

INTERDEPARTMENTAL

SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON FACULTY WOMEN

Date: January 31, 1992
To: Faculty Council on Faculty Affairs
From: Julie Stein, Chair
Subject: Faculty Code Procedures Task Force Final Report

With regard to the Task Force Committee's comprehensive report on addressing issues of faculty adjudication, the Special Committee on Faculty Women is particularly concerned with the report as it would affect cases of gender discrimination/sexual harassment. While the Special Committee on Faculty Women endorses the University's commitment to insure that cases of gender discrimination/sexual harassment are handled equitably and fairly, some questions remain in our minds about the contents of the final report. We are not in favor of establishing a hearing board at the investigatory stage, but agree that such a hearing board may be beneficial at the later stages of the grievance process.

In addition to sharing concerns about faculty treatment, the Special Committee on Faculty Women continues to be interested in the treatment of those who are in the situation of bringing charges against members of the faculty or administration. Our concern is that a hearing board including only faculty members would raise a conflict of interest.

Though faculty participants in a hearing board may have all of the best intentions in terms of investigating and recommending action upon charges of gender discrimination/sexual harassment, we question how well this task could be performed. It is unclear if such faculty would be able to prevent any conflict of interest from affecting their decisions, in other words, that they would be able to separate fully their affiliation with the faculty from the consequences and interests of a case involving another faculty member.

Additionally, we are concerned that the presence of a hearing board composed of faculty members only might be intimidating for those bringing charges of gender discrimination/sexual harassment. Because those bringing charges are often students and staff members, we are concerned that they might reasonably feel reluctant to give testimony not only to multiple people but those whom they may perceive as sharing interests with faculty members named in the charges. We are most concerned that the presence of such a board, as a mandatory part of process, would deter students, staff members, and possibly faculty as well, from bringing forth charges at all.

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