

Talking about sexual harassment...

by John Watson

Sexual assault is not currently a big problem on the U of A campus. Doug Langevin, head of Campus Security, hopes it will stay that way. "We are fortunate in this university that we don't have a sexual assault problem, and we don't want one to start," he said.

And, in the interest of preventing problems, Langevin has a number of suggestions for women on campus "so they don't put themselves in the position of making it easier" for would-be attackers.

The primary concern is walking alone at night. That is a dangerous thing to do said Langevin.

Women, especially women from out of town, may put themselves in a bad position by "being too friendly", said Langevin.

"Sitting, talking in the cafeteria (with a stranger) is fine," he said, "but walking home, or to your car can be a very dangerous thing to do."

Langevin pointed out it is not necessary for someone to walk alone on campus. Campus Security provides a free escort service anywhere on campus at any time of day. To get an escort phone Campus Security (432-5252).

There is one location on campus particularly prone to incidences of sexual assault and harassment. "The Humanities Building — if anything is going to happen that is going to be the area," Langevin said.

Also, "We should not forget that this is a two-sided sword, there is a male side and a female side," said Langevin.

"About 15 per cent of sexual harassment is females on males," he said. But Langevin believes men must change their attitudes.

Men were raised to be the macho, domineering type, but that kind of idea can get them into trouble. No means no.



photo Rob Schmidt

Head of Campus Security Doug Langevin.

When a woman says 'no', the man had better listen; otherwise, Langevin says, they'll end up being charged with sexual assault or sexual harassment.

Langevin continued, "You can't take her out, get her drunk, and take her to bed, because when she sobers up, she can holler 'rape' and you're up on charges."

"Most importantly, if anything

happens report it, let us know — don't be afraid to phone Campus Security."

No action is taken without the complainant's approval and "confidentiality is respected, nobody's name is bandied about by Campus Security — ever."

"If you are the least bit doubtful about Campus Security, use the TALK line," Langevin suggested.

The TALK line (432-8255) is a direct line to Ellen Solomon who receives all calls for the President's Advisory Committee on Sexual Harassment (PACSH).

While Campus Security deals with sexual assault matters, PACSH is in charge of sexual harassment complaints. The distinction is a very fine one, and the two organizations work closely together.

People who call the PACSH line don't have to worry about talking to an entire committee, as all problems are initially dealt with informally and on a one to one basis.

The committee is composed of a male and a female from each of four groups — academic staff, non-academic staff, graduate students, and undergraduates.

This structure allows anyone with a complaint to talk to someone from their own peer group. Anne McLellan, chairperson of the committee, said, "generally someone who calls wants to talk to the chair — that's the position I hold."

"We talk about a range of possibilities, (until we) find one that will effectively and expeditiously solve the problem," said McLellan.

That simply requires finding a solution, a method of action that the complainant is comfortable with.

Usually the problems arise from misunderstandings. "People just don't understand the effect their behaviour has on other people," said McLellan.

"Informal resolution, if it is possible, is preferable: it's much easier emotionally," she said. McLellan adds that PACSH can hold formal hearings to deal with persistent problems.

A two member assessment panel will decide whether or not a complaint should be dealt with formally. If the panel decides yes, a three member committee will hold hearings.

The three member committee then makes a recommendation to the president of the university for appropriate action.

As does Campus Security, McLellan stresses that "when they come to PACSH, they don't have to worry that everything is taken out of their hands and their control."

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