Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment is a form of sex discrimination that is prohibited by state and federal laws and WPI policy. Students/Employees are entitled to learn and to work in an environment free of unlawful sex discrimination and harassment: such conduct will not be tolerated by WPI. Sexual harassment by WPI community members will be addressed using applicable University procedures.

Definition of Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment is a form of unlawful sex discrimination and encompasses a wide range of behaviors of sexual nature. Sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature constitute sexual harassment where:

• submission to or rejection of such advances, requests or conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of, or as a basis for, decisions relating to a person’s academic or work experience;

• such advances, requests or conduct have the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with a person’s academic or work experience by creating an intimidating, hostile, humiliating or sexually offensive academic or work environment.

While it is not possible to list all of the circumstances that may constitute sexual harassment, the following are examples of conduct that, depending on the circumstances, may rise to the level of sexual harassment:

• Non-consensual physical touching of a sexual nature, including rape, sexual assault, or attempts to commit rape or sexual assault;

• Stalking, dating violence, and/or domestic violence;

• Direct or implied requests for sexual favors in exchange for an actual or promised benefit in any University educational or employment-related program or activity – such as a positive performance review, salary increase, promotion, favorable grades in a course or classroom assignment,
preferential treatment in the classroom, an extra-curricular activity, or research opportunity, a grant, fellowship or internship opportunity, or any other term or condition of a student’s educational or employment-related performance;

• Withholding, or threatening to withhold, a benefit in any University educational or employment-related program or activity on the condition that the student provides sexual favors or submits to sexual conduct;

• Unwelcome sexual advances - whether or not they involve physical touching;

• Sexual epithets, jokes, written or oral references to sexual conduct; gossip regarding one’s sex life; comments on one’s body; comments about one’s sexual activity, deficiencies or prowess;

• Displaying sexually suggestive objects, pictures, cartoons;

• Unwelcome leering, whistling, brushing against the body, sexual gestures, suggestive or insulting comments;

• Inquiries into one’s sexual experiences;

• Discussion of one’s sexual activities;

• Romantic involvement, whether consensual or not, between a person in a position of authority and a subordinate (for example, professor/student, supervisor/supervisee, coach/athlete, advisor/student).

In addition to sexual harassment, amorous relationships between a WPI faculty member/supervisor and student/employee for whom he or she has a professional or advisory responsibility – even if consensual – are inappropriate and should be avoided. Implicit in the area of professionalism is the recognition by those in positions of authority that in their relationships with students/supervisees there is always an element of power and consent to a romantic relationship may not be valid where either person has direct or indirect power or control over any aspect of the other person’s academic or employment environment. It is incumbent upon members of the profession to refrain from abusing, and seeming to abuse, the power with which they are entrusted, since relationships between members of the faculty/supervisors and students/supervisees are always fundamentally asymmetric in nature. Such relationships may have the effect of undermining the atmosphere of trust among students/employees and faculty/supervisors on which the educational process depends.

WPI will make an independent inquiry into complaints of sexual harassment or discrimination by a WPI student/employee in accordance with the standard student/employee disciplinary procedures established by WPI, and students/employees who are found to have violated this policy will be subject to appropriate disciplinary action, including termination, suspension or expulsion, where appropriate.

**Retaliation Prohibited**
Retaliation of any kind against any person involved in a complaint concerning a violation of this policy will not be tolerated by WPI. Complaints of retaliation arising from a person’s participation in the investigation of a complaint of sexual harassment will be handled in accordance with applicable WPI policies and procedures and may result in discipline, up to and including suspension or termination.

**Confidentiality**
WPI will administer any complaint of sexual harassment with the utmost degree of privacy and confidentiality possible under the circumstances of each matter and as permitted by law. Notwithstanding the foregoing, WPI reserves the right to promptly and thoroughly investigate any
complaint, including but not limited to speaking to relevant witnesses, taking such steps as are necessary and appropriate to immediately eliminate any sexually harassing conduct. Failure of any participant in an investigation process conducted under this policy to respect confidentiality, both during or after any investigation, may constitute retaliation, and subject the violator to discipline. The College encourages victims of sexual harassment to talk to somebody about what happened – to get the support needed, and so the College can respond appropriately.

University Resources
The University has designated the following individuals as having oversight responsibility for receiving complaints of and investigating allegations of sexual misconduct by a WPI student/employee in connection with a University program or activity:

Title IX Coordinator

Philip Clay, Vice President of Student Affairs 1-508-831-5201

Deputy Title IX Coordinators
Connie Aramento, Associate Director, Academic Advising
1-508-831-5381
Cherise Galasso, Associate Athletic Director
1-508-831-5063
Dana Harmon, Director of PERA
1-508-831-5243
Art Heinricher, Dean of Undergraduate Studies
1-508-831-5397
Cindy Bartelson, Director of Human Resources
1-508-831-5737
Anne Ogilvie, Director of Global Operations
1-508-831-5485
Emily Perlow, Director of Student Activities
1-508-831-5291
Bonnie Walker, Director of Multicultural Affairs
1-508-831-5819
Kris Wobbe, Associate Dean of Undergraduate Studies
1-508-831-5375

Filing a Complaint of Sexual Harassment
Although the circumstances of a particular situation may make it difficult to do so, any individual who believes they have been subjected to sexual harassment by a WPI student, faculty or staff member in connection with a WPI program or activity is strongly encouraged to immediately and firmly inform the offender that their conduct is inappropriate and unwelcome and to immediately report the conduct to the Office of Human Resource, Philip Clay, Title IX Coordinator or one of the Deputy Title IX Coordinators in order to initiate a complaint.

Appropriate Response/Disciplinary Action
Where necessary, the University will take immediate steps to protect complainants pending the final outcome of an investigation, including academic accommodations and other interim measures.
If it is determined that a member of the WPI community has been engaged in inappropriate conduct, appropriate action will be taken immediately, using the University’s established procedures, to fulfill its obligations under the law to promote a workplace and academic environment that is free of sexual harassment and sexual misconduct. Such action may range from counseling to termination of employment, or suspension or expulsion, and may include such other forms of disciplinary action as appropriate under the University’s procedures.

**Employee responsibility for student support (Role as a reporting option to students)**

College employees who have the authority to address sexual violence have the duty to report incidents of sexual violence to the Title IX coordinator. When a victim tells an employee about an incident of sexual violence, the College will take immediate and appropriate steps to investigate what happened and resolve the matter promptly and equitably.

An employee must report to the Title IX coordinator all relevant details about the alleged sexual violence shared by the victim and that the College will need to determine what happened – including the names of the victim and alleged perpetrator(s), any witnesses, and any other relevant facts, including the date, time and specific location of the alleged incident.

To the extent possible, information reported to an employee will be shared only with people responsible for handling the College’s response to the report.