



# SOCIETIES CONSORTIUM ON SEXUAL HARASSMENT IN STEMM

*An initiative to advance professional and ethical conduct, climate & culture*

## CASE STUDY LIBRARY

### 3. After-Conference Socializing Goes Sideways

*Case Study 3 falls within the category of “incident(s) during conferences, but off site, including use of alcohol.*

A female society board member, and tenured professor, attends an annual conference, accompanied by selected students, as their faculty advisor. The group celebrates the faculty members’ successful research presentation with dinner and drinking. The faculty member and some reluctant students accompany other students who plan an outing to a gay bar with a notoriously sexually explicit cabaret show. Hotel staff notice the inebriated group when they return to the hotel and notify society staff who implement a response protocol.

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## Introduction: How to Use the Case Study and Supplemental Materials

### **The “Case Study” Documents**

**Section 1 of this document** contains only the “**Facts**” of the case study with related “**Pause & Process**” questions, which also segment the facts into digestible chunks.

**Section 2 of this document** analyzes the facts. It repeats within gray boxes the relevant “**Facts**” for each segment and its associated “**Pause & Process**” questions within light grey boxes. Additional content supports individual analysis and/or group discussion, including suggested:

- **Responses** to the “**Pause & Process**” questions and related analysis of that section of the fact pattern;
- **Actions to Prevent or Remedy** harm that could have been taken; and
- **Review** items – resources and tools that can be used when considering what actions to take.

These resources and tools can be found on the Consortium webpage: [Societies Consortium on Sexual Harassment in STEMM](#). The Compendium of Existing Resources is available publicly. Model policies and tools require members to log in. In addition, members can find resources and peer support by visiting the **Consortium LinkedIn Platform (CLIP)** -- A members-only space for collaboration and thought-partnership.

### **Using the Documents**

- (1) **Individual learners: Read Section 1 before reading Section 2’s “Response” and “Action” steps.** Consider each “**Pause & Process**” question; it may be helpful to record your thoughts. Then, go to Section 2 to review the analysis. Do the offered responses reflect your own thoughts and experiences? Are there any differences between your experiences and those of individuals in the case study? Do your views, or the offered responses, change if the aim is to create a field where people of all identities and stages of career are welcomed and able to thrive?

*For additional resources and actions an individual can take, refer to the following Supplemental Materials:*

[Section 5. Reflection Questions for Individual Action](#)

[Section 6. National Support Resources](#)

**Facilitators of group learning sessions:** Each Case Study is designed for flexible use and provides options. A Case Study can be **segmented into bite-size chunks—one for each group of “Pause & Process” question(s)—to create a stand-alone 1-2 hour learning experience.** A note at the start of Section 2 identifies several “**Pause & Process**” segments that can also be **chunked together to create a 2-3 hour learning experience.** Include the “**Introduction**” in any chunk to set the stage (the facts and background on each main character to help participants develop empathy). Another option is to combine these short learning experiences **into a workshop series conducted over time, but that is not required.**

**Some societies may want to start using a Case Study with one or two stakeholder groups (e.g., an ethics committee, leadership team, or a student group) and then expand out to include other stakeholders.**

Facilitators are advised to give Section 1 (or the introduction and the segment(s) you will be addressing in your session) to participants as a stand-alone pre-read to prepare for group discussion and/or role playing. We advise not providing a preview of Section 2 (the analysis).

**Section 2** is a Facilitator-only resource if the Case Study is used for group discussion. Review “**Responses**” to the “**Pause & Process**” questions *in advance* of facilitating a discussion for guidance on the scope of issues and how a group might examine them. Review suggested “**Actions**” for discussion ideas and steps societies and institutions can take to enhance their policies and practices to create more inclusive and equitable climate and culture within their organizations and fields more broadly.

*Also review --* [Section 3. Facilitator Preparation and Practices \(Supplemental Material\)](#)—which provides additional guidance on up-front methods for establishing inclusive learning in group discussions, as well as some recommended practices for facilitating potentially difficult discussions.

## Section 1. Facts and Scope of Issues

Section 1 details the events that took place during the case study and provides “Pause & Process” questions at key intervals, inviting the learner to consider the facts and events with from a variety of perspectives, with a lens of empathy and reduced defensiveness, and to identify actions that might have prevented or mitigated the associated harms. We encourage learners to take a few moments for each question; it may be helpful to record your thoughts. In Section 2, we discuss and recommend actions for each “Pause & Process” question.

**FACTS, Part 1 – Introduction:** Tenured Professor Jones is female identifying and on the faculty of a selective research university, where she directs a research program. Dr. Jones’ twin sister is also a scientist in a different field of study. Dr. Jones’ sister identifies as lesbian, and Dr. Jones has witnessed firsthand many biases and barriers experienced by her sister. In particular, her sister has recounted many times when she has felt excluded from networking and social events at scientific conferences in her male-dominated field.

Dr. Jones is also a board member of the Association of Scientists (AOS), and attended AOS’ annual conference with four graduate students from her university as their assigned Faculty Advisor. After a competitive selection process, the university paid the registration, travel, meal and lodging fees for the students, several whom also worked in Dr. Jones’ lab. It was some of the students’ first time attending a professional society meeting. Professor Jones was scheduled to present her latest research at the conference. The night before, Professor Jones met with the students at the hotel restaurant to discuss her presentation. The conversation was lively, and the group stayed at the hotel bar well after 11pm discussing the research. They all agreed to meet again the next day to have dinner together after the presentation was completed.

