Committee to Review Campus Climate and Sexual Harassment

[The following memo was sent by President Sanders to Professors Marsha Hass (Acctg/Legal Studies) and Mary Blake (EE) and to the Speaker with a copy to Dr. Sue Sommer-Kresse. The date of the memo is September 14th].

Re: Campus Climate and Sexual Harassment

I write as a follow-up to our earlier conversation. [Ed. note: the conversation alluded to took place during the summer.] As I told you at that time, I am concerned about this issue and want to take positive steps to create a climate where harassment of any kind is not present.

Since our meeting, several actions have been taken. The required student orientation session, "Respecting Individual Differences" has included more specific information about sexual harassment and the College of Charleston procedures. Included in this material is a list of faculty and staff members who have volunteered to meet with students about sexual harassment concerns. Because approximately 99% of our new students attend an orientation session, we hope that this message will be clear and our students will be more knowledgeable about our policies and procedures.

Secondly, diversity in the classroom and sexual harassment procedures were specifically addressed during the new roster faculty and adjunct faculty orientations. Additional information will be reviewed and teaching diverse students will be included in the faculty development seminars sponsored by the Undergraduate Studies Office.

I have asked Dr. Sue Sommer-Kresse, Vice President for Enrollment Management, to call a meeting of interested students, faculty and staff members to discuss these issues and to recommend specific actions to be taken. I am most concerned about educating our entire community in order to prevent harassment incidents. She will be contacting you and others to begin this process.

[Editor's note: The first meeting of this group will be Thursday, October 14, 2:00, President's Board Room. This is an open meeting. Those interested in or concerned about the College's sexual harassment policy and procedure are interested in participating in this campus-wide policy evaluation should contact her at 3-5527 or by e-mail.]

C of C Library Introduces FirstSearch

by Sheila Seaman

The Robert Scott Small Library is now testing a new computer information service called FirstSearch. It is part of the regular library online catalog. The library administration plans to continue offering FirstSearch to the faculty all year long, and funds permitting, to continue the service if demand warrants it.

FirstSearch is an electronic information system designed for faculty and students. It offers research flexibility with access to a number of online, subject-specific databases (like MiniGeoRef for geology, BIOSIS/FS for biology, and MLA for literature. Plus it is linked to the world's largest computerized card catalog, WorldCat (the OCLC Online Union Catalog), with more than 27 million bibliographic records representing the holdings of 15,000 libraries to 11,000 journals. This database indexes journals within 48 hours of their receipt, making the index very useful for current information.

FirstSearch requires no special training in computers or online searching. Anyone should be able to walk up to a terminal or dial into the campus network and perform a successful search following the online menus. Moreover, many of the databases on FirstSearch, like WorldCat, will even show you what libraries own an item. Document ordering is also available on the ArticleFirst databases.

If you find FirstSearch useful, you can arrange to access the service from a personal computer in your office, your home, or from any location. Contact a librarian at the Reference Desk for more information about the databases or about obtaining your own authorization.

Ms. Seaman is Assistant Dean of RSS Library.

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Installation of Alexander Mullings Sanders, Jr. as Nineteenth President of College of Charleston:

Sunday, October 24th; 3:00 pm Sottile Theatre
Send RSVP to Elizabeth Kasseebaum by October 11th
Interview: Mr. Robert Gillis, Vice President for Human Relations and Minority Affairs

