vice-president external for the student union, sat on the panel.

Although the Committee's procedures had not yet been formalized and are therefore not in effect, Zayid and the other panel members tried to test some of the new rules.

With 10 panel meetings behind her, Zayid said her group is running into a few problems, but nothing which cannot be solved—

problems like who gets to speak or where to proceed next.

According to Zayid, they've looked at labour arbitration and other grievance procedures to determine what direction they should be taking. She said her group is running into things which weren't anticipated, but declined to give specific details.

"I think the experience of having this case will give the Advisory Committee (a chance to) review the procedures and will give people some food for thought."

Zayid adds that the procedural problems are no one's fault but are bound to be found in a new and

controversial area such as rules for sexual grievance.

The Advisory Committee's procedures have a built-in correctional mechanism: after two years or three cases the Committee will review the effectiveness of the procedures and make recommendations.

The committee's educational budget was only passed last week. With this, the Committee plans to print posters and brochures, send speakers to groups, and advertise. They also train the Hearing Panel members on how to deal with alleged victims and harassers and how to put the procedures into motion.

Defining sexual harassment

Definition of Sexual Harassment (from The Report of the Presidential Advisory Committee on Sexual Harassment):

Sexual harassment is defined as any sexually-oriented behavior of a deliberate or negligent nature which adversely affects the working or learning environment. It includes, but is not limited to:

- Sexual solicitation or advance of a repeated, persistent or abusive nature made by a person who knows or ought to know that such solicitation or advance is unwanted;
- implied or expressed promise or reward for complying with a sexually-oriented request;
- reprisal in the form either of actual reprisal, or of the denial of opportunity, or implied or expressed threat of actual reprisal or denial of opportunity for a refusal to comply with a sexually-oriented request;
- sexually-oriented remarks or behavior on the part of a person who knows or ought to know that such remarks or behavior may create a negative psychological or emotional environment for work or study.

Do you know the way to Fredericton?

By MARY ELLEN JONES

Speeding through the night, in search of the University of New Brunswick campus with its lookalike buildings, seven university papers from the Atlantic Regional Canadian University Press Conference, ARCUPPIES, were presented with a jam-packed agenda of events for the conference. When the opening plenary finally ended, members invaded a local bar to relax and discuss the oppression of New Brunswickians.

Seminars and discussions were held throughout the entire weekend. Layout procedures, news-writing tips, and autonomy provided food for thought.


Food for the stomach was provided by the delegates themselves.

In a stifling conference room the final plenary went through house-keeping motions. Some delegates fanned themselves, perspiring like a hung jury in a James Cagney film.

On the agenda was a summary of the plans for the National CUP conference to be held in Nova Scotia in December, hosted by the Dalhousie Gazette, the St. Mary's Journal, and the Mount St. Vincent Picaro.

Dennis "Scooter" Valdron, of the St. Thomas Aquinian, was elected regional vice-president.

Tired out, but enthusiastic Gazette staff returned home to prepare for this week's newspaper.



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