Sexual Boundaries for Professors
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Colleges have long harbored academics who have imposed their sexual attentions on students or junior colleagues. The faculty members’ approaches are often unwelcome, or may make their targets feel uncomfortable, or are clearly instances of sexual assault. When a complaint is made, administrators are left with the difficult task of sorting out what happened and coming up with a resolution that protects everyone’s rights and ensures campus safety. The seven articles in this collection look at how colleges struggle with these sensitive issues.

Here’s What Sexual Harassment Looks Like in Higher Education
A mix of risk factors has made the problem particularly pervasive in the college workplace.

A Professor, a Graduate Student, and 2 Careers Derailed
A relationship gone bad illustrates some of the toughest problems facing higher education.

Why Colleges Have a Hard Time Handling Professors Who Harass
The case of the astronomer Geoffrey W. Marcy reflects the complex dynamics at play in such situations.

How One College Has Set Out to Fix a Culture of Blatant Sexual Harassment
Students, faculty, and administrators work to change the culture at the Berklee College of Music.

What Happens When Sex Harassment Disrupts Victims’ Academic Careers
People who say they’ve been harassed speak of ripple effects and lasting consequences.

Sexual Paranoia Strikes Academe
How campus rules make students more vulnerable.

Dirty Old Men on the Faculty
Will sexual harassment on campus finally get the condemnation it deserves?

Cover photo illustration by Bob McGrath
Here’s What Sexual Harassment Looks Like in Higher Education

By KATHERINE MANGAN

As the momentum of the #MeToo campaign brings more allegations of sexual harassment to the surface, people are looking around their workplaces and professional networks disturbed, but not necessarily shocked at the stories emerging.

Across many industries, sexual harassment persists because people (usually men) with clout can get away with it, and victims (typically women) either are disregarded or keep quiet, fearing they will be. But higher education has additional risk factors that make the problem particularly pervasive.

Stark power differentials, especially between professors and students. The intensity of intellectual exchange. A sense of entitlement by a star faculty member, with tenure and maybe an endowed chair, who is revered in his field. A potential protégé with what feels like a make-or-break publication, grant, or job on the line. Boozy conferences, secluded labs, remote research sites.

Colleges and universities have long harbored influential academics who’ve seemed confident that they could target students or junior colleagues and never be held to account. They may have gotten away with it because of their research money, political capital, or prestige. Firing a tenured professor often means months of hearings and sometimes lawsuits that an institution would prefer to avoid. Colleagues who suspect there’s something creepy about sexual banter with students might look the other way if the offender could one day serve on a tenure and promotion committee or chair the department.

“Whenever you have a working relationship in which the risks are really high of making a complaint and the rewards are low, that’s a problem,” says Justine E. Tinkler, an associate professor of sociology at the University of Georgia who has studied sexual harassment and how training programs affect behavior. A graduate student targeted by a big-deal professor, or the new hire who is aware of it, may want to speak up, but at what cost?

That calculation may be changing as more people come forward with expectations that the college will take action. In recent years, accusers have taken down Geoffrey W. Marcy, an astronomer at the University of California at Berkeley, and Colin McGinn, a prominent philosopher at the University of Miami. Now, with the fallout from the Weinstein scandal and the galvanizing momentum of the #MeToo hashtag, American gender politics finds itself at an uncomfortable crossroads. And nowhere is that sense of unease more palpable than in the campus workplace.

It remains to be
Students protested in mid-November against sexual assault and harassment at the Berklee College of Music. Berklee’s president acknowledged that 11 faculty members have been fired for sexual misconduct in the past 13 years.

seen how those developments will accelerate the complaints. But over the past several weeks, at least a half-dozen accusations of sexual misconduct by male faculty members have emerged or gotten renewed attention.

AN EYE-OPENING STUDY

Any tendency to shrug off incidents in an academic setting as relatively tame may not hold up to a new study of nearly 300 sexual-harassment accusations on campuses. It finds that most implicate more-serious behaviors, with more than half involving physical contact.

“Few of those allegations involved things like hugging or kissing or anything that could be argued to be sort of accidental or affectionate,” says Nancy Chi Cantalupo, an assistant professor of law at Barry University. She and William C. Kidder, associate vice president and chief of staff at Sonoma State University, wrote an article about the study that is scheduled for publication next spring in the Utah Law Review.

“The majority of the cases we looked at indicated that the touching was sexual in nature and ranged from sexual groping all the way to criminal levels of sexual assault, and even some domestic violence-like behaviors.”

That pattern, she says, runs counter to the narrative that the current push against sexual harassment threatens academic freedom. It’s not what professors are saying as much as what they’re doing.

And they’re doing it a lot. One in 10 female graduate students at major research institutions report being sexually harassed by a faculty member, according to a study by the Association of American Universities.

Some offenders are serial harassers who, if found out, resign and quietly move on to another campus. They may never be stopped because their victims, who sometimes suffer for years from self-doubt and shame, don’t speak out. Some get so discouraged they leave academe.

More women in academe will feel emboldened now to share their past experiences, or to protest a hand on the knee or an unwelcome embrace, Erin E. Buzuvis, a professor of law at Western New England University and moderator of the Title IX Blog, expects.

“The thing that keeps sexual-harassment victims from speaking is the fear of not being believed or of their complaints being trivialized,” she
says. “There is a lot of momentum now for believ-
ing people’s reports,” she says, rather than assum-
ing that someone so prominent or well-regarded
couldn’t possibly have done such a thing.

But even if someone comes forward to report
sexual misconduct, a star professor often escapes
serious consequences, as anecdotes from across
higher education have shown.

That’s what Seo-Young Chu says happened
when, as a 21-year-old graduate student in English
at Stanford University, she accused her former
professor, Jay Fliegelman, of raping her and tell-
ing her that he controlled her future. Ms. Chu is
now an associate professor of English at Queens
College of the City University of New York. Mr.
Fliegelman, an influential scholar of American
literature and cultural studies, was suspended
without pay and banned from the department
for two years following the incident, in 2000, but
the reasons for his punishment were kept under
wraps until recently. He died in 2007.

A researcher wrote in Nature magazine last
year about being sexually harassed by a former
postdoctoral supervisor and complaining to his
university that, despite her objections, he had re-
peatedly made lewd comments and tried to kiss
her. He was eventually found guilty of research
misconduct and inappropriate behavior, including
sexual harassment, but wasn’t fired, she wrote.
The woman, who wrote anonymously and opted
not to name him, said she had been advised to
keep the outcome of the case confidential.

The secrecy that surrounds sexual harassment
contributes to a whisper network that activates
when people want to warn one another whom to
stay away from.

As women move beyond that network and so-
cial-media sites like Twitter and Facebook, they
sometimes seek a more public platform, like Buzz-
feed News, which published leaked details about
the investigation into Mr. Marcy.

LEGAL STANDARD FALLS SHORT

Most anti-harassment policies are ineffective be-
cause they focus mainly on avoiding legal liability,
according to a report issued last year by the Equal
Employment Opportunity Commission.

The legal standard for sexual harassment is be-
behavior so frequent or severe that it creates a hostile
work environment, or results in someone being de-
moted or fired in retaliation. But there’s plenty of
behavior that falls short of that threshold that can
make people uncomfortable or lead to harassment.
Sometimes such examples make their way into
campus anti-harassment training.

Poorly designed training can make men feel
more resentful toward women, says Ms. Tinkler,
the Georgia sociologist. Sessions can also cause
offense by reinforcing gender stereotypes “of men
being more powerful and aggressive, and women
more vulnerable and weak,” Ms. Tinkler says.

It’s sometimes hard to say when a remark or ac-
tion crosses the line into harassment. But even if
the behavior just makes someone uncomfortable,
the offender should be told, victim advocates say.

The message doesn’t have to come from the per-
son on the receiving end of the squeeze or slea-
zy compliment. Bystander-intervention policies

One in 10 female
graduate students
at major research
institutions report
being sexually
harassed by a
faculty member.

that include men in calling out sexual aggressors
or clueless curmudgeons can help avoid an “us vs.
them” mentality, Ms. Tinkler says.

Along with increased awareness of harassment,
a backlash is brewing, warns Laura Kipnis, a pro-
fessor in the department of radio, television and
film at Northwestern University and the author of
Unwanted Advances: Sexual Paranoia Comes to
Campus, Even before the Weinstein reports, Ms.
Kipnis says she had been hearing from male pro-
fessors who were reluctant to advise female grad-
uate students because they feared something they
said or did could be misinterpreted.

At a time when universities are experiencing
what she calls “a heightened climate of sexual
paranoia,” a kiss on the cheek at a holiday party
can become grounds for investigation, she says,
and, once accused, a professor will have a hard
time shaking the reputation as a harasser.

That’s not to say that bad things aren’t happen-
ing and that some people don’t need to be fired,
Ms. Kipnis says.

“I have no doubt sexual harassment is pervasive,
and in cases where there’s groping or it’s quid pro
quo,” she says, “those people should be out.”

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A Professor, a Graduate Student, and 2 Careers Derailed

By ROBIN WILSON

Peter Ludlow, a philosopher at Northwestern U., has put his possessions in storage pending a planned move to Mexico.
The first time the young woman wound up in Peter Ludlow’s bedroom was during a party at his apartment held by Northwestern University’s philosophy department. In the luxury high-rise, with its expansive view of the Chicago skyline, Mr. Ludlow and his colleagues wined and dined prospective graduate students. He was a star professor in the department, and she had just earned her master's degree.

“He brought me into his bedroom, where his printer was, and he was printing off all of this unpublished work that he said nobody else had read, and he said, ‘Send me all your half-cooked ideas,’” recalls the woman, who was shocked that such a prominent philosopher would share so much. She had an interest in epistemology, one of the professor’s areas of expertise.