Both the Professor and students were required to register for the event. The registration process required participants to read and acknowledge AOS’ Policy on Diversity and Inclusion and its Meetings Code of Conduct, which requires a harassment-free and inclusive environment with a safe and positive experience for everyone, including that unacceptable behavior will not be tolerated at any time prior to, during or after an event and that a participant can be removed from the meeting without warning in response to an incident of unacceptable behavior. The society shared these goals and expectations in all conference written and electronic materials and trained all conference staff on them. The society also created an app whereby staff and members could report incidents (though not anonymously). AOS also trained hotel and conference center staff on their role in implementing the guidelines and expectations.

### Pause & Process

1. **From the students’, Dr. Jones’, and AOS’ perspectives,** did AOS’ Policy and Code of Conduct help them to understand what conduct norms they could expect at the meeting or during (or concurrent with) the events and activities surrounding the meeting?

**FACTS, Part 2 – The evenings’ events—the decision to attend the gay bar/cabaret outing :** The following day Professor Jones presented her paper and received much acclaim from society members and the science media who were present. As previously agreed, the students and Professor Jones met for dinner at the hotel restaurant. During the jovial dinner, Professor Jones told the graduate students that they could order whatever they wished for this celebratory meal, because it was “on the university.” All in

attendance consumed alcohol. At the end of the meal, Professor Jones asked the students what they were going to do for the rest of the evening. One of the students said, “I heard of a really cool gay bar with a red-hot cabaret show in the area, and a few us are going.” Professor Jones asked if she could join them. The students agreed.

**Pause &  
Process**

2. **From the students, university and AOS’ perspectives**, did the students experience sexual harassment? Did any students play a role in harassment?

Do your answers depend on Dr. Jones asking to join the group? Or the fact that Dr. Jones indicated that the activities were “on the university? Or that the students attended the meeting with the sponsorship of the university?

**FACTS, Part 3 – More of the evenings’ events:** Professor Jones ordered two Ubers using her university credit card and she took the group of students to the bar. She also paid the students’ club entry fee. While drinking throughout, the group watched the highly sexually charged show, featuring a dancing pole and performers in scant costumes. Professor Jones clapped wildly and exclaimed, “Hell, I’m a rock star scientist. I deserve this.” She then took off her shirt, exposed her bra, and started dancing on the strip pole. At least some of the students laughed and seemed to be enjoying the evening. After a while, Professor Jones ordered two Ubers that took the students back to the hotel. The hotel security guard noticed the boisterous group of obviously inebriated students, accompanied by Professor Jones, stumbling toward the elevators and asked Professor Jones for her name and whether the students were okay. Professor Jones laughed, gave her name and said everyone’s fine, as they all fell into the elevator.

**Pause &  
Process**

3. **Were the students in a position to object to the outing**, or the events that occurred once at the bar? Why didn’t the students report what had happened?
4. **What might have been the impact** if a few students planned the outing and invited other students—but Dr. Jones was never involved?
5. **What might have been the impact** if a few students banded together to object to the outing , or to leave once the sexualized show started, or when Professor Jones’ performance began?

**FACTS, Part 4 – After the incident:** The head of security then contacted the AOS Chief Diversity Officer (‘CDO’) to alert him to the behavior that was observed and gave him Professor Jones’ name. The CDO contacted the President of the society, and they decided to immediately institute the Society’s protocol to respond when a potential incident involving misconduct, or implicating the safety of meeting participants, may have occurred.

The AOS CDO contacted Dr. Jones to find out what had occurred during the evening and asked her for the names of the students. Once he learned of the details of the outing, he questioned the students to determine if they were harmed or felt in danger. The students all agreed that there was no threat of harm to them, acknowledged that a lot of drinking was involved, and confirmed that there had been no inappropriate touching or sexual advances. Several students noted that they were not comfortable with attending but didn’t want to “ruin the fun” for the other students.

The AOS CDO confirmed that Professor Jones’ account was similar to that of the students. The CDO then contacted the university’s Title IX Coordinator. While waiting on a follow up response from the institution, the CDO and President conferred and agreed that based on their established zero tolerance

policy regarding unacceptable behavior, and in accordance with their protocol, Professor Jones should be immediately removed from the conference. They contacted Professor Jones, told her of the decision, and asked for her to leave the premises and all conference activities immediately.

When the AOS CDO spoke to the university Title IX coordinator, the CDO said that the society would defer to the university's decision on whether the students could remain at the conference. However, the CDO emphasized that the students would be at the conference with no Faculty Advisor. As such, given the poor judgement exhibited by the students while on a university sponsored trip, the institution instructed the students to return back to campus immediately.

**Pause &  
Process**

**6. From the students', university's, and AOS' perspectives**, did policies and conduct codes help them determine if a student, faculty or society member was acting at odds with their respective policies and aims? Was there any aspect that could have been clearer? If so, would that affect how the institutions should respond? Prevent recurrence?

**7. From AOS' perspective**, if no one is reporting concerns about their experiences at society meetings, can AOS assume nothing problematic is occurring? How could AOS assess experiences without relying on reporting alone?

**8. Is legal compliance, while necessary, enough** to create inclusive and equitable climate and culture in fields? Is a pronouncement of welcome—or even “zero tolerance” for harassment—in a society's or institution's policy enough? What aims and key content define an effective ethics policy? What associated action is needed?

**9. Given the students' positions as early career professionals**, how could the behavior they encountered impact their career trajectories? What special concerns and challenges arise when considering early career professionals—generally and those of marginalized identities?

