

Sierra College

ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURE

AP 3430

Prohibition of Harassment

Date Adopted: 9/7/2004

Date Revised: 12/8/2023

Date Reviewed: 12/8/2023

References: 42 United States Code Annotated Section 2000e; Education Code Sections 212.5, 44100-66281.5 and 66281.8; Title 5, Sections 59320 et seq.; Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964; Government Code Section 12940 and 12923; Civil Code Section 51.9

The Sierra Joint Community College District is committed to providing an academic and work environment free of unlawful harassment. This procedure defines sexual harassment and other forms of harassment on campus, and sets forth a procedure for the investigation and resolution of complaints of harassment by or against any staff or faculty member or student within the District.

This procedure and the related policy protects students, employees, interns, and volunteers in connection with all the academic, educational, extracurricular, athletic, and other programs of the District, whether those programs take place in the District's facilities, a District bus, or at a class, training program or events sponsored by the District at another location.

Definitions

General Harassment

Harassment based on race or ethnicity, religious creed, color, national origin, ancestry, immigration status, physical disability, mental disability, medical condition, genetic information, marital status, sex, gender, gender identity, gender expression, age, or sexual orientation of any person, or military and veteran status or the perception that a person has one or more of these characteristics is illegal and violates District policy. Harassment shall be found where a reasonable person with the same characteristics as the victim of the harassing conduct would be adversely affected to a degree that interferes with their ability to participate in or to realize the intended benefits of an institutional activity, employment, or resource.

For sexual harassment under Title IX, Complainants must proceed under BP 3433 Prohibition

of Sexual Harassment under Title IX, AP 3433 Prohibition of Sexual Harassment under Title IX, and AP 3434 Responding to Harassment Based on Sex under Title IX. For other forms of sexual harassment or gender-based harassment, Complainants should use this procedure.

Gender-based harassment does not necessarily involve conduct that is sexual. Any hostile or offensive conduct based on gender can constitute prohibited harassment if it meets the definition above. For example, repeated derisive comments about a person's competency to do the job, when based on that person's gender, could constitute gender-based harassment. Harassment comes in many forms, including but not limited to the following conduct that could, depending on the circumstances, meet the definition above, or could contribute to a set of circumstances that meets the definition:

- **Verbal** - Inappropriate or offensive remarks, slurs, jokes, or innuendoes based on a person's race, gender, sexual orientation or other protected status. This may include, but is not limited to, inappropriate comments regarding an individual's body, physical appearance, attire, sexual prowess, marital status or sexual orientation; unwelcome flirting or propositions; demands for sexual favors; verbal abuse, threats or intimidation; or sexist, patronizing or ridiculing statements that convey derogatory attitudes based on gender, race, nationality, sexual orientation or other protected status.
- **Physical** – Inappropriate or offensive touching, assault, or physical interference with free movement. This may include, but is not limited to, kissing, patting, lingering or intimate touches, grabbing, pinching, leering, staring, unnecessarily brushing against or blocking another person, whistling or sexual gestures. It also includes any physical assault or intimidation directed at an individual due to that person's gender, race, national origin, sexual orientation, or other protected status. Physical sexual harassment includes acts of sexual violence, such as rape, sexual assault, sexual battery, and sexual coercion. Sexual violence refers to physical sexual acts perpetrated against a person's will or where a person is incapable of giving consent due to the victim's use of drugs or alcohol. An individual also may be unable to give consent due to an intellectual or other disability.
- **Visual or Written** - The display or circulation of visual or written material that degrades an individual or group based on gender, race, nationality, sexual orientation or other protected status. This may include, but is not limited to, posters, cartoons, drawings, graffiti, reading materials, computer graphics or electronic media transmissions.
- **Environmental** - A hostile academic or work environment exists where it is permeated by sexual innuendo; insults or abusive comments directed at an individual or group based on sex, gender, race, nationality, sexual orientation, or other protected status; or gratuitous comments regarding gender, race, sexual orientation or other protected status that are not relevant to the subject matter of the class or activities on the job. A hostile environment can arise from an unwarranted focus on sexual topics or sexually suggestive statements in the classroom or work environment. It can also be created by an unwarranted focus on, or stereotyping of, particular racial or ethnic groups, sexual orientations, genders or other protected statuses. An environment may also be hostile toward anyone who merely witnesses unlawful harassment in their immediate

surroundings, although the conduct is directed at others. The determination of whether an environment is hostile is based on the totality of the circumstances, including such factors as the frequency of the conduct, the severity of the conduct, whether the conduct is humiliating or physically threatening, and whether the conduct unreasonably interferes with an individual's learning or work.