Mr. Ludlow says there was nothing unusual about his behavior. Showing a prospective graduate student unfinished work, he says, is “textbook.”

The student started the Ph.D. program at Northwestern the next fall, in 2011. Within a month or so, she was spending several evenings a week at his apartment. They drank bottles of red wine on the balcony and debated ideas about the theory of knowledge, scrawling on the floor-to-ceiling windows. They slept in the professor’s bed.

She was 25 and had a serious boyfriend who lived in Boston. Mr. Ludlow was 54 and had a history of dating young women.

The professor and the graduate student agree on those details. Everything else about the nature of their relationship is disputed. She says she made it clear she wanted a mentor, not a romantic partner. She says he raped her one night in November of that year. Mr. Ludlow denies that accusation, saying they regularly had consensual sex and had even discussed marriage.

The student eventually filed a complaint with the university. In 2014, Northwestern found Mr. Ludlow responsible for sexual harassment, not rape. But the fallout was just beginning.

Their story set off a chain reaction of controversies that has placed them and their university at the heart of some of the toughest issues facing higher education. The case — and a separate complaint of sexual assault lodged against Mr. Ludlow by an undergraduate — has become a rallying cry for campus activists who want colleges to do more to stop sexual misconduct. The allegations also represent one more black eye for the discipline of philosophy, which has long been plagued by accusations of harassment and discrimination against women.

What happened between Mr. Ludlow and the graduate student, and how people responded, illustrates the changing campus climate about sex, the complexities of the student-professor relationship, and how difficult it is for colleges to arbitrate when things go wrong. Following the complaints against Mr. Ludlow, Northwestern joined a handful of institutions nationwide and banned all romantic relationships between professors and undergraduates.

In the past few months, the reverberations have grown louder. Another Northwestern professor wrote about what she called “sexual paranoia” on campuses in an essay published in The Chronicle Review that referenced both students’ complaints against Mr. Ludlow, without naming names. The essay prompted the graduate student to file federal complaints against the author and the university’s president, who had written an essay in The Wall Street Journal defending professors’ rights to free speech. His argument, the student said, implied that her complaint against the author was without merit. Those complaints raised new questions about the reach of the federal gender-equity act known as Title IX.

Their relationship put them at the heart of difficult issues facing academe.

The author of the essay, Laura Kipnis, described her experience as the subject of a Title IX investigation in a second essay last month for The Chronicle Review, prompting a media firestorm over academic freedom and what’s safe to say about sex on campus, and creating a further public-relations debacle for Northwestern.

For both Mr. Ludlow and the graduate student, the latest episode has meant further upheaval that opened up their relationship and their lives to more public scrutiny and further jeopardized their careers.

Mr. Ludlow agreed in late February to talk for the first time about his relationship with the graduate student. Until then he had not publicly commented, instead using the legal system to challenge the actions of the two female students and the university. Talking with The Chronicle, he says, “was my last, best hope to get at least some part of the truth out there.”

Mr. Ludlow says he faces dismissal hearings at Northwestern next month. (The university
The graduate student saw herself become an academic villain.

students in the same department? Mr. Ludlow doesn't necessarily think so, and he emphasizes that the university's former rules prohibited dating only when the professor supervised the student.

Students, he says, are as likely as professors to instigate relationships, and he adds that he has always been careful to let female students he dated make the first move. "If you're trying to tell me that a 20-year-old college student has a weaker libido than a 50-year-old man," says Mr. Ludlow, "that's a stereotype, and it's a false one."

Prohibiting dating between people who are decades apart in age seems no different to him than doing so between people of different races or religions. "At what point do we decide this is some sort of moral hang-up preventing us from being in a relationship or spending time with people we should be spending time with?" he asks. "It doesn't seem right to lock people out of your life because society considers the relationship inappropriate."

The graduate student, meanwhile, has watched herself become an academic villain after using Title IX to challenge others at Northwestern who wrote and spoke publicly about her charges.

"I'm a wreck," says the graduate student, who is now married and lives out of the country. In talking publicly for the first time about her relationship with the professor, she asked to remain anonymous because she does not want her name openly associated with the rape accusations.

While the student has been identified by name on various blogs and in tweets, The Chronicle does not typically publish the names of those who lodge rape charges.

"I am a shadow of my former self," she says.

The graduate student says the attention she remembers receiving from Mr. Ludlow during the recruitment party continued after she accepted Northwestern's admissions offer. Mr. Ludlow, she says, asked her to travel to the University of St Andrews, in Scotland, to visit one of the world's leading centers for philosophy. He told her he'd rented a house on the ocean where she could stay. She says he offered to use his research funds to pay for her trip and asked her not to mention that to anyone.
The graduate student says the trip sounded “magical.” But she reluctantly declined after consulting with faculty advisers at her master’s-degree institution and deciding that accepting might not only appear inappropriate but could also alienate her from her fellow graduate students.

Mr. Ludlow says trying to arrange the trip was not a special favor but part of his job. The student had made it clear that she wanted to visit St Andrews, and after accepting Northwestern’s offer, she asked again about the opportunity, he says. “When she asked me to arrange something, I said I’d do it. It’s what you are supposed to do for a student.”

Using his own research funds was a fallback option, he says, if she didn’t find another way to pay for the trip. In making the offer, he says, he didn’t want to make other students jealous, which is why he asked her to keep it quiet.

Over the next couple of months, the graduate student and Mr. Ludlow agree, they grew close. They ate out together almost every night when they were both in town, and then spent the rest of most evenings at his apartment. He says they had pet names for each other: He called her “Spoon” because the first night she spent at his place, she asked if he could “spoon” her while they slept, he says. She called him “1,000 Angels,” in reference to Tina Fey’s character in 30 Rock, who said she was so happy she was “high-fiving a million angels.” (The graduate student says the term was a joke and didn’t mean anything to her.)

According to Mr. Ludlow, the two had sex numerous times at his apartment during their three-month relationship, and he showed The Chronicle text messages in which the graduate student told him that she was “in love” and that they were made for each other. The graduate student says those were conversations she was manipulated into having by a man who told her he was lonely and needed a friend.

Mr. Ludlow also showed The Chronicle a picture of a card they had filled out in early November 2011 after dinner at a Chicago restaurant called iNG. The restaurant used the card to collect contact information. On it the graduate student had written: “I’m sorry my boyfriend’s a douche. Please email us anyway.”

Beneath that, Mr. Ludlow had added: “This is the first time she ever called me her boyfriend so thank you Chef Cantu.”

The graduate student then wrote: “That’s a big step, FYI.”

The graduate student says she was very drunk when she completed the card at the restaurant and never thought of Mr. Ludlow as her boyfriend. But he says he took her sentiment seriously because it seemed in line with her behavior. “She didn’t seem to care about anything but talking to me and hanging out with me,” he says. “The amount of love I felt coming from her was something I hadn’t felt before. I could sit and talk to her forever.”

Still, Mr. Ludlow acknowledges that it was he who was the most invested in the relationship, and that he kept pressing the student to make it exclusive. She told him she couldn’t decide between him and her Boston boyfriend, Mr. Ludlow says.

Renewed debates pitted protection of sex-assault victims against professors’ academic freedom.

“We liked the same kind of music, we both had a nerdy streak in us,” he says. “She was not intimidated by me in any way, and it wasn’t like the connection we had was due to professorial gravitas.”

But the graduate student says Mr. Ludlow used his position to take advantage of her — praising her work, offering to help launch her career, telling her she was a “rock star,” then pushing her to make their relationship romantic. The clash between their intentions was the subject of several heated arguments between them, she says.

“We would be spending time together, hanging out a ton, having these late, late, late nights where we would sit up and talk about philosophy, and they were so engaging and so lovely,” she says. “And then there would be these cracks. He would get sad and distant and upset because he was in love with me.”

The graduate student says she did not consider their relationship romantic, nor did she consider them to be dating.

One time, she says, when they were sitting on the balcony, Mr. Ludlow kissed her and she remembers saying: “Peter, I have a boyfriend. I can’t reciprocate.” In retrospect, she says, “I should have gotten up and left, but I thought, OK, let’s just act like that didn’t happen.” (Mr. Ludlow says the graduate student kissed him first.)

She kept the precarious relationship going, she says, because she benefited from the professional connection. She and Mr. Ludlow were planning to publish their academic paper. But she says she always walked a tightrope between the philosophical work she enjoyed and the physical relationship he was pushing for.
One night in late November 2011, the graduate student says, everything changed. As usual, the two were sleeping in his bed after a night of drinking and talking about philosophy. But that night, while she was passed out from too much alcohol, she says, Mr. Ludlow had sex with her.

She doesn’t remember any of the details other than when she woke up in the morning, it was clear to her what had happened. “I remembered feeling like I had lost,” she says. “I had been fighting this fight for a long time and trying to draw a line in the sand. I just felt crushing sadness.”

Mr. Ludlow disputes that account. What happened, he says, is that he simply could no longer take the student’s vacillating between him and her boyfriend. On the night in question, he says, he went to a hotel and left her at his apartment alone.

Over the next several weeks, he and the graduate student continued to exchange text messages. He shared some of them with The Chronicle.

“…Instead I just felt like I was flipping back and forth. I wish it was really obvious and easy. But it’s not. And I don’t want to hurt anybody. I just don’t know what I want.”

After that, their relationship slowly unraveled, ending for good in January 2012.

Just before that, in late December, the two had a prophetic exchange over Google Chat in which they discussed their fears over how their relationship might be viewed by others. The conversation began because the student believed that Mr. Ludlow might have confided in a prominent philosopher.

“Do you understand how devastating rumors about me having an unprofessional relationship with one of my advisers could be? Did you give [him] a reason to think that our relationship was anything more than professional?”

Mr. Ludlow: “I lied to him and said we don’t have a romantic relationship. I have as much to lose as you do.”