**10. This case study detailed experiences in association with, but not at, a society meeting. How could the harms to the students be amplified in other settings or situations?**

## Section 2. Discussion & Suggested Responses

Identity-based harassment and bias can have disparate and devastating impact on individuals who are early in their careers<sup>1</sup> or have less social capital in a field (disproportionately, but not always, women, women of color, members of the LGBTQ+ community, or people who identify as members of other marginalized groups in STEMM). Our discussion of this case study examines points throughout the experiences detailed to shine light on – and create understanding and empathy for -- the various perspectives involved in the case study. Power differentials are often at play in instances of sexual harassment, assault, and intersecting racial and gender-based harassment. However, peers and those in earlier stages of education or career can also cause harm.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> “Early career” can include post-doctoral scholars, residents, non-tenure track faculty/researchers, untenured tenure-track faculty (e.g., assistant professor), and other professionals. Graduate and undergraduate students are also included, although their position is distinct. Within this group, there are differences in the experiences and agency of each role in relation to the others that may influence the effect on them of others' misconduct and the response.

<sup>2</sup> In discussing these power differentials, the analysis uses terms such as “a mid-career professional.” This is a person who has past entry-level and, for faculty, typically has been tenured (i.e., tenured associate professors). A “late-career professional” is generally a person who has been promoted to top tenured faculty ranks and/or has gained honors or other substantial renown and influence in a field (e.g., tenured full professors, distinguished professors, endowed professors, emeritus professors and researchers with world renown and top honors).

It is important to consider the case study from two perspectives (1) What happened, and what was done well or could have been done better in relation to these facts? and (2) In light of the **Section 4. Elements**, what actions can be taken beyond the case at hand to advance a more inclusive, equitable and ethical climate and culture in the institution, society, and field.

**NOTE: For group facilitators creating a single, stand-alone learning experience**, consider using:

- (1) Introduction + Facts centered on “Pause & Process” questions 1 and 6; or
- (2) Introduction + Facts centered on “Pause & Process” questions 3, 4, and 5; or
- (3) Introduction + Facts centered on “Pause & Process” questions 2 and 9

### ANALYSIS, Part 1 – Introduction:

*Tenured Professor Jones, is female identifying, on the tenured faculty of a selective research university, and directs a research program at the university that employs several high achieving graduate students. Dr. Jones’ twin sister is also a scientist in a different field of study. Dr. Jones sister identifies as lesbian, and Dr. Jones has witnessed firsthand many biases and barriers experienced by her sister. In particular, her sister has recounted many times when she has felt excluded from afterhours social events at scientific conferences in her male-dominated field.*

*Dr. Jones is also a board member of the Association of Scientists (AOS), and attended AOS’ annual conference with four students from her university, as the assigned Faculty Advisor. After a competitive selection process, the university paid the registration, travel, meal and lodging fees for the selected students, several whom also worked in Dr. Jones lab. It was the students first time attending a professional society meeting. Professor Jones was scheduled to present her latest research at the conference. The night before her presentation, Professor Jones met with the students at the hotel restaurant to discuss her presentation. The conversation was lively, and the group stayed at the hotel bar well after 11pm discussing the research. They all agreed to meet again the next day to have dinner together after the presentation was completed.*

*Both the Professor and students were required to register for the event. The registration process required participants to read and acknowledge AOS’ Policy on Diversity and Inclusion and its Meetings Code of Conduct, which requires a harassment-free and inclusive environment with a safe and positive experience for everyone, including that unacceptable behavior will not be tolerated at any time prior to, during or after an event and that a participant can be removed from the meeting without warning in response to an incident of unacceptable behavior. The society shared these goals and expectations in all conference written and electronic materials and trained all conference staff on them. The society also created an app whereby staff and members could report incidents (though not anonymously). They also trained hotel and conference center staff on their role in implementing the guidelines and expectations.*

**1. From the students, Dr. Jones and AOS’ perspectives**, did AOS’s Policy and Code of Conduct help them to understand what conduct norms they could expect at the meeting or during (or concurrent with) the events and activities surrounding the meeting?

**RESPONSE:**

- Broad statements requiring an “harassment-free and inclusive environment,” and that “unacceptable behavior will not be tolerated at any time,” are often mistaken for strong and effective policy. The fact is

that people in a range of roles, stages of career, influence, and experiences in the field and society-at-large, are likely to attribute widely different meanings to such phrases if left to their own interpretations. That is borne out by the facts of this case, where despite such statements, students and society leaders engaged in, experienced, and failed to report, unacceptable conduct including sexual harassment. Meeting organizers, and even hotel staff, had a clear idea that an incident in violation of policy had likely occurred (at least as to obvious drunkenness), and responded promptly, but such awareness was not obvious to the students at their first society meeting or even to Dr. Jones, a senior professor and society board member.

- Dr. Jones’ knowledge of her sisters’ experiences may have led her in a misguided attempt to make students feel at ease at the meeting, and to be inclusive of the LBGTQ+ experience by going to a gay bar with them. Relationships with members of the dominant community often enhance career support and advancement for early career professionals, with particularly high impact for those from marginalized groups. However, attending *any* bar or venue that offers a asexualized performance (that it was a gay bar is beside the point) and encouraging excessive drinking have no place in professional settings (where unrelated to the substance of the work)—and certainly have no place in a faculty- or other evaluator/mentor-student relationship.