Sexual Harassment - In addition to the above, sexual harassment consists of unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal, visual, or physical conduct of a sexual nature made by someone from, or in, the work or educational setting when:

- submission to the conduct is explicitly or implicitly made a term or condition of an individual's employment, academic status, progress, internship, or volunteer activity;
- submission to, or rejection of, the conduct by the individual is used as a basis of employment or academic decisions affecting the individual;
- the conduct has the purpose or effect of having a negative impact upon the individual's work or academic performance, or of creating an intimidating, hostile or offensive work or educational environment (as more fully described below); or
- submission to, or rejection of, the conduct by the individual is used as the basis for any decision affecting the individual regarding benefits and services, honors, programs, or activities available at or through the community college.

This definition encompasses two kinds of sexual harassment:

- "Quid pro quo" sexual harassment occurs when a person in a position of authority makes educational or employment benefits conditional upon an individual's willingness to engage in or tolerate unwanted sexual conduct.
- "Hostile environment" sexual harassment occurs when unwelcome conduct based on a person's gender alters the conditions of an individual's learning or work environment, unreasonably interferes with an individual's academic or work performance, or creates an intimidating, hostile, or abusive learning or work environment. The victim must subjectively perceive the environment as hostile, and the harassment must be such that a reasonable person of the same gender would perceive the environment as hostile. A single or isolated incident of sexual harassment may be sufficient to create a hostile environment if it unreasonably interfered with the person's academic or work performance or created an intimidating, hostile, or offensive learning or working environment.

Sexually harassing conduct can occur between people of the same or different genders. The standard for determining whether conduct constitutes sexual harassment is whether a reasonable person of the same gender as the victim would perceive the conduct as harassment based on sex.

Prohibited Relationships by Persons in Authority

Consensual relationships between individuals where the behavior of the parties is of such a nature that it introduces a sexual element into the workplace or educational setting, and where there is a power differential (e.g., between supervisors and employees; between administrators, faculty or staff members and students; etc.), may result in a hostile environment for others. There is an inherent imbalance of power and potential for exploitation in such relationships; and the

relationship may create an appearance of impropriety and lead to charges of discrimination or favoritism by other students or employees. A consensual sexual relationship may also change, with the result that sexual conduct that was once welcome becomes unwelcome and harassing.

It is always the responsibility of the individual in authority to maintain appropriate professional and/or academic boundaries. Individuals in authority are expected to be aware of their professional responsibilities and avoid an apparent or actual conflict of interest, favoritism, or bias. To avoid the potential for a conflict of interest or claim of harassment/discrimination, it is prohibited for any member of the College to enter into or continue a consensual relationship with someone over whom they have, or reasonably expect to have in the future supervisory, decision-making, oversight, evaluative, or advisory responsibilities and shall be considered misconduct. Failure to comply will be considered a violation of this policy.

To avoid the potential for a conflict of interest or claim of harassment/discrimination, any member of the College who anticipates entering into a consensual relationship with someone over whom they have, or reasonably expect to have in the future supervisory, decision-making, oversight, evaluative, or advisory responsibilities shall take immediate effective steps to remove themselves from any professional decisions concerning that individual. The individual in authority shall, with the Title IX Coordinator, Chief Human Resources Officer, or designee, develop ways to eliminate any potential conflict of interest. Individuals in authority are expected to be aware of their professional responsibilities and avoid apparent or actual conflict of interest, favoritism, or bias.

Academic Freedom

To the extent the harassment policies and procedures are in conflict with the District's policy on academic freedom, the District recognizes that, legally, harassment policies and procedures shall prevail. If the faculty member wishes to use materials in the classroom that may be perceived as sexually explicit, the faculty member is urged to consult collegially with other subject matter experts/instructors and relevant academic administrators and, additionally, to create written lesson plans that can be saved for reference and shared with students.

No provision of this Administrative Procedure shall be interpreted to prohibit conduct that is legitimately related to the course content, teaching methods, scholarship, or public commentary of an individual faculty member or the educational, political, artistic, or literary expression of students in classrooms and public forums. Freedom of speech and academic freedom are, however, not limitless and this procedure will not protect speech or expressive conduct that violates federal or California anti-discrimination laws.

See Board Policy 3430.