

March 24, 2021

Subject: Geography Department's zero tolerance position on racial discrimination and sexual harassment and misconduct

Dear Colleagues,

Recently articles in the [Florida Phoenix](#), [WFSU](#), and the [Tallahassee Democrat](#) described how a former COSSPP faculty member preyed upon Asian women students in the college for decades and faced multiple allegations of sexual misconduct. He was allowed to resign last year before a full investigation could be completed. It appears that at least some people in the college were aware of his behavior for years, yet he remained on campus and freely interacted with students until last March. The Dean's statement on this matter, which was sent to faculty and staff this week, is copied at the end of this message.

While we acknowledge that Dean Chapin promptly placed this predator on administrative leave and banned him from campus as soon as the Office of Human Resources investigation was launched in January 2020, we were devastated to learn that students and faculty have been sounding the alarm against this individual for several decades, as recently as 2018 and dating all the way back to 1991. This failure to stop a sexual predator is part of a larger pervasive culture of Asian women being stereotyped as quiet and submissive, in addition to being treated as hypersexualized objects, which perpetuates violence against them as the recent murder of six Asian women in Atlanta by a 21-year old white man has shown the world.

This incident in our own College underscores the prevalence of hurtful and traumatizing institutionalized racial and sexual discrimination in academia. **We want to make clear that this is unacceptable and that our department will not tolerate sexual harassment, sexual misconduct, or any kind of discrimination.** We have a responsibility to foster a safe environment for our students and all department members so that this does not happen again. Towards positive change in our department, we are initiating a review of internal practices and policies. To start a College-wide conversation on increasing accountability within COSSPP and FSU more broadly, we are speaking with administration and requesting that an external audit be conducted to identify and address the failures within our institution's justice system. This violence could have been prevented if the processes we had in place were adequate to the task. Tragically, we have learned they are not.

We must once again reaffirm our commitment to social justice and to condemn all types of discrimination and sexual violence. We invite you to reach out and contact the DEI committee about any questions, concerns, or suggestions that you have.

Sincerely,

Stephanie Pau & the Geography Department DEI Committee:
Sarah Lester, Chair
James Elsner, Member & Department Chair

Sage Ponder, Member
Sandy Wong, Member
Adam Ware, Member
Efrain Roxas, Member

Sent on behalf of Dean Tim Chapin on 23 March 2021.

FOR ALL COLLEGE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES AND PUBLIC POLICY FACULTY & STAFF

Recent reports have brought to light that a former college faculty member engaged in reprehensible behaviors during his time at the university. These acts brought great distress and hurt to a number of students, faculty, and staff, and undermined the trust many have in the college and institution.

As soon as reports of these appalling behaviors were brought to my attention, I worked with university officials, specifically Human Resources, to immediately remove the faculty member from the classroom and prohibit any contact with students and FSU personnel. A formal investigation was immediately launched and was underway at the time the faculty member resigned from the university. This resignation permanently ended his employment at FSU as well as any future engagement with faculty and staff, but most importantly with students.

As Dean of the College of Social Sciences and Public Policy, **I want to state clearly and unambiguously that sexual misconduct and sexual harassment have no place in our community.** The University has a zero-tolerance policy for these behaviors, and this value must be loudly communicated and universally known.

I will continue to do everything within my power to ensure that any incidents of sexual misconduct and harassment are documented, reviewed, and addressed, in accordance with university policies and procedures.

True progress requires a shared commitment by faculty, staff, and students to stamp out sexual misconduct and sexual harassment in our community and within society at large. This holds true for any type of harassment and discrimination. It is incumbent upon all of us to do something when these incidents occur, which may include speaking up, taking care of those that are impacted, and appropriately reporting so that action can be taken.

In the final weeks of this semester and into the next academic year, the college will be pursuing a range of activities to reflect on and respond to what happened. Next week Associate Vice President for Human Resources Renisha Gibbs and I will hold a session with faculty and staff to hear your concerns. The college is working with University Counseling Services and the Employee Assistance Program to secure needed, ongoing support for those directly affected. The college will also partner with the Title IX office and Human Resources to facilitate educational sessions aimed at preventing sexual misconduct and sexual harassment in our community. Lastly, I will be seeking input from the community about other activities and actions to help ensure that nothing like this ever happens again in our college.

The college will undertake all of the above, and much more, with the explicit goal of enforcing a zero tolerance policy for sexual misconduct and sexual harassment in our college.

Please visit FSU's kNOwMORE website at knowmore.fsu.edu to receive guidance on university resources, get help, or report an incident.

As ever, please know that any member of the college community can reach me directly at tchapin@fsu.edu.

Dr. Tim Chapin, Dean

College of Social Sciences and Public Policy

Florida State University