Student: “You already have a career. Mine could be over before it even begins if my credibility is shot at this point. You can’t lose your job.”

Mr. Ludlow: “Watch it happen if you go to the admin.”

Student: “You know I don’t have a dishonest bone in my body. I could never do that to anybody.”

Mr. Ludlow says the exchange validates his assertion that the two had a romantic relationship. The graduate student says she simply decided not to challenge him on his interpretation of their relationship. What she was most concerned with, she says, was what he was telling others.

“I wasn’t trying to go to war with Peter Ludlow.

“It doesn’t seem right,” says Mr. Ludlow, “to lock people out of your life because society considers the relationship inappropriate.”
How One Professor’s Relations With Students Led to Controversy

July 2008:
Peter Ludlow is hired as a full professor by Northwestern’s philosophy department.

February 2012:
A Northwestern undergraduate lodges a complaint with the university against Mr. Ludlow, alleging sexual assault. The university finds the professor responsible for some “unwelcome and inappropriate sexual advances” but not all. Northwestern docks the professor’s pay, withdraws his endowed chair, and requires him to go to sensitivity training, according to Mr. Ludlow.

February 2014:
The undergraduate sues Northwestern, asserting that it botched its investigation into her complaint and inadequately punished Mr. Ludlow. She also accuses Northwestern of retaliating against her by denying her both a fellowship and some of the academic accommodations she requested. Northwestern denies her charges, saying it properly responded to her complaint. A federal judge later upholds his decision to dismiss the lawsuit, and the woman files an appeal with the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Seventh Circuit.

The undergraduate sues Mr. Ludlow under the Illinois Gender Violence Act, saying the alleged assault caused her academic performance to suffer and brought on post-traumatic stress disorder.

March 2014:
News of the lawsuits breaks, and students at Northwestern stage protests outside Mr. Ludlow’s classroom with tape over their mouths and signs that read: “We Will Not Be Silenced.” The professor agrees to stop teaching for the remainder of the spring quarter because of the controversy.

A Northwestern graduate student files a complaint with the university against Mr. Ludlow, alleging that he raped her in 2011. She says she decided to tell her story after reading about the undergraduate’s lawsuit. In the graduate student’s case, Northwestern finds that Mr. Ludlow violated its policy on sexual harassment, but not assault. The findings — coupled with those involving the undergraduate — prompt the university to schedule hearings to decide whether to fire Mr. Ludlow.

June 2014:
Mr. Ludlow files a lawsuit accusing the university of defaming him and of discriminating against him by finding him responsible for sexual harassment. The suit also accuses the graduate student of defamation. A federal judge later dismisses the lawsuit, and Mr. Ludlow’s lawyer reorganizes it and refiles it.

October 2014:
Mr. Ludlow files a defamation lawsuit against the undergraduate. The professor says she made false statements to the university and to the news media after, he says, he rejected her advances.

February 2015:
An essay by Laura Kipnis, a cultural critic and a professor in Northwestern’s department of radio, television, and film, is published in The Chronicle Review. In it, she writes about what she calls “sexual paranoia” on campuses and criticizes university efforts to limit or forbid student-professor relationships. The essay refers to both students’ complaints against Mr. Ludlow, though it doesn’t use his name.

March 2015:
The graduate student files a complaint against Ms. Kipnis, alleging that she violated the federal gender-equity law known as Title IX. Ms. Kipnis did so, says the graduate student, by retaliating against her by speaking and writing about her complaint against Mr. Ludlow. The graduate student then files a Title IX complaint against the university’s president, saying that in an essay he wrote for The Wall Street Journal, he implied that the graduate student’s complaint against Ms. Kipnis had no merit.

May 2015:
Ms. Kipnis details her experience as the subject of a Title IX investigation in a second essay for The Chronicle Review, prompting a media firestorm over academic freedom and about what’s safe to say about sex on campus. Northwestern decides that Ms. Kipnis is not responsible for retaliation, and the graduate student then drops the other complaint. Still, Northwestern professors say the way the administrators handled the investigation had a chilling effect. The university’s president says the institution had no choice but to investigate. The graduate student files an internal complaint against the head of the Faculty Senate, saying he broke university rules concerning confidentiality when he spoke during a senate meeting about her complaint against Ms. Kipnis. The graduate student drops the complaint before the university can make a decision on it.
ferred to drive them both to the show, and they met at his campus office. Mr. Ludlow says he wanted the philosophy department’s chairman to see that he was doing his job. Northwestern encourages professors to create opportunities for “experiential learning” for students outside of class.

That night, Mr. Ludlow and the female student, who was 19, not only stopped at several art shows, but at two restaurants and a jazz club, where the woman says he ordered alcohol and insisted she drink. She says he ignored several of her requests that they return to Northwestern. By the time they ended up back at his apartment, after midnight, she says, she was drunk. She detailed her allegations in a lawsuit she later filed against the university, saying that over the course of the evening Mr. Ludlow had kissed her, put his hands on her body, and told her he wanted to have sex.

According to Mr. Ludlow, the young woman ordered her own drinks and didn’t consume enough to get drunk. He says she told him she wanted to date him, and at the jazz club she leaned in and kissed him. It was her idea to stay at his apartment, he says. And while she ended up sleeping in his bed that night, they slept with their clothes on and — both agree — never had sex. He drove her back to her dorm in the snow the next morning.

Within days the undergraduate had complained to the university, saying Mr. Ludlow had sexually assaulted her with fondling and kissing. “The big deal is that this was unwanted,” she said in a brief interview with The Chronicle this month. “This was freshman year, with someone I respected and trusted.”

The university found Mr. Ludlow responsible for some but not all of the “unwelcome and inappropriate sexual advances” described. Northwestern docked his pay, withdrew his endowed chair, and required him to go to sensitivity training. Because such proceedings are confidential, few people even knew about the complaint or that Mr. Ludlow had been punished.

Within a year of the incident with the undergraduate, Mr. Ludlow was making plans to move on. In 2013 he accepted a job offer at Rutgers University — which has a highly regarded philosophy department — where he also would direct the university’s Center for Cognitive Science.

But before he could make the move, the undergraduate at Northwestern had thrown the dispute between her and Mr. Ludlow into the open. In February 2014 she sued the university, claiming that it had botched its investigation of her complaint and inadequately punished Mr. Ludlow. The trauma of their sexual interaction, she says, had caused her to try to commit suicide. She charged Northwestern with retaliating against her by denying her both a fellowship and some of the academic accommodations she requested after the night with Mr. Ludlow. In its response to the lawsuit, Northwestern denied all of her charges, saying it had properly responded to her complaint.

The undergraduate sued Mr. Ludlow, too, under the Illinois Gender Violence Act. The professor responded with a defamation suit against her. When news of the lawsuits broke, students at Northwestern staged protests, gathering outside Mr. Ludlow’s classroom with tape over their mouths and signs that read, “We Will Not Be Silenced.” With controversy swirling around him, he agreed to stop teaching for the remainder of the spring quarter last year.

After students at Rutgers learned about the complaints at Northwestern and their university’s plan to hire Mr. Ludlow, they, too, protested, and Rutgers abandoned its interest in Mr. Ludlow, he says. In a statement, Rutgers said: “When Rutgers learned of allegations against Professor Ludlow at Northwestern, the university requested relevant information from Professor Ludlow and his attorney. This information was not provided. As a result, Professor Ludlow did not come to Rutgers University.”

After reading the details of the undergraduate’s lawsuit, the graduate student decided to finally tell someone at Northwestern what had happened between her and Mr. Ludlow. She chose as her confidante Jennifer Lackey, a philosophy professor who serves as her dissertation adviser. As a result of that conversation, Ms. Lackey was required by the university to report the allegations to administrators. After consulting with Ms. Lackey, the graduate student lodged a formal complaint of sexual assault against Mr. Ludlow in March 2014. Ms. Lackey — who has been sued by Mr. Ludlow in connection with the graduate student’s complaint — declined to comment for this article.

The professor says he was stunned, but he expected the university to clear him.

Northwestern determined that he hadn’t violated its policy prohibiting professors from dating students they supervise. The graduate student had not taken any classes with him, nor had the annual review of graduate students by the department occurred, so Mr. Ludlow hadn’t offered any formal opinions of her work.

Northwestern did find that Mr. Ludlow had violated its policy on sexual harassment. By virtue of his position as a professor, it said, he had taken advantage of the unequal relationship between him and the student and had courted her by offering her expensive dinners and other social benefits she would otherwise not have had. In doing so, the university found, Mr. Ludlow had used his position as a faculty member to exert pressure on the student to engage in an intimate relationship that had negatively affected her academic performance.

That’s when the professor filed a lawsuit against the graduate student, Ms. Lackey, several universi-
ty officials, and Northwestern. The lawsuit included charges of defamation and gender discrimination. A federal judge dismissed Mr. Ludlow's case in February, but he has since refiled it.

Northwestern issued a statement to The Chronicle in which it said it cannot comment on individual cases. The university, though, went on to say that it is committed to creating and maintaining a safe and harassment-free environment. Northwestern, the statement also said, is “one of very few universities” with a policy that expressly bans faculty-undergraduate relationships and “is a leader in this area.”

For both Mr. Ludlow and the graduate student, the turmoil that their relationship had created seemed to be winding to a close by the beginning of this year. Still outstanding were the final verdicts in the professor's lawsuits and a decision on whether he would keep his $190,000-a-year job. He sold his apartment and his car to pay his legal bills and was living in Chicago in the basement of a friend's mother.

But then Ms. Kipnis's essays, published in February and in May, returned their story to public view and kicked up an even greater controversy. Drawn into the mix were new debates pitting a university's obligation to protect victims of sex assault against its responsibility to maintain a professor's academic freedom. The graduate student felt that Ms. Kipnis's words belittled her and the serious charges she had brought against Mr. Ludlow, arguing that the essay amounted to retaliation. Widespread condemnation of the student has ensued; several commenters have said no academic department should ever hire her now.

