

## WHAT IS SEXUAL HARASSMENT?

**It is not** a relationship of mutual consent.

**It is not** a hug between friends.

**It is not** mutual flirtation.

It is unwanted attention of a sexual nature, often with an underlying element of threat or coercion.

## WHAT CAN I DO IF I THINK I AM BEING SEXUALLY HARASSED?

First, say “NO” clearly and firmly. Don’t ignore the situation and hope it will stop. Report the situation and discuss options for addressing it. Consider writing a letter to the harasser, stating what was done, why it was objectionable and that you want it to stop. Be polite, but firm and clear. If you do write a letter, keep a copy. Make a file and keep complete records. Note dates, places, times, witnesses, and the nature of the harassment. Record what was said as accurately as possible in case this information is needed later. Don’t rely solely on your memory. Talk to students or other co-workers. Ask them for their support if you take action.

Sexual harassment occurs when acceptance or rejection of sexual advances is a condition of your education or employment, affects your grades, your performance evaluation, or any academic or personal decision that concerns you. It also occurs when unwelcome sexual actions interfere with your work or study and create an intimidating, hostile, offensive or humiliating environment.

## SEXUALLY HARASSING BEHAVIOR MAY INCLUDE:

- Unwelcome sexual advances-whether they involve physical touching or not;
- Sexual epithets, jokes, written or oral references to sexual conduct, and sexual gossip.
- Comments on an individual’s sexual activity, deficiencies, or prowess;
- Displaying sexually suggestive objects, pictures, cartoons;
- Dissemination of sexually explicit voice mail, e-mail, graphics, downloaded material or websites;
- Unwelcome leering, whistling, brushing against the body, sexual gestures, suggestive or insulting comments;
- Inquires into one’s sexual experiences; and
- Discussion of one’s sexual activities.

## EXAMPLES:

- An instructor, supervisor, co-worker or student hugs, pats, or otherwise touches you in a sexual way that upsets you or interferes with your work or study.
- Your supervisor offers you a promotion in return for your sexual attention and/or threatens reprisal if you refuse.
- An instructor, supervisor, or peer makes repeated sexual comments or ask you

questions of a sexual nature, which interfere with your work or concentration.

- An instructor promises a better grade or academic opportunity in return for your sexual attention or implies your academic record will suffer if you refuse.

## WHAT CAN I DO IF SOMEONE I KNOW IS SEXUALLY HARASSED?

Be supportive. People who have been harassed may be embarrassed or fear they may not be believed, and it is important to listen carefully and to empathize. Let them know you are concerned. Encourage them to report the harassment, document the episode, and take action. If you are a witness to the harassment, be willing to testify about it.

## HOW CAN I PREVENT HARASSMENT?

Be aware. Learn about sexual harassment. Understand your behavior and the behavior of others that may be offensive.

Don’t accept it. Don’t participate in it. Don’t condone it by your silence.

Talk about it. Recognize it for the dehumanizing behavior it is. Work to change it.

## WHAT SHOULD I DO IF I’M ACCUSED OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT?

Seek the advice of one of the offices listed at the end of this brochure. In addition, if you are represented by a union, you could report the situation and enlist assistance.

## WHAT ABOUT FACULTY/STUDENT RELATIONSHIPS?

*Consenting* faculty/student relationships do occur. However, there is always an underlying power imbalance in such relationships and both parties should be aware of the potential danger, especially if the relationship changes. If a student is threatened or sexually harassed after seeking to end such a relationship, there may be grounds for a complaint.

## EVERYONE IS AFFECTED BY SEXUAL HARASSMENT.

Usually, women are harassed by men who exert some power over them. However, both men and women can be harassed by someone of the same sex and men are harassed by women. Those who are most vulnerable (for example, women supporting families, female students, scholarship students) are often singled out for harassment because they have the most to lose by taking action against a harasser and are, therefore, less likely to pursue a complaint.

As a community, we must resolve to eradicate every type of sexual harassment from Mount Wachusett Community College.

## SEXUAL HARASSMENT IS AGAINST THE LAW.

Sexual harassment is sex discrimination under Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 and the Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and in Massachusetts under General Law, Chapter 151B sections 3A, 4 (1), and 16A.

Under these laws, educational institutions are responsible for preventing sexual harassment of their students and employees.

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Sexual harassment is also a violation of College policy. Both formal and informal channels are available to member of the College community for resolving alleged sexual harassment complaints. If you have or know of a sexual harassment problem/issue, contact one of the offices listed in this publication.

## GET HELP OR INFORMATION FROM ANY OF THE FOLLOWING:

### ASSOCIATE VICE PRESIDENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES/AFFIRMATIVE ACTION OFFICER:

Diane Ruksnaitis, Arthur F. Haley Building, Room 109, (978) 632-9160 for filing formal charges, advice regarding the grievance process, information about options and resources, advocacy information and referral.

### EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT:

Ann McDonald, Arthur F. Haley Building, Room 107, (978) 632-9164 for student complaints or referral.

### CONTACT YOUR COLLECTIVE BARGAINING UNIT

If you are an employee represented by a collective bargaining unit, you may wish to contact the appropriate union officer for advice and assistance.

### NOTICE OF NON-DISCRIMINATION

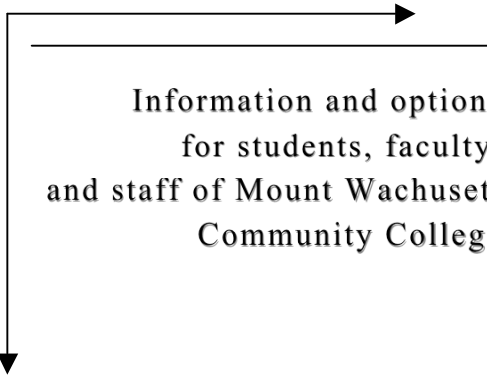
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**Mount Wachusett  
Community College**

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Information and options  
for students, faculty,  
and staff of Mount Wachusett  
Community College