Rules on Sexual Harassment

Under the University’s Employment Policies and Procedures on Discrimination and Harassment, sexual harassment is defined as follows:

Unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal, physical or visual conduct or behavior of a sexual nature constitute sexual harassment when:

• submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of an individual’s employment; or
• submission to or rejection of such conduct by an individual is used as the basis for employment decisions affecting that individual; or
• such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual’s work performance or creating an intimidating, hostile, demeaning, or offensive working environment.

Sexual harassment may include a range of subtle and not so subtle behaviors among them: sexual violence; sexual jokes and innuendo; verbal abuse of a sexual nature; commentary about an individual’s body, sexual prowess or sexual deficiencies; leering, catcalls or touching; insulting or obscene comments or gestures; and the display or circulation (including through email) in the working, learning and living environment of sexually suggestive or explicit objects or pictures. Sexual harassment may involve individuals of the same or different sex. The complainant does not necessarily have to be the person harassed but could be anyone affected by the offensive conduct.

All non-union University employees (including faculty) have a duty report any possible incidents of gender-based misconduct or other forms of discrimination or harassment to EOAA. Reports may be filed via http://eoaa.columbia.edu/report-incident. On campus, there are numerous confidential places in which students can confide (counseling center, clergy, medical staff, sexual violence response teams, ombuds office); and still more non-confidential venues (Gender-Based Misconduct office, EO/AA office, residential life staff, public safety, academic advisors, deans of students, faculty & staff, campus administrators). If a student brings a matter to a non-confidential recipient, such as a faculty member, that instructor is obligated via the DOE’s Title IX regulations to report the situation. Failure to report these situations will lead to action against the faculty member, with the punishment dependent on the severity of the situation. If a faculty member hears from students about any of the aforementioned policies (sexual assault, harassment, etc) being broken, then it must be reported. The spirit of the policy is that the investigators need to hear from people to know what is happening on the ground. Reporting should be done as soon as possible; delay of days or weeks slows the process and looks questionable; a couple of hours is reasonable.