Beyond a handful of words, Ms. Kipnis says her original essay was not about the graduate student. The student was simply upset, says Ms. Kipnis, that the article wasn't written from her point of view. Although Ms. Kipnis believes that the Title IX charges brought against her were outrageous, she says some of the harsh criticism the student received online was “brutal” and made Ms. Kipnis herself uncomfortable. On her Facebook page, where she posted her Chronicle essays, Ms. Kipnis said she didn’t agree with commenters who called the student a “bully” for using Title IX.

In the end, Northwestern decided that Ms. Kipnis was not responsible for retaliation, but not before it had hired a team of outside lawyers to help make the determination. And not before people on the campus and off criticized the university for investigating the graduate student's complaints against Ms. Kipnis so thoroughly. Morton O. Schapiro, Northwestern's president, said it had had no choice. But faculty members said the way administrators handled the situation had a chilling effect and damaged the university's reputation.

After the university cleared Ms. Kipnis, the graduate student dropped the complaint she'd filed against Northwestern's president.

In the wake of the controversy, Mr. Schapiro and Daniel Linzer, the provost, issued a joint statement this month that sought to clarify the university's position. "The offensiveness of a particular view, standing alone, is not a sufficient basis to establish a Title IX claim," the statement read. But, the administrators continued, "we ask that members of the Northwestern community be mindful of the privacy of others and help maintain a campus climate that fosters mutual respect and healthy discourse, while protecting the interests of those who take advantage of the rights afforded to them under the law."

The graduate student says she wishes now she'd never made the original sex-assault complaint against Mr. Ludlow. Northwestern, she says, didn't ensure that professors would keep her charges out of open conversations on the campus and out of the news media, and didn't protect her from retaliation, as she'd expected.

Her name has been spread widely online. “Why did I trust the system with this thing that is the most delicate, most humiliating, most agonizing thing that’s ever happened to me?” she asks. “Why did I hand this over to a system that is so toothless, so full of empty promises, only to be made a laughingstock?”

The graduate student has barely written a word on philosophy in the 15 months since she filed her complaint against Mr. Ludlow. She fears that she’ll never finish her Ph.D. “I need this all to be over,” she says. “I need to find the fastest, safest way to the other side.”

Meanwhile, Mr. Ludlow is planning to move to Mexico — where the living is cheaper and where, he says, he can still study and write. “Things are not that bad,” he says. “Everyone you meet is someone you can share knowledge with and gain information from.”

The events of the past few years, he says, won’t ruin him. Neither will Northwestern. “There is a certain level of freedom they can’t take away,” Mr. Ludlow says. “They can’t stop me from doing philosophy.”

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By resigning last week from the University of California at Berkeley, Geoffrey W. Marcy — the acclaimed astronomy professor found to have repeatedly violated Berkeley’s sexual-harassment policy over the course of a decade — may have helped the institution solve a nagging disciplinary problem. But Mr. Marcy’s decision could not allay the backlash over Berkeley’s treatment of his case. Many professors...
and observers have decried the university’s failure to quickly dismiss the professor; some have called for the university, and other institutions, to revamp the process for dealing with similar cases of faculty misconduct.

The critics ask a simple question: Why didn’t the university do more to punish a professor it had identified as a serial offender?

In a statement after Mr. Marcy’s resignation, two Berkeley officials said they couldn’t do much else. Any further disciplinary action, they said, would have required faculty-led hearings with high standards of evidence and a three-year statute of limitations. (The complaints against Mr. Marcy concerned alleged incidents from 2001 to 2010.) The officials described such a process as “lengthy and uncertain.”

Even a professor who is the subject of regular misconduct complaints often cannot be easily removed from a campus. Tenure protects many professors from quick dismissal. Their faculty peers, who are often charged with assessing whether an accused colleague bears responsibility, may view the cases as attacks on tenure. College leaders, who often don’t have the power to terminate a professor without consulting the faculty, may fear damage to their institution’s reputation. Students who experience harassment may not file complaints if they feel they have little chance of being taken seriously.

Mr. Marcy’s case echoed those themes. Students and faculty members inside and outside of Berkeley had known about the professor’s behavior for years but had discussed it mostly in private. University officials eventually conducted an investigation, but it was not made public until a Buzzfeed News report this month. And even though the university found Mr. Marcy responsible for harassment and forced him to give up any future due-process rights, the astronomer was allowed to remain on the campus.

After Mr. Marcy’s resignation, Janet A. Napoli- tano, president of the University of California system, announced plans to create a committee of administrators, faculty members, and students to review the system’s procedures for handling sexual-misconduct complaints against tenured professors. Ms. Napolitano wrote in an October 15 letter to the system’s chancellors and regents that Mr. Marcy’s ability to remain on the campus had “highlighted the urgent need to review university policies that may have inadvertently made the investigation and resolution of this case more difficult.”

‘AN UGLY PROCESS’

Faculty disciplinary procedures are murky at many institutions. When a sexual-harassment complaint is brought against a tenured professor, a faculty committee might be involved both in the review of the complaint and in any dismissal proceedings, depending on college policy. Terminating a tenured faculty member could require hearings and appeals that might take a full semester or longer and that are unpleasant for the complainant, who is typically questioned and cross-examined by the committee.

Some colleges channel all sexual-misconduct complaints involving employees through human-resources offices, a process that does not uphold the standards of the American Association of University Professors, said Anita Levy, associate secretary for its Department of Academic Freedom, Tenure, and Governance. To honor academic freedom, such a review should be conducted “by a committee consisting exclusively of elected faculty peers,” she said in an email.

But faculty-run proceedings are “an ugly process at times,” said Eric Isicoff, an outside lawyer for the University of Miami. He is defending the university against a Title IX lawsuit brought last week by a former graduate student, Monica Morrison, who was upset with Miami’s handling of her sexual-harassment allegations against Colin McGinn, a former prominent philosophy professor there. As a student filing a complaint, Mr. Isicoff said, “you’re walking in with the odds largely stacked against you.”

Unlawful conduct, such as a sexual assault, is a different scenario, he said. However, “when there
are fringe or borderline allegations, especially ones that can be interpreted or construed in more than one way," he said, "the faculty is going to give the tenured professor the benefit of the doubt."

If a faculty committee recommends a punishment for a professor, the college president tends to have the final say on the matter. But pushing professors out without their peers’ approval might provoke an uproar among faculty members, and perhaps an ugly public backlash. That’s why a “golden parachute” is a common administrative response to such situations, said Heidi L. Lockwood, an associate professor of philosophy at Southern Connecticut State University who has spoken out frequently against harassment by professors. In those cases, she said in an email, administrators might offer problem professors a voluntary severance agreement, an opportunity to resign, or assistance in finding another job, either at the institution or elsewhere.

As part of such a secret process, student complainants might be offered minor gestures of appeasement and might be required to sign nondisclosure agreements, said Cynthia Lewis, a professor of English at Davidson College who is working on a book about professors’ harassment of students. “The victims in these cases typically get nothing,” Ms. Lockwood added.

Miami officials successfully pushed Mr. McGinn to resign. Ann Olivarirus, a senior partner at McAllister Olivarirus, a law firm that specializes in workplace-discrimination claims, said she assumed that Mr. McGinn felt he would lose if he went before the institution’s Faculty Senate on harassment charges, so he resigned. Ms. Olivarirus — a plaintiff in Alexander v. Yale, a 1980 case that used Title IX to establish that sexual harassment of female students could be considered discriminatory — is representing Ms. Morrison in her suit.

Still, Mr. Iscsoff said, the university’s administrators had acted appropriately to bring a quick conclusion to the case. Mr. McGinn’s resignation “didn’t happen in two or three years, or never,” he said. “And there weren’t embarrassing proceedings.”

Alternatively, officials might give the professor a slap on the wrist, as many observers — including Ms. Olivarirus — feel Berkeley did initially with Mr. Marcy. “It’s the oldest game in the book to say, Don’t do it again,” she said. “Nobody wants to face the real truth of it.”

But we have to discover ways to be more stringent with faculty,” said Billie Wright Dziech, a longtime professor of English at the University of Cincinnati who wrote a groundbreaking 1984 book, The Lecherous Professor: Sexual Harassment on Campus.

Star professors, like Mr. Marcy and Mr. McGinn, “are role models,” she said. “When they get away with it, it sends the message that this behavior is OK.”

REMEMBERING RIGHTS

It is important, too, for tenured faculty members’ rights to be protected in sexual-harassment cases, said Heather Metcalf, research director of the Association for the Advancement of Women in Science.

“Even if the situation at hand is a really terrible one,” like Mr. Marcy’s, Ms. Metcalf said, it’s essential to remember that there will also be occasions “where someone is accused of something they didn’t do.”

The AAUP’s Ms. Levy said a subcommittee of the association is drafting a report about the “uses and abuses of Title IX” in response to “a number of troubling academic-freedom cases stemming from the apparent misapplication of institutional sexual-harassment policies.”

Despite Ms. Napolitano’s planned task force, Benjamin E. Hermalin, chair of Berkeley’s Academic Senate, said he wasn’t sure whether changes in the university’s procedures were necessary in the aftermath of the Marcy case. If the problem was how policies had been interpreted or carried out, he said in an email, then making adjustments was unlikely to deter future harassment.

That’s not how Southern Connecticut’s Ms. Lockwood sees it. She said colleges can take clear steps to improve how they handle claims of misbehavior by professors. She recommended, among other changes, that colleges conduct harassment-specific background checks before hiring professors.

Alexandra Tracy-Ramirez, an Arizona lawyer who worked as a Title IX investigator at two colleges, said it might make sense for some campuses to create a separate committee that deals with sexual-harassment complaints against faculty members. That body could involve professors, she said, but it could also include people who are specially trained to deal with sexual misconduct and an expert investigator from outside the institution.