**ACTIONS TO PREVENT OR REMEDY:**

- AOS’s training of both their own and the hotel staff to recognize potential incidents resulted in their immediately recognizing and responding to a harmful situation. But such awareness and ownership did not extend to meeting participants.
- This evidences, that **zero-tolerance policies are often ineffective**. Effective policies address the possibility of bad acts and are **explicit** about the community’s professional, ethical and inclusive aims—using examples of the kinds of conduct that support those aims and are expected vs. conduct that undermines those aims and will not be tolerated. People of many identities and stages of career should have input into policy development to help individuals (particularly those in dominant roles) to “walk in others’ shoes” and elevate awareness of conduct that is harmful.
- **Clear definitions of key terms** (with examples) are also important, as conduct that is “obviously” harmful to some, may not be understood as harmful by all. **Example “Dos and Don’ts”** (in flyers, posters and handbooks), including some on people in a range of roles socializing in conference and non-conference settings make expectations more concrete and understandable for everyone. **Case studies and facilitated conversations** can be used to help people in all roles to understand what is expected of themselves and others, and how others experience their conduct. That preparation could have helped Dr. Jones to understand how her conduct harmed the graduate students, rather than helping them to feel included.
- AOS admirably intended its code of conduct to apply beyond on-site, or official conference events. However, it was unclear, at least to some, that social activities involving or affecting conference participants—outside of official conference activities or regular conference hours—are covered. **Be explicit about such coverage.**
- AOS included its conduct policy in meetings materials and followed good practice to require that participants acknowledge reading it. But that’s not enough to **ensure that inclusive conduct norms and expectations are socialized—known, owned, shared, and accessible**—by the full range of relevant audiences, from early-career professionals new to society activities, to the late-career, field leaders, and frequent participants and presenters at meetings.
- **Accompanying, accessible, and widely distributed guidance summarizing key points** (e.g., participant guides and concrete “Dos” and “Don’ts” in flyers and posters) are critical. Conduct norms should be highlighted at the beginning of plenary sessions. **Orientations at the beginning of a meeting or society activity** can be particularly helpful to conference leaders and facilitators, as well as to early-career professionals who are navigating their first engagements with the society. Such orientations should go

beyond the logistics and content of the meeting, and address the professional conduct expected of all members, at all times.

- It is unclear from the facts whether excessive drinking alone would have violated the policy. But alcohol can reduce inhibitions and negatively impact boundaries of professional behavior, particularly when a professor engages in and encourages the consumption of alcohol by students they supervise. **Guidance, and perhaps bright-line rules, regarding alcohol consumption can be helpful**, particularly for new and inexperienced members.

**REVIEW:**

- Societies Consortium Compendium of Existing Resources (**Compendium**) (access **Compendium** under Consortium’s **Library**/Practical Implementation Tools)/Understanding the Compendium/click on to access: Sexual Harassment of Women, Climate, Culture, and Consequences in Academic Sciences, Engineering and Medicine (**NASEM June 2018 Report**))
- Visit the **Consortium LinkedIn Platform (CLIP)** -- A members-only space for collaboration and thought-partnership for members of the Societies Consortium.
- **Outcome Vision & Research Framework** document (Consortium adaptations, for societies, of outcome-actions from NASEM’s June 2018 Report and key research from the Report related to the Consortium’s strategic plan) (access from Consortium’s **Homepage**/About/Key Documents)
- Societies Consortium Roadmap Towards Excellence and Integrity in STEMM (**Roadmap**) (access **Roadmap** from **Homepage**/Latest News/May 28, 2020 entry)
- **Roadmap/Stage 1/Dos & Don’ts** (click on link to documents in gray box)
- **Roadmap/Stage 1/Meetings & Ethics/Conduct Short Form Policies and Participants’ Guides** (click on links to documents in gray box)
- **Societies Consortium Model Ethics/Conduct-Harassment Policy & Model Meetings Policy** (access under **Library**/Model Policies, or through **Roadmap/Stage 2: “Chose Your Adventure: Policy Development”/Meetings & Ethics/Conduct Polices** (click on links to documents in gray box))
- Societies Consortium Model Glossary of Terms (**Model Glossary**) (access under **Library**/Model Policies)
- **Compendium/Meetings C. Members’ Inclusive Meetings Initiatives**

**ANALYSIS, Part 2 -- The evening’s events—the decision to attend the gay bar/cabaret outing :**

*The following day Professor Jones presented her paper and received much acclaim from society members and the media who were present. As previously agreed, the students and Professor Jones met for dinner at the hotel restaurant. During the jovial dinner, Professor Jones told the students that they could order whatever they wished for this celebratory meal, because it was “on the university.” All in attendance engaged in alcohol consumption. At the end of the meal, Professor Jones asked the students what they were going to do for the rest of the evening. One of the students said, “I heard of a really cool gay bar with a red-hot cabaret show in the area, and a few of us are going.” Professor Jones asked if she could join them. The students agreed.*



**2. From the students, university and AOS’ perspectives, did the students experience sexual harassment? Did any students play a role in harassment?**

Do your answers depend on Dr. Jones asking to join the group? Or the fact that Dr. Jones indicated that the activities were “on the university? Or that the students attended the meeting with the sponsorship of the university?

**RESPONSE**

- In this case study, some students planned an outing that included a “red hot” cabaret, and some others may have wanted to go too. All students could not consent to this highly sexualized activity (at *any* venue—that it was a gay bar is beside this point) or an to evening centered on excessive drinking. Also, we don’t



know if the students that arranged the outing were acting in solidarity with members of the LGBTQ+ community or were planning the outing to a gay bar for amusement to gawk at the community—clear gender harassment. Analysis of this case assumes that ill intent was not at play—but be sensitive to that possibility (which may arise in discussion.) “Group think” and peer pressure prevented effective consent and resulted in student-to-student sexual/gender harassment—which is not always understood and bears emphasis in policies, training, and orientations.

