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Anti-Bullying in the Academy

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What is Academic Bullying?

- Workplace Bullying has two key features: negativity towards the target and persistence. These behaviors can be subtle or explicit. Academic bullying often undermines or sabotages the recipient in a manner that interferes with their ability to productively engage in their work.

Academic bullying manifests itself in many different ways and can include intimidation, humiliation, belittlement, embarrassment and undermining one's authority. Academic bullying also includes behaviors or comments that indicate disregard of one's concerns, ignoring contributions, minimize one's efforts in the eyes of colleagues, and other means of exclusion or withholding information.

Expectations of unreasonable workload, limiting earned vacation and prohibiting agency for professional choices and personal decisions could also be inappropriate. As is well known, comments or behaviors that are sexist, racist, homophobic, xenophobic and more are unacceptable and can fall under the umbrella of academic bullying and should not be tolerated. Academic bullying occurs throughout the academic or professional space; in the classroom, in meetings, at conferences, in the laboratory setting, in face-to-face interactions, and of course through email and social media.

(Virginia Tech Graduate School [Academic Bullying and Graduate Education](#))



What is Academic Bullying? (continued)

- The UC Draft Policy on Workplace Bullying states:

Abusive Conduct/Bullying: For purposes of this policy, abusive conduct and bullying are synonymous. Abusive Conduct/Bullying is sufficiently severe, persistent, or pervasive conduct in the Workplace that denies, adversely limits, or interferes with a person's participation in or benefit from the education, employment, or other programs or activities of the University, and creates an environment that a reasonable person would find to be intimidating or offensive and unrelated to the University's legitimate educational and business interests. A single act shall not constitute Abusive Conduct/Bullying, unless especially severe or egregious.

- Academic Bullying is unique in that it often is asserted under the cover of Academic Freedom:

Academic Freedom is often asserted to justify the allowance of bullying speech, often with the explanation that the best response to bullying words is a cogent response by other faculty or administrators in the self-correction of academic speech.

What is Academic Bullying? (continued)

- However, self-correction assumes a power balance that is often not present:

Targets of workplace bullying are disproportionately women, minoritized groups, and other historically power-disadvantaged groups. Power abuse is an almost-universal feature: sources of power imbalance include workplace hierarchies, membership in the dominant workplace culture, and perceived influence with higher authorities.

Resources:

- Brandeis University Report on Bullying:
<https://www.brandeis.edu/faculty-senate/ongoing-work/dignity-at-work/pdfs/dignity-at-work-recommended-policies-and-procedures.pdf>
- UC Draft Policy on Bullying:
<https://ucnet.universityofcalifornia.edu/abusiveconductbullyingreview.pdf>
- https://graduateschool.vt.edu/content/dam/graduateschool_vt_edu/anti-bullying/academic-bullying-and-grad-ed-kpd.pdf



