

DESIGNING & IMPLEMENTING A SEXUAL HARASSMENT PREVENTION PROGRAM ON A BARE BONES BUDGET

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I. OVERVIEW OF STEVENS

Before discussing Steven's sexual harassment prevention program, I'd like to provide you with some information about our institution.

Stevens is a small, private, competitive, 4 year technical college. Our student enrollment consists of 1,400 undergraduates and 2,000 graduate students (20% of both groups are women). The institute employs 400 faculty (143 full-time) and staff and only 7% of the faculty are women. However, there is a more balanced ratio of men and women among staff members.

II. DEVELOPMENT OF THE COMMITTEE

Initially, a steering committee developed a sexual harassment policy and procedures for hearing and investigating complaints. The policy and procedures were developed from policies of other institutions. Final drafts were reviewed by Stevens' legal counsel and adopted by the Board of Trustees. The last task of the steering committee was to assemble a sexual harassment committee. A call for volunteers was circulated campus wide and the steering committee submitted recommendations for membership to the President.

The sexual harassment committee consists of ten volunteers who were officially appointed by the President. The committee is charged with hearing and investigating complaints and developing and implementing a sexual harassment prevention program.

The essential criteria for creating the committee includes:

Strong leadership: The committee leader should be a good delegator, possess the ability to motivate others, and be a good spokesperson.

Support from the top: It is important to have committee members officially appointed by the President. This communicates that the endeavor is being taken seriously.

Co-chairs: We found it beneficial to have a tenured faculty member and a staff member serve as co-chairs. The faculty member gave credibility to the committee with regards to faculty. Also, having a male and female co-chair relayed the message that sexual harassment is not just a women's issue.

Volunteers: Ensure that your committee members are dedicated and committed and willing to devote a significant portion of time and effort to the program.

Diversity: We have representation from several different segments of the campus community serve on the committee including union, faculty, staff, and undergraduate and graduate students. This provides a voice for such segments of the campus. We also have a balance of men and women on the committee.

Special Skills: In selecting committee members it is essential for them to possess most of the following skills:

- * Counseling & mediation skills - For hearing complaints and speaking with alleged harassers and complainants.
- * Conflict resolution, group facilitation & public speaking - For conducting educational seminars.

Committee Size: 10-12 committee members are needed to distribute the work load.

Legal advisor: A legal advisor is essential for keeping abreast of changes in the law regarding sexual harassment and to consult with regarding investigations.

Affirmative Action Officer as Advisor: Our Affirmative Action Officer served as our main advisor. This person kept the committee aware of legal issues and assisted with the design and implementation of the training program. At Stevens we are fortunate to have a very supportive Affirmative Action Officer who has participated in all phases of our prevention program.

Confidentiality: Last but certainly not least, confidentiality is paramount. Committee members must be able to maintain strict confidentiality.

III. DEVELOPMENT OF THE SEXUAL HARASSMENT TRAINING PROGRAM

Recognizing that there was a lot to learn, the Committee proposed that an outside consultant with expertise in sexual harassment be hired to conduct a campus-wide training program. Due to budgetary constraints, this was not possible. However, some monies were available to hire a consultant to provide training for senior level management and to conduct a "train the trainer" program for committee members. Therefore, the Committee decided to conduct training for the rest of the campus in-house.

Following the train the trainer program, we proceeded to develop our own sexual harassment prevention program. This entailed designing and conducting a series of sexual harassment educational seminars to all members of campus. Different seminars were tailored to address the needs of certain populations (e.g. students, faculty/staff).

Strong leadership, organization and direction with this endeavor was essential. In order to accomplish such a monumental effort, the committee divided itself into sub-teams. The sub-teams and their tasks included:

* Logistics:

Reserve meeting rooms, communication (send out letters), ordering refreshments, ordering A.V. equipment, copying hand-outs.