- By omission and commission, Dr. Jones failed in her role as a faculty advisor and senior society leader by not asking more about what made the cabaret “red hot” and not stopping a sexualized event from taking place. She exacerbated the harm by first failing to act when the sexualized cabaret began and then adding her own sexualized performance. She failed to model professional, ethical and inclusive conduct expected by the society, and contributed to sexual harassment and a sexually hostile environment. The power differences between the students and their professor—exacerbated by Professor Jones’ prominence in the society and the university, and her control over the research program—made it particularly difficult for the students to object to, or even opt out of, the outing. Even the students who planned, or willingly attended, may have felt it was untenable to leave the bar despite the escalating inappropriateness of events unfolding, including Dr. Jones dance on the strip pole.
- That the students were sponsored by the university (i.e., they were selected to attend, and their costs were covered, by the university) or that Dr. Jones’ offered to pay for the activities on the university’s account is not determinative of whether the conduct was sexual harassment. Dr. Jones, as a university and society leader, should have quashed the event regardless of whether or not she served as their faculty advisor for a sponsored event. Her having attended the event, and even implicitly (by participating) encouraging others to attend – will likely have an ongoing negative impact on the students’ engagement with Dr. Jones at the university, regardless of who paid for their evening at the bar. That it was a sponsored event and paid by the university contributes to, but does not define, the harm. These facts may have made it harder for the students to object by creating the perception that the university and AOS endorsed or at least tolerated socializing in a sexualized activity and heavy drinking. The scope of AOS’ and the university’s conduct codes is relevant to determining whether a violation of either occurred. But with or without a violation, sexual harassment occurred; the question is what could have been done to prevent and respond to it.

#### **ACTIONS TO PREVENT OR REMEDY:**

- **Assuring an explicitly broad-scope conduct code that covers after-hours, unsponsored, and all locale activities when members of the community are involved is important.** Well understood conduct expectations— amplified by examples of what conduct is harmful to individuals, the society, and the field, and why, contrasted with positive inclusive conduct -- are essential.
- Early-career professionals are often in the dark about what to expect at society events, and when interacting with their faculty and others in senior and leadership roles. They may assume that faculty/leader behavior —even when in violation of express society and university aims and policies—is, in fact, accepted or at least tolerated as the norm, both at society- or university-sponsored events and beyond. **Conduct codes, concrete and broadly disseminated Dos, Don’ts, and accessible and well-disseminated participation guides** should clearly extend conduct expectations to any engagement with a member of the learning or professional community in a manner that could adversely affect: individuals’ experience or ability to fully participate; the society’s or university’s mission; or the individuals’, society’s, or university’s reputation. **Training and orientations**—with examples— and positive role modeling by faculty and other leaders are critical for clarity on the conduct that is valued and required by all in the society and institution communities.

#### **REVIEW:**

- **Roadmap/Stage 1**/"Communicate Inclusive Conduct Expectations" (and accompanying Consortium Resources (click on links to documents in gray box))
- Societies Consortium 5-Step Slide Guide (**5-Step Guide**), with more detailed guidance on first steps to create basic inclusive conduct expectations and some informal process (access **5-Step Guide** through **Roadmap/Stage 1** (click on **5-Slide Guide** link in gray box))

### ANALYSIS, Part 3– More of the evenings' events:

*Professor Jones ordered two Ubers using her university credit card and she took the group of students to the bar. She also paid the students' club entry fee. While drinking throughout, the group watched the highly sexually charged show, featuring a dancing pole and performers in scant costumes. Professor Jones clapped wildly and exclaimed, "Hell, I'm a rock star scientist. I deserve this." She then took off her shirt, exposed her bra, and started dancing on the strip pole. At least some of the students laughed and seemed to be enjoying the evening. After a while, Professor Jones ordered two Ubers that took the students back to the hotel. The hotel security guard noticed the boisterous group of obviously inebriated students accompanied by Professor Jones stumbling toward the elevators and asked Professor Jones for her name and whether the students were okay. Professor Jones laughed, gave her name and said everyone's fine, as they all fell into the elevator.*

**3. Were the students in a position to object to the outing, or the events that occurred once at the bar? Why didn't the students report what had happened?**

#### RESPONSE:

- AOS created an app for reporting potential violations of its conduct policies, though anonymity was not an option. A well-advertised and known app can make reporting an incident easier in the moment and facilitate a prompt response. But it is unclear from the case study whether or not staff and contacts were also available, and accessible, to assist on reporting or other options for addressing uncomfortable situations. The students did not seek out advice, or report the conduct, even though some students were uncomfortable. That indicates weaknesses in AOS's reporting policy, procedures, or associated support.

#### ACTIONS TO PREVENT OR REMEDY:

- **Reporting policies should be readily accessible in a variety of meeting materials.** Who to contact for guidance should be posted in prominent places, including, here, on the app.
- **Offering a range of reporting and resolution options** (anonymous, informal, and formal), with confidential guidance, can increase the likelihood of reporting. Here, allowing anonymous reporting (on the app or otherwise) may have surfaced the problem early or prevented it entirely, without requiring a person to expose themselves.
- **Trained allies at meetings**—with prominent badges or other markings—provide valuable assistance, in the moment, on safe ways for individuals to get out of uncomfortable situations and information on where to find further assistance. Confidential ombudspersons can explain the pros and cons of reporting options and help individuals navigate difficulties. Consider stationing allies around the conference hotel and at both formal events and locales in the vicinity where conference attendees are likely to socialize, such as nearby bars. Provide a private place for an ombudsperson to be stationed at the hotel, where they can maintain confidentiality.
- **Highlighting prohibitions against retaliation, and consistently and seriously enforcing them, are critical.**
- **A key lever for prevention – including encouraging reporting – is to change any reality and perception** (even if the perception isn't accurate) that a society or institution tolerates harassment or won't enforce

policies when leaders or distinguished researchers are the perpetrators. The benefits for targets of reporting must outweigh the perceived (and often real) risks to relationships and career, considering the experience of people in a range of roles. Regularly reporting to the community about the existence and aims of conduct and honors policies, reporting options, and resources, as well as in an anonymized form (to protect privacy) about the frequency, type, and serious response to incidents, is an effective way to demonstrate a society's or institution's serious commitment to professional, ethical, and inclusive climate and evenhanded implementation of associated policies.