Ms. Dziech criticized the statute of limitations that applied to the allegations against Mr. Marcy, saying there shouldn’t be any such limit. “All of the reliable research says that it takes years and years, often, for people to come forward and talk because of the stigma attached to it,” she said.

Given the factors at play, it’s perhaps understandable that institutional leaders want to tread cautiously. But in highly charged sexual-misconduct cases, some advocates say, risk aversion doesn’t work. College leaders, Ms. Dziech said, “have to stop worrying about who’s going to sue us or countersue us.”
How One College Has Set Out to Fix “a Culture of Blatant Sexual Harassment”

By NELL GLUCKMAN

As the #MeToo movement has gathered steam, women have gone public with accusations of sexual misconduct by professors at dozens of colleges. But one institution in particular has faced reproach as a hotbed of abusive behavior. The Berklee College of Music was described in a recent Boston Globe article as having a “a culture of blatant sexual harassment.”

The Globe’s characterization did not surprise students or faculty members at the college, many of whom said they knew or had heard about people being harassed. But it spurred them to action. Worried that the issue would not be taken seriously by the college, students quickly organized a walkout and march this month, followed by a forum that drew more than a thousand participants.

“People just got to a point where we were like, OK, we can’t ignore this any longer,” said Michela McDonagh, a professional music major who organized the protest. “People were so ready to move forward.”

At the event, Roger H. Brown, the college’s president, laid out numbers that revealed the extent of the problem: Eleven professors, he said, had been fired for sexual misconduct over the past 13 years.

The walkout — and the forum that followed — launched the college into public soul-searching. Students, faculty, and administrators now say they are determined to fix a culture that has allowed sexual misconduct to persist. At a moment of dramatic change in how the issue is addressed across many fields, Berklee is trying to emerge as a model for other higher-education institutions and the music industry that the college helps populate.

Berklee’s students aren’t the only ones pushing for change. A small group of professors that formed after the publication of the Globe article has issued a list of demands. Among them: diversity among the faculty and student body.

“It’s our belief that if women and femmes are more adequately represented, that this is going to be less likely to take place,” said Carlee Travis, an instructor of liberal arts. Women make up 36 percent of Berklee’s student body and 37 percent of its faculty. A group of faculty members is calling for gender parity among both populations by 2025. They’re also demanding that at least 30 percent of the faculty be people of color by that time.

“That was met with a lot of resistance from my male colleagues,” Ms. Travis said. Some faculty members responded to the demands with emails arguing that “a gender quota would negatively impact what male colleagues believe to be a meritoc-
racy,” she said. But Mr. Brown, the president, said that diversifying the student body and faculty is one of several big changes the institution is trying to make. He said the faculty members’ demands are “probably doable,” though he did not want to commit to specific numbers without first making a plan.

REPORTING AND SUPPORT
Since the November rally, Mr. Brown said, he has met with hundreds of students. Every one of them has told him that either they or someone close to them has a story about being subjected to sexual misconduct.

“The insight I came to is that I think there’s a tendency for us to look at these cases as isolated incidents of a bad person doing bad things, particularly when it’s sexual in nature,” he said. “After hearing the #MeToo stories and reading about this, I’m not sure these are isolated incidents, and I think they have less to do with sex and more to do with power and the abuse of power.”

With that in mind, he said, the college plans to bolster the structures that provide support to students who say they have been sexually harassed or assaulted. Mr. Brown said the university will hire more counselors, and Berklee officials have already placed posters around campus that tell students how to report an incident.

The president plans to give faculty members more instruction about boundaries and to make sure everyone knows how to report an incident. Like all colleges that receive federal funds, Berklee already reports on the number of crimes committed on campus under the Clery Act, but he also wants to improve their method for reporting incidents of sexual assault so that students and the public have “some way of comparing us to the past and to other institutions so we’re as transparent as we can be without naming individuals.”

The president is creating a working group of students, faculty, and staff to evaluate broader changes to prevent sexual assault.

‘PASS THE HARASSER’?
The working group may examine a policy that the college will not change in the short term: the common practice of keeping private the names of people investigated or fired for sexual misconduct. That policy, critics say, effectively gives faculty members who have been fired for sexual harassment a better chance of finding work elsewhere. Colleges have debated this practice for decades. It has been referred to as “pass the harasser,” because bad actors were allowed to jump from job to job.

‘PASS THE HARASSER’?

Berklee has been on both ends of that dynamic, according to The Boston Globe. In one case, an anonymous woman told the newspaper she woke up naked to find her mentor, Jeff Galindo, a jazz musician and instructor, groping her. She reported the case and Mr. Galindo was fired. She later found out that he went on to teach at three other institutions, though she said she had been assured by Berklee that he wouldn’t be able to. Berklee told the Globe that it had provided one of the institutions with Mr. Galindo’s termination letter, “which included an explicit statement that explained the reasons for his departure from the college.” Mr. Brown said that “if another institution calls for a reference on someone, we will tell them that they were terminated for sexual misconduct.”

In another case, Berklee recently hired a professor, Steve Kirby, who had retired from the University of Manitoba. The Winnipeg Free Press reported that, as he stepped down, the university was meeting with students reporting concerns about the professor that were “sexual in nature.” At the November rally, according to the Globe, Mr. Brown said that Berklee did not know about the students’ allegations until hearing from reporters in Manitoba. After an investigation, Mr. Kirby was fired from Berklee. (Another Steve Kirby who works at Berklee has not been accused of sexual misconduct.)

If no one feels good about those stories, no one is entirely sure what to do about them. Sky Stahlmann, a first-year student and professional-music major, acknowledged that balancing an accused person’s right to privacy with students’ need for more transparency is tricky.

“A lot of people want to see sexual offenders strung up,” she said. While she sees the benefits of that approach, she said she plans to focus on making sure victims have support and educating people on campus about sexual harassment. Ms. Stahlmann is president of a newly formed group, Berklee and BoCo Against Sexual Assault, that will work independently of the administration to teach people about the issue and give students a voice as the college mulls changes.

Many victims of sexual misconduct have taken it upon themselves to name abusers. Since the Globe article and the rally, said Jaclyn Chylinski, a senior musical-theater major, more students have been speaking out about their experiences on campus. “I do not think this will be the last of the allegations,” she said.

More revelations would bring more soul-searching. But Ms. Chylinski and other student activists say they have been encouraged by their administration’s willingness to listen. That alone won’t change the culture, but they say it’s a start.
What Happens When Harassment Disrupts Careers

By NELL GLUCKMAN

Kristen Gorman

COURTNEY PERRY FOR THE CHRONICLE
Seo-Young Chu used to be known as Jen-nie. She was a young Ph.D. student studying early American literature and culture at Stanford University, with Jay Fliegelman, an influential scholar and teacher both on the campus and in the field.

While Ms. Chu was his student at Stanford in 2000, Mr. Fliegelman raped and abused her, she says. The university investigated, suspending him for two years after he was found responsible for sexual harassment. Ms. Chu moved across the country, enrolled in the English Ph.D. program at Harvard University, changed the focus of her studies, and decided to go by her Korean name.

“I wanted to be a new person,” she says. “That’s how much in denial I was.”

After finishing her Ph.D., she landed a tenure-track position at Queens College of the City University of New York, where she is now an associate professor in the English department. But the experience changed her and the course of her career. At Harvard, she left behind research on children’s literature and focused on science fiction. In job interviews and on campus visits, she was occasionally asked if she was connected to what happened with Mr. Fliegelman. The questions made her anxious, but she answered them and assumed she’d lost that particular job opportunity. She was applying during the recession, when the job market was particularly bad, but she wonders if her experience had anything to do with why her search lasted three years.

“Those kind of moments have pierced my life again and again over the years,” Ms. Chu says.

Mr. Fliegelman died in 2007. But when Ms. Chu is teaching now, she’s still haunted by the memory of a professor who hurt her while telling her he controlled her career.

“I’m constantly wondering, Am I abusing my power? Am I saying something that will make a student uncomfortable?” Ms. Chu says. “I don’t know whether it’s good or bad being that kind of teacher. I think I’m overly distant at times, because I don’t want any student to feel like I’m too close.”

Stories like Ms. Chu’s have surfaced recently as part of the #MeToo movement, in which people in seemingly every industry are sharing their experiences of sexual abuse by people in power. Dozens of professors, many of whom are revered in their fields, have been called out for misconduct. Those who say they were the victims of such behavior are demanding that colleges end a longstanding problem. They’re motivated by anger that some abusers have gone unpunished — and fear that those people will hurt others.

Academics and others who have spoken out about experiencing sexual harassment or assault also speak of long-term repercussions to their careers. Students and former students describe carving paths that would allow them to avoid certain professors. Some, like Ms. Chu, say they changed the focus of their research, while others left higher education altogether. These losses can be devastating for the individuals involved. When their potential contributions as researchers, teachers, or leaders are squashed, what else is lost?

“Each individual makes choices that make sense in the moment to keep themselves safe, and that leads to big cumulative effects,” said Kristen S. Gorman, a graduate of the University of Rochester’s department of brain and cognitive sciences. They might not apply to their first-choice program because of what they heard about a professor or decide not to write a chapter of their dissertation in order to avoid working with him. Some skip out on conferences or networking events or drop out of academe altogether, disillusioned by what they’ve seen. Their departures dampen the impact of efforts to put people from underrepresented populations in the pipeline.

Ms. Gorman speaks from experience. She said she made decisions about where to study and what research to pursue in order to avoid certain professors. She contributed to a complaint with the Equal Opportunity Employment Commission that was filed in August against Rochester and T. Florian Jaeger, a professor who was accused of harassing female graduate students. The complaint alleged violations of state and federal civil-rights laws, such as Title IX.

She worked with Mr. Jaeger early in her time at the university, but she said that after he showed up uninvited to grad-student social gatherings, made a pass at her, and made belittling comments, she decided to avoid him. Ms. Gorman didn’t pursue the research that would have involved collaborating with him, and she told her adviser that she didn’t
want Mr. Jaeger on her dissertation committee. When she had questions that involved complex statistical analysis and computational modeling, Mr. Jaeger's areas of expertise, Ms. Gorman instead asked his graduate students for help. She never reported Mr. Jaeger, but after she had graduated, when former colleagues asked if they could name her as someone a Title IX investigator could contact, she agreed.

“I was proud of myself,” Ms. Gorman said. She was proud both because she had managed to avoid him and because of the research she was able to accomplish. But she said that she missed out on computational training by avoiding Mr. Jaeger and that the scientific contributions she was able to make were different as a result. And she wonders whether the decision she and others have made to quietly accommodate an uncomfortable situation is having a broader impact on who persists through her field.

In an email on Thursday, Mr. Jaeger’s lawyer, Steven V. Modica, said his client was surprised by Ms. Gorman’s account. Mr. Jaeger does not recall making belittling comments or a pass at her, but does remember inviting her to give a guest lecture in his class, which he said she did. “My client holds Dr. Gorman in high regard as a researcher and teacher,” Mr. Modica said. He noted that an undergraduate student who had been a research assistant of Mr. Jaeger’s wrote a letter in Rochester’s student newspaper praising him. She recalled him as a good teacher who is “caring but stern, honest, and fair.”

Ms. Gorman’s experience at the University of Rochester was not the first time she thinks sexual harassment blunted her educational opportunities. She decided not to apply to two different graduate schools, she said, because she had heard that her potential adviser at one had “trouble dealing with female students,” and that another had sexual relationships within the department. The “whisper network,” a system of quietly shared information on relationships within the department. The “whisper network,” a system of quietly shared information on whom to avoid in various departments had seemed at the time like an important tool for survival but now looks to have enabled bad behavior.

Hundreds of faculty members signed an open letter saying they “cannot in good conscience encourage our students to pursue educational or employment opportunities at the University of Rochester.”

As a graduate student, Ms. Gorman said, she attended a workshop that was meant to keep women in the STEM fields. There she was instructed on how to negotiate, prepare for an interview, and apply for funding. She also attended lectures aimed at women, but she said that broader attempts to improve gender diversity fell flat, especially when others wouldn’t acknowledge the negative consequences of sexual misconduct.

Ms. Gorman is now an education program specialist at the University of Minnesota, where she helps faculty members in the STEM fields with their teaching practices. She said her decision not to pursue a career as a brain researcher was complicated and not tied to one specific person or incident. But she wonders whether she would have had a more positive impression of academic life had she felt better about the culture within her department.

Research has shown that while it’s not uncommon for graduate students to become less interested in careers as scientists as their training progresses, the issue is more acute for women and underrepresented minority students.

Kimberly A. Griffin, an associate professor of education at the University of Maryland at College Park, was a co-author of one such study about biomedical-science Ph.D. students. She said that female participants in the study who experienced harassment had one of two responses: They ignored it or they left the academy.

“Experiences with sexual harassment were a larger part of an unwelcoming climate that marginalized women and made them feel unwelcome,” she wrote in an email. “In some cases, this did translate to less interest in faculty careers or academic research.”

Kim M. Cobb, a professor of earth and atmospheric sciences at the Georgia Institute of Technology, said that in many academic departments, male faculty members’ relationships with their graduate advisees or students are open secrets. That never works out for the student, who often must leave the field because their relationship with their main advocate is compromised.

“If you have a conflict of interest with someone, you can’t pretend to serve that student’s professional goals anymore,” she said. A romantic relationship, she says, presents a conflict of “gargantuan proportions.”

The other students and faculty members within a department or lab also feel the effects of sexual harassment, Ms. Cobb said. They may be forced to pick sides or stay quiet about something they know violates university policy. That dynamic, Ms. Cobb added, doesn’t help keep women in higher education.

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You have to feel a little sorry these days for professors married to their former students. They used to be respectable citizens — leaders in their fields, department chairs, maybe even a dean or two — and now they’re abusers of power avant la lettre. I suspect you can barely throw a stone on most campuses around the country without hitting a few of these neo-miscreants. Who knows what coercions they deployed back in the day to corral those students into submission; at least that’s the fear evinced by today’s new campus dating policies. And think how their kids must feel! A friend of mine is the offspring of such a coupling — does she look at her father a little differently now, I wonder.

It’s been barely a year since the Great Prohibition took effect in my own workplace. Before that, students and professors could date whomever we wanted; the next day we were off-limits to one another — verboten, traife, dangerous (and perhaps, therefore, all the more alluring).

Of course, the residues of the wild old days are everywhere. On my campus, several such “mixed” couples leap to mind, including female professors wed to former students. Not to mention the legions who’ve dated a graduate student or two in their day — plenty of female professors in that category, too — in fact, I’m one of them. Don’t ask for details. It’s one of those things it now behooves one to be reticent about, lest you be branded a predator.

Sexual Paranoia Strikes Academe

By LAURA KIPNIS
Forgive my slightly mocking tone. I suppose I'm out of step with the new realities because I came of age in a different time, and under a different version of feminism, minus the layers of prohibition and sexual terror surrounding the unequal-power dilemmas of today.

When I was in college, hooking up with professors was more or less part of the curriculum. Admittedly, I went to an art school, and mine was the lucky generation that came of age in that too-brief interregnum after the sexual revolution and before AIDS turned sex into a crime scene replete with perpetrators and victims — back when sex, even when not so great or when people got their feelings hurt, fell under the category of life experience. It's not that I didn't make my share of mistakes, or act stupidly and inchoately, but it was embarrassing, not traumatizing.

As Jane Gallop recalls in Feminist Accused of Sexual Harassment (1997), her own generation — she de coeur, sleeping with professors made her feel cocky, not taken advantage of. She admits to seducing more than one of them as a grad student — she wanted to see them naked, she says, as like other men. Lots of smart, ambitious women were doing the same thing, according to her, because it was a way to experience your own power.

But somehow power seemed a lot less powerful back then. The gulf between students and faculty wasn't a shark-filled moat; a misstep wasn't fatal. We partied together, drank and got high together, slept together. The teachers may have been older and more accomplished, but you didn't feel they could take advantage of you because of it. How would they?

Which isn't to say that teacher-student relations were guaranteed to turn out well, but then what percentage of romances do? No doubt there were jealousies, sometimes things didn't go the way you wanted — which was probably good training for the rest of life. It was also an excellent education in not taking power too seriously, and I suspect the less seriously you take it, the more strategies you have for contending with it.

It's the fiction of the all-powerful professor embedded in the new campus codes that appalls me. And the kowtowing to the fiction — kowtowing wrapped in a vaguely feminist air of rectitude. If this is feminism, it's feminism hijacked by melodrama. The melodramatic imagination's obsession with helpless victims and powerful predators is what's shaping the conversation of the moment, to the detriment of those whose interests are supposedly being protected, namely students. The result? Students' sense of vulnerability is skyrocketing.

I've done what I can to adapt myself to the new paradigm. Around a decade ago, as colleges began instituting new "offensive environment" guidelines, I appointed myself the task of actually reading my university's sexual-harassment handbook, which I'd thus far avoided doing. I was pleased to learn that our guidelines were less prohibitive than those of the more draconian new codes. You were permitted to date students; you just weren't supposed to harass them into it. I could live with that.

However, we were warned in two separate places that inappropriate humor violates university policy. I'd always thought inappropriateness was pretty much the definition of humor — I believe Freud would agree. Why all this delicacy? Students were being encouraged to regard themselves as such exquisitely sensitive creatures that an errant classroom remark could impede their education, as such hothouse flowers that an unfunny joke was likely to create lasting trauma.

Knowing my own propensity for unfunny jokes, and given that telling one could now land you, the unfunny prof, on the carpet or even the national news, I decided to put my name down for one of the voluntary harassment workshops on my campus, hoping that my good citizenship might be noticed and applauded by the relevant university powers.

At the appointed hour, things kicked off with a "sexual-harassment pretest." This was administered by an earnest mid-50s psychologist I'll call Beth. The pretest consisted of a long list of true-false questions such as: "If I make sexual comments to someone and that person doesn't ask me to stop, then I guess that my behavior is probably welcome."

Despite the painful dumbness of these questions and the fading of afternoon into evening, a roomful of people with advanced degrees seemed grimly determined to shut up and play along, probably aided by a collective wish to be sprung by cocktail hour. That is, until we were handed a printed list of "guidelines." No. 1 on the list was: "Do not make unwanted sexual advances."

Someone demanded querulously from the back, "But how do you know they're unwanted until you try?" (OK, it was me.) David seemed oddly flustered by the question and began frantically jangling the change in his pants pocket.

"Do you really want me to answer that?" he finally responded, trying to make a joke out of it. I did want him to answer, because it's something I'd been wondering — how are you supposed to know in advance? Do people wear their desires emblazoned on their foreheads? — but I didn't want to be seen by my colleagues as a troublemaker. There was an awkward pause while David stared me down. Another person piped up helpfully, "What about smoldering glances?"

Everyone laughed, but David's coin-jangling was becoming more pronounced. A theater professor spoke up, guiltily admitting to having complimented a student on her hairstyle that very afternoon (one of the "Do Nots" involved not comment-
The aftermath has been a score of back-and-forth lawsuits. After trying to get a financial settlement from the professor, the student filed a Title IX suit against the university: She wants her tuition reimbursed, compensation for emotional distress, and other damages. Because the professor wasn’t terminated, when she runs into him it triggers her PTSD, she says. (The university claims that it appropriately sanctioned the professor, denying him a raise and a named chair.)

