Sexual harassment and sexism

Western Michigan University is committed to an environment which encourages fair, humane, and beneficial treatment of all faculty, staff, and students. In accordance with that fundamental objective, the university has a continuing commitment to assure equal opportunity and to oppose discrimination because of race, sex, color, sexual orientation, age, religion, national origin, or handicap, height, weight or marital status. Therefore, in that same perspective, neither sexual harassment nor sexism will be tolerated at Western Michigan University. It is expected that each member of the university community will consider himself/herself responsible for the proper observance of this policy.

Sexual harassment: Sexual harassment is defined as unwelcome sexual conduct which is related to any condition of employment or evaluation of student performance. This definition is intended to include more than overt advances toward actual sexual relations. It applies as well to repeated or unwarranted sex-related statements, unwelcome touching, sexually explicit comments, and/or graphics. All persons should be sensitive to situations that may affect or cause the recipient discomfort or humiliation or may display a condescending sex-based attitude towards a person. Sexual harassment is illegal under both state and federal law. In some cases, it may be subject also to prosecution under the criminal sexual conduct act. Conduct will be defined as sexual harassment when any or all three of the following conditions exist:

A. The sex-related situations are unwelcome by the recipient.

B. A specific or implied connection with employment or student status is involved.

C. Sexual harassment continues after the recipient has made it clear that the conduct is unwelcome.

Sexism: Sexism is defined as the perception and treatment of any person, not as an individual, but as a member of a category based on sex. Whether expressed in overt or subtle form such as sex-related jokes or materials, sexism in the classroom or work place is unacceptable at the university; and its elimination shall be the responsibility of the entire university community. Depending upon the seriousness of the misconduct, informal corrective action may be adequate.

Complaint procedure:

Sexual harassment and sexism constitute acts of misconduct. Therefore, whenever such acts are reported and confirmed, prompt disciplinary action will be taken, up to and including discharge. However, to enable the university to act through these formal procedures, employees and students are encouraged to report such incidents. Employees should report such conduct to the Director of Compensation and Employee Relations. Students should report it to the Office of Institutional Equity.
The Director of Compensation and Employee Relations and the Director of Institutional Equity shall jointly establish appropriate procedures to implement this policy. They shall also investigate thoroughly any complaints of alleged sexual harassment or sexism, and then report the results of such investigations to the President of the University.

(Approved by Board of Trustees May 17, 1985)