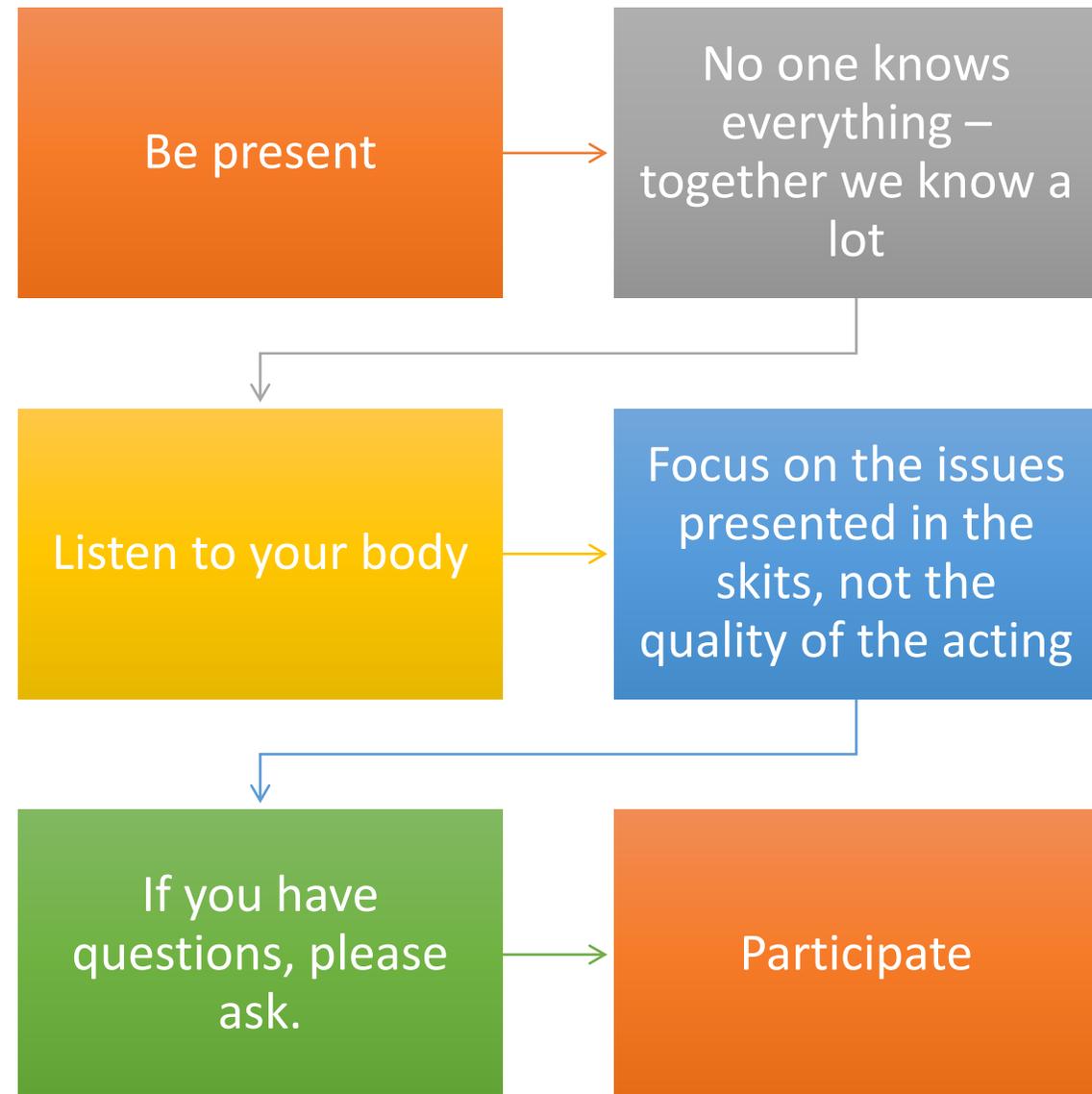
What does Academic Bullying Look Like?

- The UC Draft Policy includes:
 - Persistent or egregious use of abusive and/or insulting language (written, electronic or verbal);
 - Spreading misinformation or rumors;
 - Behavior, language, or gestures that intimidate, humiliate, belittle, or degrade, including criticism or feedback that is delivered with yelling, screaming, threats (including implicit threats), or insults;
 - Encouraging others to act, singly or in a group, to bully or harass other individuals;
 - Making repeated or egregious comments about a person's appearance, lifestyle, family, or culture;
 - Interfering with a person's personal property or work equipment or excluding access to shared equipment;
 - Making unwanted physical contact or inappropriately encroaching on another individual's personal space;
 - Purposefully excluding, isolating, or marginalizing a person from normal work activities for non-legitimate business purposes;
 - Repeatedly demanding an individual do tasks or take actions that are inconsistent with the individual's job, are not that individual's responsibility, or repeatedly refusing to take "no" for an answer when it is within the individual's right to decline a request;
 - Making inappropriate threats to block a person's academic or other advancement, opportunities, or continued employment at the University;
 - In any other way sabotaging or undermining a person's work performance;



Skits

Things to keep in mind





As you watch each skit, take note of the following:



What did you SEE?