*** Curriculum Development:**

Develop a trainers' manual. The manual was written for committee members who facilitated educational seminars for faculty, staff and students. It contains the curriculum needed to conduct the seminars, the amount of time each component of the seminars should last, and tips for facilitators including advice on how to handle challenging audience members.

*** Facilitators/Role players:**

Committee members volunteered to conduct the educational seminars. In preparation, they received training from the outside consultant, read literature on the issue, and held rehearsals beforehand. A role play commenced most training sessions and committee members as well as members of the Stevens Drama Club served in this capacity.

SEXUAL HARASSMENT PREVENTION TRAINING PROGRAM

AGENDA

(Program Length = 1 1/2 - 2 hrs.)

I. Welcome & Overview (5 mins.)

During this segment we stated the objectives and rationale of the workshop, introduced committee members, discussed the committee's role, and our training.

II. Role Play (10-15 mins.)

A role play illustrating some basic elements of sexual harassment was used at the beginning of each seminar. It was designed to elicit audience participation and to encourage them to begin thinking about what sexual harassment is.

We incorporated humor into the role play to make the workshop a fun as well as educational experience. For example, the role players were given humorous names like "Lecherous Larry" or "Frisky Freddy". Utilizing humor worked well in our seminars. However, we prefaced the role play by telling the audience that we incorporated humor purposefully and that it was not our intention to mislead them into thinking that sexual harassment is funny or should be taken lightly.

III. Research Based Definitions & Legal Definitions (15 mins.)

To illustrate the different types of harassment, we discussed research based definitions and then legal definitions of sexual harassment. Concrete examples were provided wherever possible.

IV. Steven's Policy & Procedures (10 mins.)

Stevens' policy regarding sexual harassment as well as procedures for handling complaints were presented. General tips for preventing and dealing with sexual harassment were also discussed.

V. Case studies (40 mins.- 20 mins. for groups to work on and another 20 mins for group processing)

A major portion of the seminars involved case studies. Audience members were divided into 5 groups of 8 or less. Each group was given a different case study to read and answer questions about.

Each case study was designed to highlight different elements of sexual harassment. For example, case studies focused on the importance of documenting incidences, third party sexual harassment, how to handle sexual harassment, abuse of power, fear of retaliation, impact on victims (physical, psychological, etc.), and risks associated with consensual relationships.

VI. Question & answer period & evaluation (15-20 mins.)

A one-page evaluation helped us identify what components of the seminars participants found useful and what needed to be improved.

EVALUATION & FEEDBACK

Attendance:

Over 50% of the individuals on campus have been trained. This includes senior level management, faculty, staff, teaching assistants and freshmen.

We were able to obtain this participation by having support from the top. For example, letters sent to senior management were signed by the President. Letters sent to faculty and staff were signed by the Dean of the Faculty and the Vice President for Administration.

Evaluation:

Evaluations indicated that 95% of the participants believed that the seminar increased their understanding of sexual harassment. Most importantly, 91% indicated that overall, the program was effective.

V. WHAT WORKED & WHAT DID NOT WORK:

* Audience Size & Composition:

We scheduled 60 individuals per session, anticipating that 30-40 would attend. Working with a larger group is not recommended since sexual harassment is a loaded issue and can spark heated debate in addition to a variety of other group reactions. Smaller groups (i.e. 30-40 people) are easier to manage and tend to encourage more discussion and participation.

Faculty & staff were scheduled for the same seminars to avoid having a room full of men since our female faculty are so few. This worked very well because there were varying viewpoints and opinions.

* Case studies:

The case studies were an effective learning tool. They promoted more serious thought about the issue and stimulated questions and discussion. They were also effective in highlighting the different elements of sexual harassment. Ideally, the groups working on case studies should contain no more than 8 members. If larger groups are utilized, there is less interaction and discussion.

Role Play:

The role play was effective with faculty and staff. It served as a good "ice-breaker" and encouraged audience participation. However, the role play was not effective with teaching assistants. Our TA's are predominantly foreign and we believe a language barrier interfered with their full understanding of the role play.

