

# Holding Ourselves Accountable A Peer-Review Process for Unprofessional Faculty Behavior



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## Enhancing Accountability for Faculty Behavior

Institutional structures are in place to address the most egregious episodes of disruptive faculty behavior, including sexual harassment. However, many behaviors do not meet current criteria for institutional action. Nonetheless, these behaviors may send messages of exclusion, second class status, disrespect or disempowerment. They often involve power differentials that silence any reaction and can be early warning signs of a larger problem. These behaviors drive an unhealthy environment and thus they are critical to address.

## Dean's Advisory Council on Faculty Conduct

We established a Dean's Advisory Council on Faculty Conduct in 2011 to address this accountability gap.

Summary of the Council process:

- Complements other institutional resources (legal, Title IX, clinical peer review etc), enabling response to concerns that would otherwise "fall through the cracks"
- Provides a peer review of cases referred to it by the Dean
- Provides recommendations to the Dean regarding follow up actions and potential sanctions. The Dean ultimately decides the course of action
- Prioritizes Department level resolution, but assists when management of faculty conduct cannot be resolved at that level
- Is managed by the Vice Dean for Faculty
- Engages faculty as peers, selected for their capacity to evaluate complexity, and respect multiple perspectives

## Process Supports Dean, Chairs, Faculty

This process strengthens accountability for faculty behavior. It supports the Dean and Department Chairs by providing recommendations that are judged to be fair and appropriate by a group of the faculty member's peers.

## Council Benefits

By strengthening accountability, this process addresses problematic faculty behavior that may otherwise go unchecked. By utilizing a collaboration between the Chairs and the Dean, the Council process communicates that the highest levels of leadership within the school are invested in a fair and accountable climate.

Use of this process helps to diffuse power differentials that otherwise silence discourse, offers targeted support by taking concerns seriously and allowing stories to be told, and supports a climate for respect and civility.

The focus on remediation and insight (when possible) also provides the accused faculty member an opportunity to adjust their approach.

Documentation that occurs as part of the process strengthens our ability to manage repeat behaviors.

## Outcomes

- Marked increase in volume of *informal* consults requested of Vice Dean for Faculty (from faculty members and from Chairs seeking advice about an issue in their department)
- Increased interest in including professionalism in promotion and tenure guidelines
- Interest in education about speaking up and initiating difficult conversations
- Interest from Campus in translating to University environment
- Development of national learning community to share ideas

## Challenges

- Reporting outcomes so community understands action has been taken
- Managing staff-faculty issues
- Centralizing reports of disruptive faculty behavior so that patterns may be seen
- Responding to volume of need for informal resolution of matters that do not ultimately come to the Council
- Moving beyond accountability to restoration of relationships when possible.

### Cases Referred to Dean's Advisory Council on Faculty Conduct Since 2011

	Description of behavior	Sanctions
Male	Physical assault (not sexual)	Salary decrease Reassignment of some duties
Female	Poor work group management Questionable research practices (QRP)	Left institution
Female	QRP	Left institution
Male	QRP Unprofessional behavior toward female subordinate	Left institution
Male	QRP Unprofessional behavior toward female subordinate	Removal from leadership position, physical relocation, submit correction to journal re failure to adequately acknowledge collaborator
Female	Poor management of work group Disruptive behavior unresponsive to multiple measures	Performance improvement plan, enhanced management of research program
Male	QRP Unprofessional behavior with respect to collaboration	TBD