Ed.: What exactly is the office of Human Relations and Minority Affairs?
RG: We handle affirmative action, equal employment opportunity, employee assistance programs, physically disabled student services; we also coordinate the Americans with Disabilities Act, which is federal legislation that is as important for people who are disabled as was the Civil Rights legislation of 1964. We also investigate complaints of alleged discrimination and sexual harassment from students, employees, and job applicants; this also could include students who have applied but not been accepted to specific programs at the College. We also serve as an advocate for employees in an attempt to resolve conflicts between employees and supervisors.
Ed.: Let's take these one at a time. Describe how you deal with issues relating to affirmative action.
RG: Affirmative action involves program goals for hiring of qualified minorities and females relative to their availability relative in certain job classifications. The affirmative action officer sets the goals based on a mathematical formula using availability data and other factors. How many are trained to perform specific jobs in our SMSA (standard metropolitan statistical area) will assist us in ascertaining the availability of qualified minorities and females who are employable.
Ed.: In other words, one goal of the College is to hire more qualified minorities and women, both in the professional ranks and in staff positions. How hard a job is that?
RG: In some areas it is very difficult. We already know even before we advertise that minorities in many cases will have fewer years of teaching experience, fewer publications, and may not have as much research experience as others. But at the same time, when committees screen applicants for faculty positions, those three elements are very critical in terms of how they rate candidates. So in that sense, more often than not, minorities fall short of being recommended when in fact they probably would have no problem, if they were they hired. My argument is, at what level do these applicants have to function in order to teach the courses?
Ed.: In other words, affirmative action has as its purpose the goal of diversifying the College while maintaining high standards for both the teaching profession and for the many staff positions here.
RG: Yes, and at the same time is it a management tool of setting goals with the purpose of meeting those goals.
Ed.: Have we met them?
RG: In some areas we have. We could always do better.
Ed.: What is an employee assistance program?
RG: This primarily function is to address the needs of employees who have problems such as substance abuse, marital or financial difficulties. It provides a system where the employee can seek help. The program is administered through this office. This is a professional referral service. The employee assistance program should be viewed by all C of C employees as a benefit available to them and their families. We receive quarterly reports that describe how many people have gotten assistance and for what type of problem. These reports are strictly confidential and no names or identifications of any kind are attached.
Ed.: So this is strictly confidential.
RG: Yes. I may call a supervisor and have the employee set up an appointment with me to talk about the problem. The problems I encounter range from the typical substance abuse or marital problem to those of a more individualized nature such as loss of a loved one or an overextension of consumer debt.
Ed.: Tell me about accommodating physically disabled students.
RG: We are currently assessing campus facilities for accessibility. What we are going to do is to produce a five year program where we can bring any deficiencies up to federal standards.
Ed.: My comment is: that is rather difficult given the nature of a lot of our buildings.
RG: Many of our buildings, because of their historical nature, are exempt, but we are primarily looking at facilities like classroom buildings and dormitories. Entrances, exits, restrooms, door frame widths, and so forth have strict standards. The administration is going to have to decide how to achieve those program goals.
Accommodating physically disabled students involves ADA, but there is more. We are also obliged to look at accommodating physically disabled students from an academic perspective.
Ed.: Do you mean, how do we provide a blind student with reading materials?
RG: We have to accommodate students so that they will be able to participate as fully as any other student. We have the student certified by a medical professional concerning the nature of the disability. Some will prescribe what is necessary. My job is to work with the faculty and staff to make adjustments in, for instance, exam situations. Without the cooperation of the faculty, these measures could not succeed; the faculty are to be commended for their willingness to work with us in this regard. Students may choose not to engage our office for assistance; often, faculty take the initiative and make inquiries about accommodation.
Ed.: Let's talk about allegations of sexual harassment and/or discrimination. We have policies in place. Can you provide an example?
RG: Typically, a person will come to the office either through referral or on her own and describe a situation which she would describe as sexual harassment. Usually these are females describing undesirable encounters with males. These are very delicate matters that usually involve a student and an employee. In any case, an allegation will be checked out. How the allegation will be investigated depends on the willingness of the complainant to put something in writing. I will then call the individual in for a conference, inform the person of the allegations, and most of the time the individuals have been honest about the encounter.
Ed.: Do you believe that some people might fear raising a complaint in the first place?
RG: Sexual harassment is so devastating to women that they might fear making a complaint. It is very unusual to find an example of a first encounter resulting in a complaint. Most complaints result from extended periods of abuse. The point it gets to is, "I'm mad as hell and won't take it any more."
Ed.: Do we need better education about what harassment is?
RG: Yes, we do.
Ed.: How?

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Candide Day at the College
by Patrick Harwood

The classic French novel Candide by Voltaire will be examined by professors of philosophy, history, English, and French during the College of Charleston Candide Day, October 13, 3-4:30 pm in the School of the Arts Recital Hall. A forum of faculty will focus on Voltaire and his classic work, which was published originally in 1759, just a few years before the founding of the College. The panel will discuss the book's philosophical lessons, literary style, place in history, and importance relevant to Voltaire's other works.

David Stahl, Artistic Director and Conductor of the Charleston Symphonic Orchestra, will conclude the symposium with a discussion of Leonard Bernstein's musical version of Candide, which will be performed by the Charleston Symphony Orchestra October 16th at the Gaillard Auditorium.

Professor Sylvia Gamboa, Assistant Professor of English and coordinator of Candide Day: "By having faculty from several academic disciplines focusing on one author and one of his works, we hope to show students that subjects in the humanities are interrelated. Many students already read Candide in history classes, as well as in English, philosophy, and French classes. Now students should begin to link information learned in these courses." The event is a new idea on campus, and next year another topic will be studied in a similar way, incorporating the views of many departments on campus.

