CASE STUDY #1

The Difficult Co-Worker

Elizabeth is a Mormon. During a disagreement regarding a joint project, a co-worker, Sam, told Elizabeth that she didn’t know what she was talking about and that she should go back to Salt Lake City. When she subsequently proposes a different approach to the project, Sam tells her that her suggestions are as “flaky” as he would expect from “her kind.” When Elizabeth tries to resolve the conflict, Sam tells her that if she is uncomfortable working with him, she can either ask to be reassigned, or she can “just pray about it.” Over the next six months, Sam regularly makes negative references to Elizabeth’s religion.

Guiding Questions

➢ Is this situation problematic? Why or Why not?
➢ What are the primary issues?
➢ How would you handle this situation if the student or employee came to you?
➢ Would you refer the case? If so where? If not, why?
➢ What additional information would you require to assess the situation?

Put yourself in the position of the supervisor, or department head.

➢ What might happen if you do nothing?
➢ What could happen if you leave it to the two students to work out?
➢ What should you do next?
CASE STUDY #2

“Oh, That’s Just Bob!”

Bob, an employee in a department, regularly tells off-color jokes, is rude to coworkers, nicknames them derogatory names behind their backs and uses sexual and racial slurs. He has made some of these comments in front of his supervisor, Dale.

His coworkers are upset by the conduct but feel that since Dale hasn’t done anything about it, they just have to put up with it. Joan, a new employee, approaches Dale to complain. Dale tells her that Bob is a good worker and “doesn’t mean anything” by the comments. “That’s just Bob.”

Question:

A) Even though Bob’s conduct is rude, it is not a hostile environment since everyone else has been able to deal with it.

B) Dale should have contacted EO when Joan complained.

C) Bob’s conduct is harassment only if he really meant to bother people.

D) Dale should have addressed this with Bob when he first heard Bob making the comments.
CASE STUDY #3

Culture-Based Miscommunication?

Pam, a staff member, regularly engages in friendly small-talk with Ahmed, an international post-doc.

Ahmed’s culture is more formal, with defined rules for male-female interactions. He views Pam’s conversations with him as romantic interest.

One day, Ahmed hugs Pam and discloses his attraction toward her. Pam is upset and files a complaint. Ahmed is shocked by the complaint. Pam stresses that she just wants him to stop because she’s not interested in him.

Guiding Questions

➢ Is this situation problematic? Why or Why not?
➢ What are the primary issues?
➢ How would you handle this situation if the student or employee came to you?
➢ Would you refer the case? If so where? If not, why?
➢ What additional information would you require to assess the situation?

Put yourself in the position of the supervisor.

➢ What might happen if you do nothing?
➢ What could happen if you leave it to the two students to work out?
➢ What should you do next?
CASE STUDY #4

Office Party

Mary Ann is a department chair. She reserves a private room at a local restaurant for the departmental holiday dinner. At the dinner, one of the faculty members in the department, Eric, becomes inebriated and starts loudly commenting on female staff members’ physical attributes, including the size of their breasts. The other staff members have been drinking as well, and laugh at the comments. Mary Ann witnesses the conduct but doesn’t want to ruin anyone’s fun. Besides, Eric behaves this way at every holiday party.

The next day, Mary Ann is approached by Derek, a new faculty member, who tells her that Eric’s behavior went too far.

Questions

A) Eric has violated the Discrimination and Harassment Policy
B) Since people were laughing at the conduct and no one objected, it was welcomed by all and therefore not harassment
C) Both Eric and Mary Ann have violated the Discrimination and Harassment Policy
D) If Eric was too drunk to know what he was doing, he can use that in his defense since his actions weren’t intentional.
CASE STUDY #5

The Inappropriate Professor

Shada is Lebanese graduate student working in the Diabetes Nutrition lab with Dr. Moore and other graduate students. Dr. Moore is Shada’s immediate supervisor. Shada has been the subject of several offensive comments by Dr. Moore. Shada is the only female in the lab and is often made to work in a separate rear office while her male counterparts were allow to work in the front of the lab with Dr. