

SASGov Resolution: University Policy on Reporting Complaints of Sexual Harassment

WHEREAS The School of Arts and Sciences Graduate Student Government (SASgov) believes that the University of Pennsylvania owes a duty of care to students who have been victims of sexual harassment, and

WHEREAS the *Penn Violence Prevention Resource Guide* currently stipulates that if a student wishes to report a complaint of sexual harassment against any members of faculty or instructional staff, their complaint will be directed to their department chair or dean (p. 7), and

WHEREAS students can not guarantee that their department chair or dean is sufficiently qualified to deal with their complaint in a sensitive manner, and

WHEREAS students may wish to make a complaint specifically about their department chair or dean, or indeed about one of their colleagues, acquaintances, or friends, and

WHEREAS any department chair or dean is likely to hold a position of power over a student, now therefore be it

RESOLVED that SASgov should petition the University Administration to amend this policy with the utmost expediency, in order to ensure that complaints of sexual harassment against members of faculty or instructional staff be directed to an independent and impartial body, without the intermediary of a department chair or dean, who does not hold personal or professional power over the plaintiff, and who is sufficiently trained in handling issues of sexual harassment with trauma-informed sensitivity. And be it

RESOLVED that SASgov should nominate an individual to submit, on behalf of SASgov and with their full backing, the following statement to the Office of the University Secretary before November 28th 2017, in order that it may be raised at the University Council Open Forum on December 6th 2017:

“To the Office of the Secretary, for discussion at the University Council Open Forum,

It is currently stipulated within the *Penn Violence Prevention Resource Guide* that if a student wishes to report a complaint of sexual harassment against any members of faculty or instructional staff, their complaint will be directed to their department chair or dean (p. 7,

https://www.vpul.upenn.edu/pvp/files/PVP_Resource_Guide_July_2017_FINAL.pdf). The policy puts students at risk for several reasons:

1. Students can not guarantee that their department chair or dean is sufficiently qualified to deal with their complaint in a trauma-informed and sensitive manner.
2. Students may wish to make a complaint specifically about their department chair or dean, or indeed about one of their colleagues, acquaintances, or friends. A department chair or dean is in a position of significant power over a student.
3. Students have no guarantee that their complaint will be followed up in a timely and suitable manner.

Given the highly sensitive nature of this issue, and the immediate risks it poses for students, I would like the University to respond to the following concerns.

1. As a temporary stop-gap in order to reassure its students, would the University please clarify the precise nature of the trauma-informed training that each department chair or dean is required to undertake in order to enable them to respond adequately to complaints of sexual harassment? Further to this, can it clarify how often graduate chairs and deans are required to repeat such training, and what the consequences are for any department chairs or deans who refuse to undertake it?

2. Can the University outline what steps it will take to change this policy, and ensure that complaints of sexual harassment are always directed to an impartial party, a party not in a position of power over the student, nor a potential aggressor, colleague, advisor, or acquaintance. Can the University describe the predicted timeline for implementing this change, and what measures they will put in place to provide a temporary work around before it will be implemented?
3. Finally, will the University recognize that the inadequacy of the current policy points to a larger systemic issue: namely that Penn Violence Prevention, like many of its institutions dedicated to student care and wellbeing, is chronically underfunded and understaffed? Will it commit to investing more resources and money into Penn Violence Prevention?

Yours sincerely,

NAME”

Also be it RESOLVED that SASgov invite members of the general body to circulate this text among the students of their respective departments, and invite them to submit it to the Office of the University Secretary before November 28th 2017, in order to increase the likelihood of it being raised at the University Council Open Forum on December 6th 2017. And be it

RESOLVED that SASgov should empower the Vice President for Public Affairs to publish summaries of this resolution on the SASgov website, and to advertise it through its social media pages in the weeks leading up to the University Council Open Forum on December 6th 2017. And be it

RESOLVED that SASgov should empower the Vice President for Policy to bring this resolution to the attention of the Graduate And Professional Student Assembly, Penn Violence Prevention, the Undergraduate Assembly, and Graduate Employees Together - University of Pennsylvania in order to coordinate responses to this issue.