He made various sexual insinuations, and that she wanted him to drive her home (they’d driven in his car); he says she insisted on sleeping over at his place. She says she woke up in his bed with his arms around her, and that he groped her. He denies making advances and says she made advances, which he deflected. He says they slept on top of the covers, clothed. Neither says they had sex. He says she sent friendly texts in the days after and wanted to meet. She says she attempted suicide two days later, now has PTSD, and has had to take medical leave.

The optimist continues, outpaced only by all the new prohibitions and behavior codes required to sustain it. According to the latest version of our campus policy, “differences in institutional power and the inherent risk of coercion are so great” between teachers and students that no romance, dating, or sexual relationships will be permitted, even between students and professors from different departments. (Relations between graduate students and professors aren’t outright banned, but are “problematic” and must be reported if you’re in the same department.) Yale and other places had already instituted similar policies; Harvard jumped on board last month, though it’s a sign of the incoherence surrounding these issues that the second sentence of the New York Times story on Harvard reads: “The move comes as the Obama administration investigates the handling of accusations of sexual assault at dozens of colleges, including Harvard.” As everyone knows, the accusations in the news have been about students assaulting other students, not students dating professors.

Of course, the codes themselves also shape the narratives and emotional climate of professor-student interactions. An undergraduate sued my own university, alleging that a philosophy professor had engaged in “unwelcome and inappropriate sexual advances” and that the university punished him insufficiently for it. The details that emerged in news reports and legal papers were murky and contested, and the suit was eventually thrown out of court.

In brief: The two had gone to an art exhibit together — an outing initiated by the student — and then to some other exhibits and bars. She says he bought her alcohol and forced her to drink, so much that by the end of the evening she was going in and out of consciousness. He says she drank of her own volition. (She was under legal drinking age; he says he thought she was 22.) She says
She's also suing the professor for gender violence. He sued the university for gender discrimination (he says he wasn’t allowed to present evidence disproving the student’s allegations)—this suit was thrown out; so was the student’s lawsuit against the university. The professor sued for defamation various colleagues, administrators, and a former grad student whom, according to his complaint, he had previously dated; a judge dismissed those suits this month. He sued local media outlets for using the word “rape” as a synonym for sexual assault—a complaint thrown out by a different judge who said rape was an accurate enough summary of the charges, even though the assault was confined to fondling, which the professor denies occurred. (This professor isn’t someone I know or have met, by the way.)

What a mess. And what a slippery slope, from alleged fondler to rapist. But here’s the real problem with these charges: This is melodrama. I’m quite sure that professors can be sleazebags. I’m less sure that any professor can force an unwilling student to drink, especially to the point of passing out. With what power? What sorts of repercussions can there possibly be if the student refuses?

Indeed, these are precisely the sorts of situations already covered by existing sexual-harassment codes, so if students think that professors have such unlimited powers that they can compel someone to drink or retaliate if she doesn’t, then these students have been very badly educated about the nature and limits of institutional power.

In fact, it’s just as likely that a student can derail a professor’s career these days as the other way around, which is pretty much what happened in the case of the accused philosophy professor.

To a cultural critic, the representation of emotion in all these documents plays to the gallery. The student charges that she “suffered and will continue to suffer humiliation, mental and emotional anguish, anxiety, and distress.” As I read through the complaint, it struck me that the lawsuit and our new consensual-relations code share a common set of tropes, and a certain narrative inevitability. In both, students and professors are stock characters in a predetermined story. According to the code, students are putty in the hands of all-powerful professors. According to the lawsuit, the student was virtually a rag doll, taken advantage of by a skillful predator who scripted a drunken evening of galleries and bars, all for the opportunity of some groping.

Everywhere on campuses today you find scholars whose work elaborates sophisticated models of power and agency. It would be hard to overstate the influence, across disciplines, of Michel Foucault, whose signature idea was that power has no permanent address or valence. Yet our workplaces themselves are promulgating the crudest version of top-down power imaginable, recasting the professoriate as Snidely Whiplashes twirling our mustaches and students as helpless damsels tied to railroad tracks. Students lack volition and independent desires of their own; professors are would-be coercers with dastardly plans to corrupt the innocent.

Even the language these policies come packaged in seems designed for maximum stupefac-

Let’s face it:
Other people’s sexuality is often just weird and creepy.
harassers should be chemically castrated, stripped of their property, and hung up by their thumbs in the nearest public square. Let no one think I’m soft on harassment. But I also believe that the myths and fantasies about power perpetuated in these new codes are leaving our students disabled when it comes to the ordinary interpersonal tangles and erotic confusions that pretty much everyone has to deal with at some point in life, because that’s simply part of the human condition.

In the post-Title IX landscape, sexual panic rules. Slippery slopes abound. Groper becomes rapist and accusers become survivors, opening the door for another panicky conflation: teacher-student sex and incest. Recall that it was incest victims who earlier popularized the use of the term “survivor,” previously reserved for those who’d survived the Holocaust. The migration of the term itself is telling, exposing the core anxiety about teacher-student romances: that there’s a whiff of perversity about such couples, notwithstanding all the venerable married ones.

These are anxious times for officiandom, and students, too, are increasingly afflicted with the condition — after all, anxiety is contagious. Around the time the “survivor” email arrived, something happened that I’d never experienced in many decades of teaching, which was that two students — one male, one female — in two classes informed me, separately, that they were unable to watch assigned films because they “triggered” something for them. I was baffled by the congruence until the following week, when the Times ran a story titled “Trauma Warnings Move From the Internet to the Ivory Tower,” and the word “trigger” was suddenly all over the news.

I didn’t press the two students on the nature of these triggers. I knew them both pretty well from previous classes, and they’d always seemed well-adjusted enough, so I couldn’t help wondering. One of the films dealt with fascism and bigotry. The triggeree was a minority student, though not the minority targeted in the film. Still, I could see what might be upsetting. In the other case, the connection between the student and the film was obscure: no overlapping identity categories, and though there was some sexual content in the film, it wasn’t particularly explicit. We exchanged emails about whether she should sit out the discussion, too; I proposed that she attend and leave if it got uncomfortable. I was trying to be empathetic, though I was also convinced that I was impeding her education rather than contributing to it.

I teach in a film program. We’re supposed to be instilling critical skills in our students (at least that’s how I see it), even those who aspire to churn out formulaic dreck for Hollywood. Which is how I framed it to my student: If she hoped for a career in the industry, getting more critical distance on material she found upsetting would seem advisable, given the nature of even mainstream media. I had an image of her in a meeting with a bunch of execs, telling them that she couldn’t watch one of the company’s films because it was a trigger for her. She agreed this could be a problem, and sat in on the discussion with no discernible ill effects.

But what do we expect will become of students, successfully cocooned from uncomfortable feelings, once they leave the sanctuary of academe for the boorish badlands of real life? What becomes of students so committed to their own vulnerability, conditioned to imagine they have no agency, and protected from unequal power arrangements in romantic life? I can’t help asking, because there’s a distressing little fact about the discomfort of vulnerability, which is that it’s pretty much a daily experience in the world, and every sentient being has to learn how to somehow negotiate the consequences and fallout, or go through life flummoxed at every turn.

Here’s a story that brought the point home for me. I was talking to a woman who’d just published her first book. She was around 30, a friend of a friend. The book had started at a major trade press, then ended up published by a different press, and I was curious why. She alluded to problems with her first editor. I pressed for details, and out they came in a rush.

Her editor had developed a sort of obsession with her, constantly calling, taking her out for fancy meals, and eventually confessing his love. Meanwhile, he wasn’t reading the chapters she gave him; in fact, he was doing barely any work on the manuscript at all. She wasn’t really into him, though she admitted that if she’d been more attracted to him, it might have been another story. But for him, it was escalating. He wanted to leave his wife for her! There were kids, too, a bunch of them. Still no feedback on the chapters.

Meanwhile he was Skyping her in his underwear from hotel rooms and complaining about his marriage, and she was letting it go on because she felt that her fate was in his hands. Nothing really happened between them — well, maybe a bit of fumbling, but she kept him at a distance. The thing was that she didn’t want to rebuff him too bluntly because she was worried about the fate of her book — worried he’d reject the manuscript, she’d have to pay back the advance, and she’d never get it published anywhere else.

I’d actually once met this guy — he’d edited a friend’s book (badly). He was sort of a nebbish, hard to see as threatening. “Did you talk to your agent?” I asked the woman. I was playing the situation out in my mind, wondering what I’d do. No, she hadn’t talked to her agent, for various reasons, including fears that she’d led him on and that her book wasn’t any good.
Suddenly the editor left for a job at another press, and the publisher called the contract, demanding a final manuscript, which was overdue and nowhere near finished. In despair, the author finally confessed the situation to our mutual friend, another writer, who employed the backbone-stiffening phrase “sexual harassment” and insisted that the woman get her agent involved. Which she did, and the agent negotiated an exit deal with the publisher by explaining what had taken place. The author was let out of the contract and got to take the book to another press.

What struck me most, hearing the story, was how incapacitated this woman had felt, despite her advanced degree and accomplishments. The reason, I think, was that she imagined she was the only vulnerable one in the situation. But look at the editor: He was married, with a midlevel job in the scandal-averse world of corporate publishing. It simply wasn’t the case that he had all the power in the situation or nothing to lose. He may have been an occluded jerk, but he was also a fairly human-sized one.

So that’s an example of a real-world situation, postgraduation. Somehow I don’t see the publishing industry instituting codes banning unhappily married editors from going goopy over authors, though even with such a ban, will any set of regulations ever prevent affective misunderstandings and erotic crossed signals, compounded by power differentials, compounded further by subjective levels of vulnerability?

