

EDITORIAL

By Karen Burgess

Today is the big day. The university's administration will get its proposed harassment policy back from legal counsel, and will then use the proposal as a focus for discussions with UNB's student unions and staff/faculty organizations. The consultations are aimed at finalizing a blanket harassment policy for the university's two campuses.

For all of you who are tingling with pride at the university's initiative, I'd like to burst your bubble.

In an interview with *The Brunswickan* published in April of last year, students were assured by Vice President Academic Tom Traves that a racial harassment policy would be a priority over the summer, and that consultation with staff and students would begin in the fall. Last fall. This policy, now expanded to cover all forms of harassment, is almost a year late in coming to the students.

What amount of consultation can students reasonably expect with regards to this policy? When the university began work on its much-lauded sexual harassment policy, there were committees (i.e. more than one person) set up to study, recommend, input, and advise in the process of writing the policy. The blanket harassment policy currently under discussion was essentially written by one person.

We're already one step behind what precedent has shown to be a reasonable degree of involvement.

The dilemma of whether or not harassment is an area more suited to individual or committee mediation will be a recurring theme throughout the hammering out of this policy. Funny, the Admin always seems to want an individual in charge, and the SU seems to favor a committee. (That Democracy thing perhaps? We know they have a penchant for taking the word of 1400 people over that of individual council members...)

Let's take a look at the informal complaint procedure as it now stands in the Sexual Harassment policy: if a student feels harassed, he or she goes to try and work out the problem with the individual in question, or possibly the individual and the individual's superior. The student is not forbidden to have someone accompany them during this initial step, but it's not encouraged.

Student Union proposal for new blanket harassment policy: the student's right to an advocate at all levels of the complaint procedure is loudly proclaimed, as is their right to lodge a formal complaint or take the charges to an external body (court or the Human Rights Commission).

Current procedure: if a complaint is resolved informally, only the individuals affected will ever know. Nobody reviewing a respondent's history will ever know a complaint was lodged, even if an admission of guilt was made, or a settlement was agreed to.

SU proposal: a notation should be made so that, say, an official hearing or investigation could have some way of gauging if the individual in question has a past history of harassing or potentially harassing behavior.

Current procedure: the individual in charge of the individual

in question completes an investigation into the allegations. He/She makes a recommendation to the individual from the administration (VP Academic) in charge of such things, who then makes THE FINAL JUDGMENT based on his/her individual response to the individual response of the individual investigator.

SU proposal: if an informal discussion doesn't resolve a problem, the student goes to a harassment advisor (with his or her advocate, should he or she chose), and they go to a committee of

people—selected because they represent a cross-section of the university community—and they input, dialogue, communicate, network and conference to synthesize a response to the student's situation. They would then make a recommendation to the VP, who would then make a judgment. If that fails to result in a satisfactory resolution, the committee could go to the President, or conceivably ask for a senate review.

Irony: The individual who used to give students an even further outlet of appeal (after the senate), the Visitor, has been abolished by the provincial legislature, so the only time the SU would conceivably be happy to have another individual to turn to, it can't happen.

Harassment is a deeply intimidating and frightening experience, whether it be sexual, racial, personal in nature, or based on political or religious affiliation or any orientation or attribute. People are harassed because they, as an individual, are singled out because of some real or imagined trait which is integral to their individuality. People who harass do it because they, as an individual, hold personal beliefs or conceptions which lead them to believe that anyone who is individual—different from them—is somehow less of a person because of it.

It is impossible for any individual to remove their own biases or inclinations from a process of investigation. This is a fact, and not an accusation. If judgments about harassment are left up to one person, those personal biases will have an effect, unconsciously or otherwise, of the outcome of the investigation. In a committee, personal preferences or prejudices can, theoretically, be balanced by the group dynamics of diversity and compromise.

I'm convinced that the members of the university's Board of Governors knows just the kind of negative influences personal opinions can have on the decision-making process. The Mass IQ Annihilation phenomenon they discovered in their research into Student Union referendums proves this point. The big mistake in the Health Plan referendum, as perceived by the BoG anyway, was letting students make a decision on something that would directly affect them. Personal biases and interests would have far too much influence in such a decision. Perhaps if a diverse enough collection of people had been allowed to vote on the health plan—administrators, staff, faculty, alumni—the prejudices of the self-motivated students who voted could have been mediated by a more academic standpoint. This alone should be testimony enough to the merits of committee negotiation over individual decree.

If judgments about harassment are left up to one person, it is conceivable that their personal biases will have an effect, unconsciously or otherwise, on the outcome of the investigation.

MUGWUMP

BY JAMES ROWAN

I don't have much to talk about this week, and even less space to talk about it in. I suppose I could go on at length about the budget numbers and the SU operating report...but I don't really understand how they're getting their numbers. Neither does anyone else, including the exec and the Council. No one is really talking, because no one wants to go on record saying they have no idea whatsoever about how much money the SU will or won't have at the end of the year. When I say no one knows, I mean estimates range between -\$10,000 and +\$50,000 for the year, meaning between a \$50,000 and \$120,000 accumulated surplus. (These numbers aren't exact—they're wild approximations; that's okay, so are the numbers presented to Council.)

All I want to know is, if -\$14,000 spells abuse, what does \$+120,000 spell? Thanks to the folks from the Pillar (Troy and Dan) for their help in writing the Top Twelve list.

MONEY AND OTHER MATTERS

Top Twelve Names and Mottos for the Pub in the SUB

12. The Antisocial Club "We guarantee you won't meet anyone here."
11. CHSR "Because we're used to losing money"
10. Under New Management "Under New Management"
9. SUBstandard "It's broke, you bought it."
8. The Paper Post "Because one bad idea deserves another"
7. McRaalte's "Over 5 Billion 5 Million 5 Thousand At Least Five served"
6. The Wimmin's Room "You Can Cry in your Beer here"
5. Liquid-ation Sale "Because we need to kill our surplus"
4. Slick's "Free Hair Gel with every Draft"
3. The SUBstitute "Because the Social Club wouldn't sell out"
2. Bobbitt's "Cutting into your pocket one beer at a time"
1. The Submarine "We may be going under, but at least we have a bail out clause."



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