**REVIEW:**

- [Section 4. Elements](#) to learn more about effective practices for communicating policies and reporting options
- **5-Slide Guide**, Step 3: Create and communicate Ways to Raise Concerns (and accompanying Consortium Resources)
- **Compendium/Ombuds Programs**
- **Compendium/National Academies June 2018 Report**, Chapter 6, Ombuds Offices
- **Societies Consortium Model Template** -- Reporting Out on Conduct Concerns and accompanying Design Guide (access under **Library/Practical Implementation Tools**, or through **Roadmap/Stage 3: "Navigate Change: Community Building** (click on links to Report Template and Design Guide in gray box))

**4. What might have been the impact** if a few students planned the outing and invited other students—but Dr. Jones was never involved?

**5. What might have been the impact** if a few students banded together to object to the outing , or to leave once the sexualized show started, or when Professor Jones' performance began?

**RESPONSE:**

- It is clearly the responsibility of academic and professional societies, institutions, and other research entities to have policies, practices, and norms in place that effectively demonstrate harmful conduct which is prohibited. It is also essential to have practices and procedures in place intended to prevent harmful situations before they occur. Assuring the policies and resources are well-known to people in a full range of roles and experience levels is critical. That didn't happen here. Dr. Jones clearly failed to fulfill the responsibility of a faculty member both initially, when she didn't explore the nature of the outing and prevent it from happening, and once there, by first failing to initiate an exit when the sexualized show began and then adding to the sexualized conduct with her own performance. The students who planned the outing and group peer pressure also created harm; harassers need not be in a position of seniority to those they harass.
- While students attending a professional conference shouldn't have been in the situation described in the case study, harassment occurs even with the best of policies. Individuals can help themselves and peers can help one another to extricate themselves from a bad situation in the moment, if their society and institution prepare them in advance.

**ACTIONS TO PREVENT OR REMEDY:**

- Unfortunately, it is not always easy for students to speak up in the face of misconduct, particularly when the perpetrator is a faculty member or a group of their peers. The students here would have benefited from a **pre-conference orientation**, with examples of expected professional, ethical and inclusive conduct, as well as prohibited unprofessional, unethical, and harmful conduct, at official events and while socializing outside of those events.
- **Case-studies like this one and hands-on role-playing** can be very helpful. **Ally and bystander programs** can offer in the moment support as well. With that preparation, it is possible that some of the students could have acted individually or joined together to suggest an alternative, and voice concern about going to the bar and cabaret—or to feign a headache or exhaustion, return to their rooms, and report their concern.

Even one student’s action might have inspired others to act and mitigated the pressure to go along. If enough students had acted, even the students that planned the outing might have had second thoughts and the evening might have ended. Here, the students who were harassed appeared to lack guidance from the society or their university to empower them to respond in a self-protective manner.

**REVIEW**

- **Compendium/Training A. Advocate and Ally Training**
- **Compendium/Training C. Bystander Training/Trainers**
- **National Academies June 2018 Report**, Chapter 6/Reducing Bias and Responding to Harassment—Including Bystander Intervention


**ANALYSIS, Part 4 – After the incident**

*The head of security then contacted the AOS Chief Diversity Officer (‘CDO’) to alert him to the behavior that was observed and gave him Professor Jones’ name. The CDO contacted the President of the society, and they decided to immediately institute the Society’s protocol to respond when a potential incident involving misconduct or implicating the safety of meeting participants may have occurred.*

*The AOS CDO contacted Dr. Jones to find out what had occurred during the evening and asked for the names of the students. Once he learned of the details of the outing, he questioned the students to determine if they were harmed or felt in danger. The students all agreed that there was no threat of harm to them, acknowledged that a lot of drinking was involved, and confirmed that there had been no inappropriate touching or sexual advances. Several students noted that they were not comfortable with attending but didn’t want to “ruin the fun” for the other students.*

*The AOS CDO confirmed that Professor Jones’ account was similar to that of the students. The CDO then contacted the university’s Title IX Coordinator. While waiting on a follow up response from the institution, the CDO and President conferred and agreed that based on their established zero tolerance policy regarding unacceptable behavior, and in accordance with their protocol, Professor Jones should be immediately removed from the conference. They contacted Professor Jones, told her of the decision, and asked for her to leave the premises and all conference activities immediately.*

*When the AOS CDO spoke to the university Title IX coordinator, the CDO said that the society would defer to the university’s decision on whether the students could remain at the conference. However, the CDO emphasized that the students would be at the conference with no Faculty Advisor. As such, given the poor judgement exhibited by the students while on a university sponsored trip, the institution instructed the students to return back to campus immediately.*

-  **6. From the students’, university’s, and AOS’ perspectives**, did policies and conduct codes help them determine if a student, faculty or society member was acting at odds with their respective policies and aims? Was there any aspect that could have been clearer? If so, would that affect how the institutions should respond? Prevent recurrence?

**RESPONSE:**

- The actions by AOS’s meeting staff to immediately institute the Society’s incident response protocol indicates excellent staff awareness of conduct expectations and training by AOS. However, the fact the

incident occurred, and was not reported by any participant, indicates that AOS had not successfully extended such awareness and training to all society members.