Faculty members participating on the panel will be Joseph Harrison (English), Norbert Scippa (French), Amy McCandless (History), Martin Perlmuter (Philosophy), and Edward McGuire (Dean, School of Arts). The latter will serve as moderator.

--Bring your cameras. We can have a candide camera day. [ed.]

Patrick Harwood serves in College Relations.

International Chemistry Olympiad
U.S. Team Led by Prof. Betsy Martin
Information provided by Jim Deavor, Chemistry

There is a high school student competition of world-wide proportions called the "International Chemistry Olympiad", which is designed to encourage excellence in Chemistry at the high school level. This summer, the competition was held in Perugia, Italy. The U.S. team of four high school students from New Jersey, Pittsburgh, San Diego, and Kansas City were schooled by three professor/mentors, one of whom was Professor Betsy Martin. The others where Joseph Mitchener of S.C. Governor's School for Science and Mathematics, and Nancy Devino of Dickinson College.

The U.S. team won two gold and two silver medals and took at least third place, behind China and Taiwan (note: at publication time, exact rankings were unknown). The team is sponsored by the American Chemical Society, and principally funded by the ACS Othmer Olympiad Endowment, with additional financial support from the Exxon Education Foundation.

Board of Trustees
Meets on October 19th and 20th

Schedule of Meetings

October 19th, 2:30: Academic Affairs--Dr. Festa's Office
Facilities--Randolph 3rd Floor Conference Room
Finance--President's Board Rm
Student Affairs and Athletics--Sottile House Conference Room

October 20th, 9:30: Full Board Meeting--President's Board Room

- These meetings are open meetings.

thanks to cch, jd, mem, and the contributors for their assistance
Speaker's Report
by David Mann

--A South Carolina State University Faculty Chair Meeting was held on Friday, September 17th in Columbia. There are two standing committees: an executive committee and a CHE liaison committee. Jack Parson was among those chosen to be a member of the executive committee. There was a long discussion about how best to communicate with CHE about the concerns of faculty throughout the institutions of higher education in the state and what strategies to employ to send whatever messages the Chairs can agree upon. No formal decisions were made by the Faculty Chairs. Anyone having a contribution to make regarding concerns of faculty to be sent either to CHE or to the General Assembly should contact Dr. Parson at 3-8138 (or Ashley e-mail to Parson).

--I had a meeting with President Sanders on September 23rd. Many items on my discussion list had been taken care of by him without the two of us having discussed them. We seem to be engaged in some sort of transcendental communication. My list included the following items:

(a) There are studies being conducted concerning summer school pay. One is at the request of the President, the other is being conducted by the Faculty Welfare Committee.

(b) A sexual harassment policy review committee has been formed (see page one of this newsletter).

(c) There are no plans to replace Deborah Neese as special assistant to the President.

(d) A faculty member asked me to request that the city place a full traffic light at George and Coming Streets. President Sanders had already done so.

(e) The annual "May letter of retention" (for lack of a better term) will be revised by President Sanders to make its meaning more clear and precise.

(f) I reported there to be an aura of crisis management rather than planning, executing and evaluating; President Sanders agreed and suggested that perhaps the SACS review process can assist the College in generating better planning and less crisis management.

(g) There needs to be a better communications link; I cited an example from the week of September 20th, that two important faculty events, the Faculty Development Seminar and the Assessment Roundtable, were going on at the same time; my suggestion was to attempt to create a central calendar scheme which could alleviate such obvious overlap of events. There will always be time conflicts; and we did not reach any conclusion about this issue.

(h) I carried forth a suggestion from a faculty member that a Clinton-style forum could be held where interested faculty could meet and engage in a dialogue with President Sanders; we agreed that the faculty senate should set this up.

Interview with Gillis, continued

RG: Probably through workshops, distribution of more literature on sexual harassment, and open forums to discuss the issues of sexual harassment.

Ed.: Is the procedure essentially the same if we are talking instead about discrimination?

RG: No. Discrimination complaints are easier to investigate. But we take all complaints seriously.

Ed.: Do people fear raising a discrimination complaint?

RG: They do because they fear losing their jobs. I have never had an employee file an official discrimination complaint since I have been at the College. Along with sexual harassment, we try to settle these conflicts on an informal basis. Every complaint so far has been resolved. I bring the complainant and respondent together, and we arrive at an agreement assuring the complainant that the harassment or discrimination will stop and that there will be mechanisms put in place to make sure that the conduct is not repeated with someone else. People may be terminated or suspended without pay. I make a recommendation to the President about the course of action to take. But the bottom line decision is his.