



President's Room
Nassau Hall
Princeton, New Jersey 08544-0015

To: Members of the Faculty

From: Christopher L. Eisgruber 
Sanjeev R. Kulkarni 

Date: September 24, 2018

Re: Policies Governing Sexual Misconduct by Faculty Members

We write to update you regarding the University's sexual misconduct policies, including matters that are likely to come to the full faculty for a vote this spring.

Last spring, Princeton's Faculty-Student Committee on Sexual Misconduct recommended that the University strengthen its policies that prohibit sexual misconduct and its procedures for investigating and adjudicating complaints against faculty members.¹ The committee's recommendations respond to campus concerns and also to broader issues being discussed throughout the country and around the world.

We are grateful to the committee for its thoughtful work, which provides the faculty with an opportunity to improve the University's policies. The problem of sexual misconduct is serious and the consequences for those affected by it can be severe. Institutions throughout society, including those in higher education, have for too long underestimated the prevalence of sexual harassment and the harm that it does. We have also been too optimistic about the power of good will or relatively light penalties to cure the problem.

All of us at this University must work vigilantly to maintain an equitable, respectful, and safe campus environment for everyone who works and studies here. Princeton's faculty has demonstrated its commitment to that goal by amending and improving its sexual misconduct rules on multiple occasions over the past decade. Members of this faculty rightly regard harassment and other abuses of power as damaging not only to the individuals directly affected by it but also to the integrity, values, and interpersonal trust that define the Princeton community.

Our policies are now, in our view, as strong as what exists at most other universities, and reasonably good overall—but they can and should be even better. We join the Faculty-Student Committee on Sexual Misconduct (FSCSM) in believing that we must go beyond the progress this University has made already. We are for that reason asking the Faculty Advisory Committee

¹ https://sexualmisconduct.princeton.edu/sites/sexualmisconduct/files/faculty-student_advisory_committee_on_sexual_misconduct_2017-2018_recommendations.pdf

on Policy (FACP) to generate a proposal for further improvements and to bring it to the full faculty and to the University trustees.

We will ask the FACP to review in full the FSCSM's report, to give serious and careful consideration to the recommendations contained in it, and to develop appropriate recommendations of its own. We will encourage the committee to have broad and wide-ranging discussions, and to take the time required to ensure that we have policies that are effective and fair to all parties involved.

In addition to charging the FACP with responsibility for recommending reforms, we are announcing a clarification to the penalties that we will apply when a member of the faculty is found to have committed sexual harassment. The *Rules and Procedures of the Faculty* direct us to impose penalties "commensurate with the nature of the offense" (*Rules and Procedures of the Faculty, IV.N.1*). Sexual harassment by definition involves conduct sufficiently pervasive or severe that it unreasonably interferes with a student's educational experience or a colleague's working conditions.² Such "pervasive or severe" misbehavior is a major breach of a faculty member's professional responsibilities. We believe that in order to be "commensurate with the nature of the offense," the presumptive minimum penalty in any case of sexual harassment must be a one-year unpaid suspension from the faculty. Beginning immediately, we will apply that presumption to all harassment cases brought against members of the faculty. All suspensions will be accompanied by mandatory counseling, probation, and other appropriate measures to ensure that violations do not recur and that our learning environment is safe and equitable for students, faculty, and staff. More egregious harassment cases will, of course, warrant more severe punishments, including dismissal.

This University can and should be a leader in creating an environment where all students, staff, and faculty can achieve their full potential. We look forward to working with the FACP, the faculty, the trustees, and the Princeton community to make changes that will improve our rules, procedures, and practices, and that ensure that we create a safe, respectful, and equitable learning environment for everyone on this campus.

² Sexual harassment is "unwelcome verbal or physical behavior which is directed at a person based on sex, gender identity, or gender expression, when these behaviors are sufficiently severe and/or pervasive to have the effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's educational experience, working conditions, or living conditions by creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive environment." *Rights, Rules, Responsibilities, 1.3.3.2*