- The CDO clearly trained all staff, including hotel staff, on their roles in implementing the policy and related protocols to address any concerning activity. The society pre-arranged authority to impose immediate, specified consequences to ensure the safety of participants. All parties involved had the opportunity to be heard before imposing consequences (e.g., requiring Dr. Jones to leave the conference immediately). Additionally, clear roles were assigned regarding who would be involved in the decision-making process when concerns are raised about participants' conduct. Steps on how to handle those concerns, and a protocol to identify and engage any related organizations (e.g., the university's Title IX Coordinator) were also pre-determined and well understood—as were the decisions that the society should make in the first order (regarding its member, Dr. Jones) and the decisions that another organization should have an opportunity to make (regarding whether the students should be allowed to remain once their faculty advisor was required to leave).
- It is unclear, however, what, if any further action was taken by the AOS or the university against Dr. Jones or any students, when the facts indicated a need.
- While all students told the CDO that they did not feel harmed, some also said they felt uncomfortable and unable to object. When that happens repeatedly, and sometimes even once, there is harm—whether or not a student uses the term. Beware of labels when determining if sexual harassment has occurred and consider the substance of what occurred..
- It appears that some students may not have understood that they caused harm by exerting peer pressure against other students who were reluctant (overtly or by silence) to participate in the outing and felt unable to object. None of the students appear to have recognized that they caused harm to themselves and others by drinking excessively.
- It is unclear from the case study if any harm occurred to the community by the events that took place. We do not know the fallout from the incident, but it is likely that news of the incident reached back to the university community, as well as to society members. How AOS and the university respond—and whether they act to make improvements in their policies and systems—are likely to impact the reality, and their communities' perception, of the genuineness of their aims of inclusive and ethical conduct and climate.

#### **ACTIONS TO PREVENT OR REMEDY:**

- Pronouncements such as AOS' statement requiring a “harassment-free and inclusive environment” and that “unacceptable behavior will not be tolerated” ring hollow; establish unrealistic goals (that are not taken seriously); and do not alone change conduct or hold people accountable.
- **Robust and specific policies that incorporate aims and standards, address preventative measures, as well as response actions when standards aren't met, are needed** along with (1) concrete examples of expected and prohibited conduct to achieve the stated aims; (2) broad dissemination and highlights to elevate understanding and broad ownership; and (3) serious preventative and response actions, applied consistently to everyone, regardless of role and stage of career. Clear definitions of key terms (with examples) are also important. Harmful conduct might be “obvious” to some, but may not be understood by those of other identities and stages of career.
- AOS might determine it necessary to impose further consequences against Dr. Jones in light of the seriousness of the incident (e.g., revoking her membership for a time, removing her from board leadership) —which may require gaining additional authority from the AOS board and providing an additional opportunity for Dr. Jones to be heard. **Punishment alone and more process might not elevate Dr. Jones' understanding or prevent recurrence of harmful conduct, which are critical** if the aim of the society, university, and students who were harmed is to advance a more inclusive, professional, and ethical climate going forward. Where imposing consequences is the desired response, at a minimum the society or

institution must already have in place: documented and well understood aims and conduct expectations; some degree of process (even informal) with identified decision makers; and authority granted by the governing board (in bylaws, votes, or delegations) for at least some limited types of consequences that can be taken in response to a violation of specific conduct expectations.

- However, **it may be helpful to consider Dr. Jones’ experiences and perspectives in shaping an effective response in relation to inclusive and ethical aims.** It is possible, though incorrect, that Dr. Jones believed she was lending solidarity and support for students by embracing their choices. Punishment alone (or at all) and a full-blown investigation are not always the best way to achieve institutional and individual aims — though such actions are sometimes necessary for safety or when those who caused harm will not accept responsibility.<sup>3</sup> In other words, **there are circumstances when it will be important not to get bogged down in thorough investigations and processes,** to make a technical and formal determination of policy violations, if in a particular situation they do not best serve the society’s policy aims and targets’ needs to elevate community and individual ownership of healthy conduct and climate aims, increase understanding of harmful conduct, and prevent its recurrence.
- The university also may need to consider if additional consequences are warranted for the students, to address their poor judgment, peer pressure, and excessive drinking. While we assumed otherwise throughout the analysis, if the student organizers planned the outing to the gay bar to gawk at the community, there would be no excuse for such harassment and any response to it should include community building to elevate understanding of harm and avoidance of recurrence.
- **Community building is an essential tool to stem harm caused (even if unintentionally) within a society’s or institution’s community.** Even without the benefit of full facts sufficient for an investigation and formal finding, gaining key facts (to understand the harm experienced and the actions that caused it) and facilitated discussion(s) with Dr. Jones and the students—separately and, with their consent, together— might (i) elevate their respective understanding of AOS’ and the university’s community values and what/why conduct caused harm to those values and individuals; (ii) ownership by those who caused harm for having done so and empathy for those they’ve harmed, with a meaningful and measurable commitment not to repeat the harm (including Dr. Jones’ voluntary acceptance of preventative consequences such as monitoring or suspension of socializing with students alone anywhere, or serving as faculty advisor for students on trips); (iii) restore a sense of safety to those harmed; and (iv) begin to repair relationships. The benefits of these outcomes would extend beyond resolution of this incident to helping to create a more professional, ethical, inclusive and equitable climate going forward.

**REVIEW:**

- **5-Step Guide/Step 4** -- Create an Informal Resolution Process With Inclusive Community Building Aims and Practices (and accompanying, linked Consortium Resources)
- **5-Step Guide/Step 5** -- Obtain Society Board Authorization for Basic Response Actions When Needed for Safety, Non-disruption (and accompanying, linked Consortium Resources)
- **Societies Consortium Model Informal Resolution Process** (access under **Library/Model Policies**, or through **5-Step Guide/Step 4/Consortium Resources**, or through **Roadmap/Stage 2/Investigation/Resolution Resources** (click on linked documents in gray box))
- **Societies Consortium Pyramid Tool** (interactive chart aligning possible responsive action with type of process required and aligned consequences) (access through **5-Step Guide/Step 5/Consortium Resources**, or through **Roadmap/Stage 2/Investigation/Resolution Resources**)

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<sup>3</sup> If a report of misconduct is not credible because it is physically impossible for the bad act to have occurred (e.g., there is certainty that the person alleged to be present wasn’t), the action is to make that credibility determination. If there is clear evidence of a bad faith report, the response will focus on the reporter.