The question, then, is what kind of education prepares people to deal with the inevitably messy gray areas of life? Personally I’d start by promoting a less vulnerable sense of self than the one our new campus codes are peddling. Maybe I see it this way because I wasn’t educated to think that holders of institutional power were quite so fearsome, nor did the institutions themselves seem so mighty. Of course, they didn’t aspire to reach quite as deeply into our lives back then. What no one’s much saying about the efflorescence of these new policies is the degree to which they expand the power of the institutions themselves. As for those of us employed by them, what power we have is fairly contingent, especially lately. Get real: What’s more powerful — a professor who crosses the line, or the shaming capabilities of social media?

For myself, I don’t much want to date students these days, but it’s not like I don’t understand the appeal. Recently I was at a book party, and a much younger man, an assistant professor, started a conversation. He reminded me that we’d met a decade or so ago, when he was a grad student — we’d been at some sort of event and sat next to each other. He said he thought we’d been flirting. In fact, he was sure we’d been flirting. I searched my memory. He wasn’t in it, though I didn’t doubt his recollection; I’ve been known to flirt. He couldn’t believe I didn’t remember him. I apologized. He pretended to be miffed. I pretended to be regretful. I asked him about his work. He told me about it, in a charming way. Wait a second, I thought, was he flirting with me now? As an aging biological female, and all too aware of what that means in our culture, I was skeptical. On the heels of doubt came a surge of joy: “Still got it,” crowed some perverse inner imp in silent congratulation, jackbooting the reality principle into assent. My psyche broke out the champagne, and all of us were in a far better mood for the rest of the evening.

Intergenerational desire has always been a dilemma as well as an occasion for mutual fascination. Whether or not it’s a brilliant move, plenty of professors I know, male and female, have hooked up with students, though informal evidence suggests that female professors do it less, and rarely with undergraduates. (The gender asymmetries here would require a dozen more articles to explain.) Some of these professors act well, some are jerks, and it would benefit students to learn the identifying marks of the latter breed early on, because postcollegiate life is full of them. I propose a round of mandatory workshops on this useful topic for all students, beginning immediately.

But here’s another way to look at it: the longue durée. Societies keep reformulating the kinds of cautionary stories they tell about intersession...
al erotics and the catastrophes that result, starting with Oedipus. The details vary; so do the kinds of catastrophes prophesied — once it was plagues and crop failure, these days it’s psychological trauma. Even over the past half-century, the story keeps getting reconfigured. In the preceding era, the Freudian version reigned: Children universally desire their parents, such desires meet up with social prohibitions — the incest taboo — and become repressed. Neurosis ensues.

These days the desire persists, but what’s shifted is the direction of the arrows. Now it’s parents — or their surrogates, teachers — who do all the desiring; children are conveniently returned to innocence. So long to childhood sexuality, the most irksome part of the Freudian story. So too with the new campus dating codes, which also excise student desire from the story, extending the presumption of the innocent child well into his or her collegiate career. Except that students aren’t children.

Among the problems with treating students like children is that they become increasingly childlike in response. The New York Times Magazine recently reported on the tangled story of a 21-year-old former Stanford undergraduate suing a 29-year-old tech entrepreneur she’d dated for a year. He’d been a mentor in a business class she was enrolled in, though they’d met long before. They traveled together and spent time with each other’s families. Marriage was discussed. After they broke up, she charged that their consensual relationship had actually been psychological kidnapping, and that she’d been raped every time they’d had sex. She seems to regard herself as a helpless child in a woman’s body. She demanded that Stanford investigate and is bringing a civil suit against the guy — this despite the fact that her own mother had introduced the couple, approved the relationship every step of the way, and been in more or less constant contact with the suitor.

No doubt some 21-year-olds are fragile and emotionally immature (helicopter parenting probably plays a role), but is this now to be our normative conception of personhood? A 21-year-old incapable of consent? A certain brand of radical feminist — the late Andrea Dworkin, for one — held that women’s consent was meaningless in the context of patriarchy, but Dworkin was generally considered an extremist. She’d have been gratified to hear that her suspicions were in any way serious about policies to prevent sexual assaults, the path is obvious: Don’t ban teacher-student romance, ban fraternities. And if we want to limit the potential for sexual favoritism — another rationale often proffered for the new policies — then let’s include the institutionalized sexual favoritism of spousal hiring, with trailing spouses getting ranks and perks based on whom they’re sleeping with rather than CVs alone, and brought in at salaries often dwarfing those of senior and more accomplished colleagues who didn’t have the foresight to couple more advantageously.

Lastly: The new codes sweeping American campuses aren’t just a striking abridgment of everyone’s freedom, they’re also intellectually embarrassing. Sexual paranoia reigns; students are trauma cases waiting to happen. If you wanted to produce a pacified, covering citizenry, this would be the method. And in that sense, we’re all the victims.

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I t used to be said of many enclaves in academia that they were old-boys clubs and testosterone-fueled, no doubt still true of certain disciplines. Thanks to institutional feminism’s successes, some tides have turned, meaning that menopausal women now occupy more positions of administrative power, edging out at least some of the old boys and bringing a different hormonal style — a more delibidinalized one, perhaps — to bear on policy decisions. And so the pendulum swings, overshooting the middle ground by a hundred miles or so.

The feminism I identified with as a student stressed independence and resilience. In the intervening years, the climate of sanctimony about student vulnerability has grown too thick to penetrate; no one dares question it lest you’re labeled antifeminist. Or worse, a sex criminal. I asked someone on our Faculty Senate if there’d been any pushback when the administration presented the new consensual-relations policy (though by then it was a fait accompli — the senate’s role was “advisory”). “I don’t quite know how to characterize the willingness of my supposed feminist colleagues to hand over the rights of faculty — women as well as men — to administrators and attorneys in the name of protection from unwanted sexual advances,” he said. “I suppose the word would be ‘zeal.’”

His own view was that the existing sexual-harassment policy already protected students from coercion and a hostile environment; the new rules infantilized students and presumed the guilt of professors. When I asked if I could quote him, he begged for anonymity, fearing vilification from his colleagues.

These are things you’re not supposed to say on campuses now. But let’s be frank. To begin with, if colleges and universities around the country were in any way serious about policies to prevent sexual assaults, the path is obvious: Don’t ban teacher-student romance, ban fraternities. And if we want to limit the potential for sexual favoritism — another rationale often proffered for the new policies — then let’s include the institutionalized sexual favoritism of spousal hiring, with trailing spouses getting ranks and perks based on whom they’re sleeping with rather than CVs alone, and brought in at salaries often dwarfing those of senior and more accomplished colleagues who didn’t have the foresight to couple more advantageously.

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Dirty Old Men on the Faculty

By SHEILA MCMILLEN

Let me provide a little history.

In December 1973, when I was a senior at the University of Pennsylvania, Esquire magazine published an article by R.V. (Verlin) Cassill, a professor at Brown University, called “Up the Down Coed,” subtitled “Notes on the Eternal Problem of Fornication With Students.” It begins with a student — “the girl,” as he calls her — coming to his office and asking his help in interpreting the Rilke poems he has assigned. He reads aloud the line giving her difficulty: “Who, if I cried out, would hear me among the angelic orders?”

He dismisses her trembling earnestness, her clothes: “dungarees with a patched jacket — a costume I find boring and pretentious,” and assures the reader that the meeting “can not lead to something the reader might find ... reprehensible.” He goes on to lament his aging and the end of “the golden era of faculty-student copulation on our campuses,” and adds jocular reminiscences of his escapades with coeds when he was younger. In his view, they were the instigators: “Many girls matriculate knowing that if the professorial lamp is properly rubbed, the phallic genie will pop out.”

Though not well known now, Cassill was at the time a respected writer and teacher. The author of 24 novels, he was a founder of the Associated Writing Programs and, before his time at Brown University, a faculty member at the Writers Workshop of the University of Iowa. Shortly after the Esquire piece was published, The Brown Daily
Could there be a creepier perversion of noblesse oblige?

To Botstein's credit, he said, "Let me say this: I think sexual relations trigger a set of ethical obligations," to which both Blythe and Kerrigan responded: "Ethical obligations?" As if the idea were absurd.

At a subsequent meeting at the University of Massachusetts, the Faculty Senate disavowed Kerrigan's comments without censuring him. No one at Kentucky seemed bothered by Blythe's comment.

That was such a long time ago, you might think.

Nearly a quarter-century later, I'm retired. I hope that those in the academic world who are tempted to make the kind of comments Cassill and Kerrigan found acceptable would think twice in this era of social media, when an intemperate remark can bring out the online pitchforks.

But the recent accusations of sexual harassment against faculty members at Berklee College of Music and the University of California at Berkeley, at the University of Virginia, Columbia University, and Dartmouth College, suggest that while faculty members may now be more circumspect about what they say, they remain less so about what they do.

Unfortunately, none of this happened a long time ago.

I've often wondered if there are more sexual predators in academia than in other environments. Where else is there an unending procession — renewed annually — of enticingly attractive young men and women, often unsure of themselves and eager to be in your good graces? It's a setup ripe with possibilities for manipulation, if one is so inclined. Rather like "shooting fish in a barrel," as Cassill said, and all too easy.

Some argue that what professors say to students in and out of classrooms is an issue of free speech — oh, campuses are full of sensitive snowflakes who can't take a joke or compliment. But, according to a study forthcoming in the Utah Law Review, the majority of harassment charges that the researchers investigated included not only verbal abuse but also unwelcome physical contact. That's when harassment crosses the line to assault.

I'd like to think we've finally reached a tipping point in awareness, that the surge in accusations of harassment signals that the attitudes and behavior that Cassill and Kerrigan endorsed will now get the condemnation they deserve. But it's not enough that predators realize they need to watch their words. They also need to consider their deeds — or be hit with more than a slap on the wrist. I certainly hope that's what the future holds. I'd hate to think students must wait another 45 years to see real change.

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