What did you FEEL?



What did you HEAR?



“For The Sake of Niceness...”



Dr. Cindy
Assistant Professor
(going up for associate
this year)



Dr. Melanie
Department Chair



Dr. Monicka
Full Professor
20 years on campus
(begins FERP next year)



Dr. Freddie
Assistant Professor
(with the department for 2
years)

The "Players"



See Something Say Something

- Academic Bullying is often witnessed by other colleagues. Bullies rely on the discomfort others may feel in speaking up. The most effective way to disrupt Academic Bullying is to speak up if you witness any bullying behavior.
 - For example, if Matt is shouting during a meeting, a colleague might simply say:

“Matt, I know you are passionate our department program learning outcomes, but your volume and tone is unprofessional.”
 - For example, if Matt is serving on the departmental sabbatical committee and is sharing over lunch that he read a colleague’s sabbatical proposal and that he found it weak, a colleague might say:

“Matt, this is not the place to share your views of the sabbatical proposal; that really is something that should be discussed within the committee where everyone present has read the proposal and can speak to its strengths and weaknesses in an informed and confidential manner.”



Resources for Chairs

- If you see or experience academic bullying, your Associate Dean and Dean are strong advocates for supporting you. If you feel you need more support, Faculty Affairs is fully prepared to support you in developing a response and/or management plan.
- While we currently have no policy on academic bullying, we can (and do) use the language in Section 600/700 to support both developmental interventions, and progressive discipline if appropriate - it is always our goal to provide employees with opportunities to correct objectionable behaviors or to improve job performance:

As a colleague, the faculty member:

604.3.1: Respects and defends the free inquiry of colleagues.

604.3.2: Shows due respect for the opinions of others in exchanges of criticism and ideas.

604.3.7: Does not engage in exclusionary, exploitative, harassing, discriminatory, or retaliatory behavior towards colleagues.

604.3.8: Treats colleagues with civility, understanding, and respect.

Resources for Chairs (continued)

Institutional Centers:

<https://paritymovement.org/about/>

https://graduateschool.vt.edu/student-life/we-hear-your-voice/disrupting_academic_bullying.html

Literature:

https://graduateschool.vt.edu/content/dam/graduateschool_vt_edu/anti-bullying/academic-bullying-and-grad-ed-kpd.pdf

<https://www-science-org.libproxy.csun.edu/doi/10.1126/science.abl7492>

<https://www-nature-com.libproxy.csun.edu/articles/d41586-021-01252-z>

Policies:

UC Draft for systemwide review (10/20/21-2/7/22): <https://ucnet.universityofcalifornia.edu/abusiveconductbullyingreview.pdf>

<https://www.brandeis.edu/faculty-senate/ongoing-work/dignity-at-work/pdfs/dignity-at-work-recommended-policies-and-procedures.pdf>

<https://insideucr.ucr.edu/announcements/2021/12/01/ucr-anti-bullying-policy>

<https://policies.wsu.edu/prf/index/manuals/50-00-contents/50-31-workplace-bullying-prevention-reporting/>

<https://eoa.oregonstate.edu/bullying-policy>

<https://www.mcneese.edu/policy/anti-bullying-policy/>

https://vpf.berkeley.edu/sites/default/files/guidelines_re_bullying_8.5.19.pdf

<https://www.uwsuper.edu/hr/policies/anti-bullying-harrasment-policy.cfm>

<http://policylibrary.colostate.edu/policy.aspx?id=729>

https://www.msudenver.edu/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/Bullying_Policy_20190701.pdf

<https://www.farmingdale.edu/policies/?pid=214276>

<https://wmich.edu/policies/bullying>