Legal Definitions:

All groups found this information useful and relevant. Although faculty and staff were more likely than TA's to comment that it was somewhat boring. TA's rated the legal information as the most useful, perhaps because it is more straightforward than the research based definitions.

Research Based Definitions:

The research based definitions were useful in helping participants identify and understand the different types of sexual harassment and illustrated the breadth and complexity of the issue.

Humor:

Humor worked well in the role play and case studies to lighten the atmosphere. Humorous titles and character names were used in the role play and case studies (e.g. "Ken and Marianne: The Doomed Duo").

Co-presenters:

Two co-presenters facilitated each seminar. This was extremely valuable because they provided support for one another. Also, we had male and female co-presenters whenever possible to communicate that this is not only a women's issue. It was also useful to have faculty and staff co-presenting since faculty were more responsive to fellow faculty and considered them more credible than a staff member.

Complimentary facilities:

Small rooms worked better than larger ones. Seating arrangements are also important. General seating is suited for information giving parts of the seminar like the policy and procedures section. However, small group circles help promote group discussion during the case studies.

Supportive Committee Members:

Whenever possible, all committee members attended each training seminar to help facilitators field questions. This was useful because presenting on such a volatile issue can be draining and stressful. Therefore, having someone help you field questions lightens the burden.

The committee held daily meetings over lunch to review evaluations from the prior seminar to decide what needed to be modified. These meetings were not only useful for evaluation purposes but they also served to promote group cohesion among committee members.

Length of Program:

Initially the seminars were scheduled to last 90 minutes. However, we soon discovered that the seminars needed to be lengthened to a 2 hour period to allow sufficient time for questions.

VI. ADVANTAGES & DISADVANTAGES OF CONDUCTING THE PROGRAM IN-HOUSE

Advantages**Cost Effective:**

The cost of conducting the prevention program in-house was under \$2,000. The most expensive component was the outside consultant whose fee was \$100 per hour. This fee is relatively reasonable as compared to other consultants who charge up to \$3,000 per day plus travel and hotel expenses.

Population Specific:

Because we designed the program ourselves, it was specifically tailored to address our population and our campus, taking into consideration all of the unique elements of our institution.

Publicity:

By conducting the educational seminars ourselves, we were able to publicize the committee and the services we offer.

Learning Experience:

Designing and implementing the prevention program was a valuable learning experience for all the committee. We acquired a significant amount of knowledge about sexual harassment and group dynamics. We also had the opportunity to work with a diverse group of people.

Disadvantages**Time consuming**

Designing and implementing this program took a considerable amount of time and effort. All sessions and meetings occurred during business hours, which took committee members away from their primary job responsibilities.

Stressful

Facilitating the educational seminars was stressful. It was not uncommon for us to encounter "challenging" audience members whose persistence of specific points could be disruptive. On these occasions, strong skills in group dynamics and conflict resolution were essential. It was also very difficult to speak about such a volatile issue on a campus which is predominantly male.

Credibility

Committee members took a risk by conducting educational seminars on a politically charged topic in which they were not experts.

Unpopularity

Having the responsibility of hearing and investigating complaints of sexual harassment places employees in a potentially vulnerable position. Employees who are alleged harassers are not likely to look upon committee members so favorably. Ostracism and distrust are often a reality.

VII. WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

Our future plans include refining our informal and formal procedures and continuing training sessions. In the Fall, we plan to offer training at Freshmen Orientation, and to upperclassmen as well as graduate students. We will continue to disseminate information about developing a sexual harassment prevention program to other institutions so that they may use this information to implement a prevention program on their campus. We will also continue to handle complaints of sexual harassment and to publicize the committee so that members of the campus community are aware of the services we provide. It is our hope that as a result of these ongoing efforts, we will continue to increase awareness and understanding of sexual harassment within our community.

