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Policy revisions break harassing barriers

BY MARIE MACPHERSON

Dalhousie's goal is the elimination of sexual harassment among members of the university community. Sexual harassment is a barrier to intellectual, professional and personal development. Where sexual harassment exists, the educational or work experience is compromised.

So opens the preamble to the report concerning proposals for revisions to Dalhousie University's sexual harassment policy. The 25-page report, unveiled last month by the President's Advisory Committee on Sexual Harassment, includes recommendations on how to make the process more user-friendly.

Despite Dalhousie having a sexual harassment policy since 1984, students, professors and employees were slow to use the services.

Barbara Harris, the President's Advisor on Women, says that since 1987, however, complaints have

ranged from 20 to 30 a year, covering occurrences from sexually oriented verbal remarks to rape.

"Women now know that it is O.K. to say 'Yes, this [sexual harassment] has happened to me' and that they will not be blamed," says Harris.

Since 1987, the committee has dealt with over 100 enquiries.

A problem with the current policy is that the individual complainant is saddled with full responsibility in dealing with the harassment. Harris says, "The institution provides the policy and procedures, little else."

This factor often results in discouraging victims from reporting assaults.

To remedy this situation, it has been suggested that the policy include advisory services and informal remedies.

"People can come with a problem, or something they think might be a problem, talk about it and get some help. It might be an encouragement

to say 'Yes, you have a right to tell someone you don't like this,'" says Harris.

Currently, there is no sexual harassment advisor employed by Dalhousie, despite the fact that other metro universities have filled such a position.

Harris says even if the complainants feel the risk involved in filing a formal complaint is too high, they will have the opportunity to speak with an advisor about the problem,

and discover options.

Having a full-time advisor would also mean centralizing information concerning harassment complaints. As it stands now, with the 10-member volunteer Sexual Harassment Committee, a complaint is filed with any one of the volunteers. The possibility for complaints against the same person to be registered with different volunteers is likely, meaning that an important pattern in harassment could be overlooked.

The proposal for revisions has been the result of a two year study and consultation with numerous groups like the DSU, DAGS, Dal Women's Group, Women in Law and GLAD. Harris says the final version will be presented to President Clark in May.

Harris stresses that, "Sexual assault is a trauma, with all sorts of long-lasting effects from physical to psychological. People must know that there is help available here at Dalhousie."

Who Dunit: Society denies trashing LSC

BY SHANNON GOWANS

Over \$3 000 worth of vandalism occurred in Science buildings during the night of Friday March 6. The same night the Dalhousie Science Society sponsored a pub crawl in the Science lounges. Just a coincidence?

Bill Lord, physical plant director, thinks not, and sent the Students' Union a bill for the damages to forward onto the Science Society. Dennis MacNeil, DSS president, admits some vandalism was caused by society members, however much of it was "just an unfortunate coincidence." Meanwhile the DSU stands on the middle, having received an invoice for \$3 000, and the DSS accepting responsibility for about \$350.

There is absolutely no question a great deal of damage was done on March 6. Two windows in the link

between the LSC and the Chemistry building were smashed, costing \$1,500 to replace. Fire extinguishers were set off, doors broken, plants uprooted, furniture overturned, and an elevator jammed, requiring outside repair personnel to be called in. "It was a general rampage through the building," said Lord.

There is also no doubt some members of the DSS were drunk and a little out of control. Three people were found overturning chairs and sofas in the Psychology lounge by the department chair Richard Brown. The DSS admits some society members set off fire extinguishers and ripped plants out of their pots scattering dirt all over the floor.

When vandalism occurs the physical plant generally tries to determine exactly which students were involved and then charge them for the damage. In this case Lord felt there was a

strong enough correlation between the vandalism and the DSS Pub Crawl to warrant billing the DSS, through the DSU.

"The DSS should obviously take charge and figure out what actually took place, and if their constituents did it, they have to take responsibility," said Peter Pottier, DSU president.

"We are certain the damage to the planters, fire extinguishers, and furniture in the Psychology lounge happened during the crawl and we are prepared to take responsibility," said MacNeil.

No one in the DSS admits to breaking the windows. "There is often vandalism in the LSC, it just happened at the same time as the

DSS crawl," says MacNeil. There is some confusion over when the windows were actually broken. Some society members say the windows were broken before the Pub Crawl began, while others say they were still intact after the crawl was over. Regardless whether DSS members were responsible for all the vandalism or not, problems occurred. "I'm not sure if there will be another pub crawl, at least not next year, after something this major there needs to be a cooling down period," said MacNeil.

MacNeil was only a minor player in this incident, being absent for the entire event and sober throughout the evening. He is currently DSU vice-president elect. Next year he

will have to deal with many societies' requests made to Bar Services to purchase liquor.

"I am very upset by this, and don't want to see it happen again," he said. He plans to ensure a member of every society intending to serve liquor attends a mandatory seminar on server intervention to prevent people from getting out of control during society events.

However, he does not believe the DSU should have to pay for vandalism that occurs during these events. "It would be foolish of Bill Lord to bill the DSU for every act of vandalism, the Students' Union shouldn't be held responsible for every act that occurs."



The raging reporters of the Blues DUS News Snooze team

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