

# MEMORANDUM

U.S. Department of Education  
Office for Civil Rights  
Midwestern Division  
Chicago Office

**To:** File 05-04-2092

**Date:** December 13, 2004

**From:** Mark Farr  
Equal Opportunity Specialist

**Re:** Interview with Bruce Weiss, Executive Director of the School of Psychology.  
December 9, 2004 at 11:00 am

The Interviewee explained that he could recall two instances in recent years that involved students being brought before an Academic Standards Committee (ASC) for issues relating to comportment.

The Interviewee explained that the School of Psychology has a standing ASC for reviewing grade appeals, plagiarism, and comportment issues. The vast majority of the issues the ASC reviews are grade appeals. The ASC is given the authority to review the relevant documentation and information, interviewing those actors involved in the incidents if necessary, and making a determination of whether action needs to be taken. Grade appeals are generally student initiated, while the other two issues are generally University initiated. The ASC was established to provide a consistent avenue for grievances within the School. Students who are unhappy with the recommendations of the ASC and resulting decision by the Executive Director or Dean can appeal the decision to the Provost. Most issues of comportment or plagiarism lead to suspension from the University for a limited time. For multiple violations of the policies, the ASC can recommend expulsion from the University. In such cases, the Provost makes that decision.

In the first case, he recalled one student getting angry over financial aid issues who posted a very inappropriate message in a course room directed toward a University staff member. The student eventually saw that things were getting out of hand and apologized for his behavior to the University staff member. Because of the limited nature of the situation (only a single posting) and the remorse the student showed by accepting responsibility and apologizing, the recommendation of the ASC, which was accepted by the Interviewee, was to place the student on academic warning for the remainder of the quarter.

The Interviewee explained that when students begin behaving in ways that interrupt the educational process, it is best to try to end it quickly. In the above situation, the student was contacted almost immediately about his behavior and the need to stop such postings.

In a second instance, the Interviewee described a situation where a male student was accused of sexually harassing another student at a conference. The School periodically schedules conferences to allow students and faculty to meet face-to-face and to network. In this case, a male student made inappropriate statements to a female student. The female student, and three other witnesses, reported the incident to the University. The ASC put together a more formal inquiry since the allegations involved witnesses to the events. The ASC interviewed all witnesses, the accused party and some faculty members. The ASC provided a list of the formal charges to the accused student who denied all charges. The accused student described the event as a non-threatening flirtation with the female student. The incident, as described by the female student and witnesses, involved the male student having stated something to the effect of “I could kill you and they would never find your body.”

The ASC recommendations were that the accused student be placed on academic warning and restricted in his dealing with other students. Specifically, the student was to avoid any contact with female students outside of classrooms at future conferences and to avoid unsupervised events with female students.

The Interviewee explained that the University is still new and that not all the Schools have a standing ASC. He believes that as the University ages, there will be a more standardization of practices throughout. He thinks that the current procedures are pretty good at providing for good due process and ensuring that the outcome is appropriate.

He added that he feels that the University “bends over backwards” to ensure that students can obtain their degree in a timely fashion.