

# CASE STUDY #3: Employee and Student Harassment Incident

You check your email one last time on a Friday at 4:55 PM to find that a newly appointed department chair in the music department, has been presented with a shocking 12-page letter sent by a group of 10 recent alumni and current students, detailing abuses that had allegedly been experienced for several years by women and LGBTQ-identified individuals at the hands of certain faculty in the department. Though the group chose not to include any names of the specific victims at this time, they maintain that all of the incidents occurred while they were students over the past 4 years.

Among the allegations are the following, each of which contains some detail and identifies the specific respondent, but does not identify the affected party/complainant(s):

- A **prominent composer (male)** who is a celebrated and tenured faculty member routinely hosted parties at his house where students were provided alcohol and encouraged to drink, even if underage. This composer's name comes up in several of the personal narratives, some of which allege that he had kissed female students on the neck or cheek, rested his hands on their legs and lower backs, and stroked their hair. The composer also reportedly told one female student that she would never have a shot at "making it" as a musician if she didn't "dress the part [and] show off that heavenly body"; and told another, "Don't worry, honey, I *always* look but I *never* touch...unless you want me to." The narratives describe students being afraid to report or resist his behavior, since he had a reputation for having his "favorites," who he would set up with strong connections in his vast professional/artistic network; and none of the students wanted to get on his "bad side."
- An openly gay professor and **jazz ensemble director (female)** frequently used the classroom environment to "scout for young talent," but only seemed interested in working with attractive lesbian, queer, or bisexual women. A few of the narratives described times when the director would invite students to clubs and private, non-University affiliated performances, introducing them to other musicians as her "latest tasty treats" or simply, her "snacks." Other reports described class sessions where, to "elicit the seductiveness of jazz" the director would moan loudly while rubbing her hands on her body and call out to students as they were playing, with remarks such as, "blow, bitch, blow...every boy in this school knows you can blow better than that," and "get nasty with that sax, baby... mmm, you're turning me on."

The letter also mentions that the **former department chair**, who has since returned to faculty status, knew of many of the instances and fielded some informal complaints from a few students, but typically shrugged them off saying, "If you can't handle a little *sexual energy* then maybe the arts aren't for you."

Several of the alumni and/or students report experiencing severe emotional distress due to these instances and express that this treatment compromised their academic opportunities in the field.

## Discussion Questions:

- 1) What are the issues?
- 2) Given your institutional context (and the new Title IX regs), what would you need to consider if you were managing this case?
- 3) Who are the stakeholders involved and what needs to be communicated to them?
- 4) What are your next steps?