- **Societies Consortium Model Investigations, Resolutions and Consequences Policy Guide**, particularly Part G.3.IB.b, which includes requirements and specific policy language for taking effective and ethical interim safety measures (access under **Library/Model Policies**, or **Roadmap/Stage 2/Investigation/Resolution Resources** )
- **Model Glossary/Credible question** (of professional and ethical conduct) – which includes both a definition of “credible” and factors to consider to determine if a credible question exists.
- **Roadmap/Stage 3: “Navigate Change: Community Building”**
- **Societies Consortium First Annual Members Convening/Important Characteristics of Community and Restorative Actions**
- **Model Glossary/Restorative Actions**
- **Compendium/Community Building and Restorative Action Resources and Initiative**

7. **From AOS’ perspective**, if no one is reporting concerns about their experiences at society meetings, can AOS assume nothing problematic is occurring? How could AOS assess experiences without relying on reporting alone?

**RESPONSE:**

- Society leaders and Boards should not rely on lack of reporting to conclude absence of problems. Permitting anonymous reporting and conducting anonymized climate surveys of members and meeting participants can be effective ways for Boards to determine and communicate to their communities the actual occurrence of, and harm caused by, exclusionary, unprofessional, unethical, and inequitable conduct. Reporting out to members with transparency about problems identified by these assessment tools and actions taken or planned to address the problems leads to accountability for change.
- Encouraging, and implementing effective, reporting is not enough. Each report should have a response. If a society has a good process, takes effective action, and reports back to its community about the kinds and frequency of misconduct and the kinds of response (even without specific details to protect privacy), the community will internalize that prohibitions against unprofessional and unethical conduct are seriously enforced. With that confidence, others are more likely to report concerns and to embrace expected conduct norms.

**REVIEW:**

- **Compendium/Data & Self-Assessment resources**
- **Compendium/Surveys**
- **Societies Consortium Model Template -- Reporting Out on Conduct Concerns**, and accompanying Design Guide

8. Is legal compliance, while necessary, enough to create inclusive and equitable climate and culture in fields? Is a pronouncement of welcome—or even “zero tolerance” for harassment—in a society’s or institution’s policy enough? What aims and key content define an effective ethics policy? What associated action is needed?

**RESPONSE:**

- Dr. Jones’ conduct raised questions of legal compliance with Title IX. However, such a finding is not necessary to conclude that students experienced unethical and unprofessional conduct contrary to AOS’ stated mission of inclusion for excellence. The graduate students may have been of legal drinking age but that doesn’t eliminate the harms of their excessive consumption or of the pressure they were under to participate.
- Policy standards, guidance, training, and enforcement that satisfy, but exceed, bare legal requirements are necessary to create professional, ethical, inclusive, and equitable conduct, climate, and culture.

**REVIEW:**

- [Section 4. Elements](#) for additional information on best aims and evidence for the creation of policy beyond legal compliance.

9. Given the students' positions as early career professionals, how could the behavior they encountered impact their career trajectories? What special concerns and challenges arise when implementing policies in incidents involving early career professionals—generally and those of marginalized communities?

**RESPONSE:**

- Students and early career professionals are highly dependent on the good will of professors, advisors, and mentors as they seek to advance in academics and careers. The effect can be exacerbated for those from marginalized communities whose families may lack the social and professional connections—and whose relationships with mentors may be limited—to help them access opportunities.
- Limited, competitive research opportunities are necessary to succeed, and are often largely controlled by one professor who can enhance or derail a student's or early career professional's prospects.
- While the limited number of opportunities speaks to the importance of faculty, post-doc, resident, and student mentorship and sponsorship, it also creates significant potential for abuse of power and requires high ethical standards, including clear boundaries between professional and personal relationships. The same can be said about the relationship among faculty at different stages of career and degrees of influence.
- Leaders or "stars" in the field can have an outsized role in decision-making.

**ACTIONS TO PREVENT OR REMEDY:**

- Diminishing the power of single faculty members by providing central funding for student and early career professional enrichment opportunities, including meeting attendance, and providing mentoring committees rather than single mentors can help minimize abuse of power by an individual. Assuring that mentoring committees include a broad diversity of experiences and identities of people can contribute to practices that are effective for all students—not only those with more social capital.

**REVIEW:**

- [Compendium/National Academies June 2018 Report](#), Chapter 6 Changing the Culture and Climate in Higher Education/Diffusing Power Structure and Reducing Isolation
- [Societies Consortium 3/24/22 Hot Topics Webinar](#): Engaging student and early career members in society leadership (access through [Library/Practical Implementation Tools](#))

10. This case study detailed experiences associated with, but not at, a society meeting, how could the harms to the students be amplified in other settings or situations?

**RESPONSE:**

- Without undermining the uniqueness of each society's and institution's mission and policies, fundamental inclusive conduct standards and expectations in common can significantly affect climate and culture across entities and a field.
- The incidents in this case study affected all of the individuals' participation in the conference—and would have affected the quality of their experience even if they were not required to leave. But that was not the limit of the harm. Due to the overlapping roles of individuals in society and academic department leadership, harms in one setting are amplified. Dr. Jones had leadership roles at both AOS and the university, expanding the possible impacts of her sexual harassment across the society's events and the university's research program. Her example acclimated upcoming generations of scientists to harmful norms thus expanding the potential for greater harm.



- Conversely, effective policy, concrete guidance (dos and don'ts), and awareness-raising about harmful vs. ethical and inclusive conduct for leaders in one setting can positively impact and encourage healthy role-modeling by them in other settings, as well. When role modeling is reinforced by guidance and awareness raising for those in a wide range of roles, everyone is held accountable regardless of role, and accountability is broadly recognized, climate and culture changes.