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Practices & Policies on Bullying & Harassment: BULLYING CASE STUDY

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BULLYING CASE STUDY

Complainant’s Perspective:

It has always been difficult for me in this department. As a “diversity hire” there has been doubt cast on my worthiness from the day I began as an Instructor.

I was hired before the completion of a Post-Doctoral program, one that requires extensive written production. Because of the teaching load, I found it difficult to complete those requirements and build a record. I sought a leave of absence, but was told such leave was highly irregular and should not be necessary. I persisted, however, seeing no way clear to establish myself, teach a high volume of classes and to complete my Post Doc requirements (a condition of my hire.) Finally, I received approval for my leave. After my 4th-year review, however, the chair came into my office and told me that the dean had changed his mind and come up with an alternative plan: instead of being released from my three classes, I would be released from two, teach one, and “pay back” the other two by teaching for free sometime in the future before tenure. I told her I needed to think about it, and she, agitated, insisted that I tell her the next morning. That night, I spoke to the guy I was dating—a sculptor going to a community college for engineering, in other words, someone with no connection to the University,—who pointed out that they were asking me to do more work for the same amount of money. He was right, and after receiving an email at 9 am the next day, I declined the offer.

From that point on, the entire department has stopped talking to me. No one understood why I would turn down such a “good deal.” Instead, I was the person who did not appreciate their efforts to “bend over backwards” for me, wanted special treatment and did not know how to manage my time. My chair even met with me with a yellow pad in her hand to make a timeline for me.

I tried to address the behavior by writing a memorandum detailing events and raising concerns about my mistreatment. As a result I was bullied into writing a conciliatory email retracting my statements. This went on record and was used against me later on. I was also retaliated for writing the initial memo. Two months later, I was blindsided into a meeting with my chair and the Dean where they gave me a document called “Position Duties and Responsibilities,” written with assistance from the Provosts office. This is obviously a concerted effort to fire me. Let me add that my academic work is beyond reproach and my contributions have been significant.

Chair Responds:

This employee has had ongoing performance problems that have been managed through consultation with Human Resources and the devotion of substantial amounts of time from the Department Chair and the Dean’s office. She does not take feedback well and raises her “diversity” in a threatening manner each time we attempt to discuss her concerns on any terms but her own. Frankly, she uses more administrative time and is less productive than anyone else in the department. By honoring this as a legitimate “bullying” complaint you will further fan the situation and give her additional distraction from her time management and performance problems.