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Online Harassment Issues

Distance Learning Challenges

Your students are not on campus and are at least 6 feet away from each other.

Shouldn't that end problems with sexual harassment for the time being?



Sadly, the benefits of moving online can also leave people open to new risks and new forms of harassment.

Concerns About Harassment by Faculty

Faculty have already been working with these students. Is there new or increased risk?

Dangers could arise if faculty and students start getting more comfortable with online and after-hours contacts, straying from appropriate communications.

Faculty may be inexperienced with virtual meetings and forget to ensure what is showing on their screen is appropriate.

Tone and demeanor can come across very differently in virtual platforms, much like email. Bias reports may increase.

Possible Solutions

Remind faculty of best practices in maintaining proper boundaries, making sure no faculty takes advantage of increased student anxiety and fragility

Provide faculty with resources to learn about virtual presence

Work with key partners to see what issues are arising and suggested partnering to address

Consider proactively reminding faculty of respectful workplace, conflict of interest and other relevant policies and expectations and how they apply in this new virtual world

Harassment by Students

- Some issues remain the same – the possibility of harassing emails and texts
- The benefits of moving online can also leave some more vulnerable
 - After-hours texting and FaceTiming
 - Study groups, chat rooms, social media
 - Cyberstalking: 40% of women have experienced Dating Violence delivered electronically*
 - Use of social networking to keep tabs on victims
 - Being able to “see” into a student’s home can be particularly invasive for the vulnerable and easily exploited by abusers
 - Virtual happy hours, e-sports, virtual Greek life

*Source: <https://www.justice.gov/sites/default/files/ovw/legacy/2012/08/15/bjs-stalking-rpt.pdf>

Harassment by Non-Students or Unidentified Individuals

“Zoombombing” - virtual meetings, classes disrupted by graphic or threatening messages or actions, often with hate speech or pornographic content

Requires being set up ahead of time - technology problems, technology solutions

Faculty and TA's need advance training to understand potential concerns, and the solutions

Update prevention education / orientation materials to address 'new' methods of harassment

Possible Technology Solutions

Disabling file transfer, screen sharing, remote control, annotation features

Use per meeting ID, not personal ID.

Disable join before Host and enable waiting room. Being in the waiting room is a good time to provide reminders of rules

Multiple co-hosts, to help as room monitors?

Mute all participants?

Party crashers: Ensuring attendees can only sign in with email through which they were invited

Kicking disruptive individuals out of a meeting by mousing over the name, click REMOVE

Locking meetings once everyone is present

Response to incidents of zoombombing: *Supporting the folks who experienced it.*

- Students and faculty can be distressed when this occurs
- Depending on the conduct, may want to reach out to folks who experienced the zoombombing with information about support resources
- This outreach can be proactive instead of reactive (syllabi or course materials listing these resources for folks to access in the aftermath of an incident if they are triggered by the conduct, etc.)

Possible Other Considerations



If you know one of your students facilitated the disruption, determine what recourse might be.



Do your harassment policies address sending/posting, social media, non-school email accounts, interactions inside and outside online course modules?



What is the new role for TA's? What training do you need to provide them?



What will be the impact of harassment on interactive discussions as part of class?



What is your institution doing to prevent incidents? Have you talked with IS/IT?



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info@grandriversolutions.com

(650) 383-4753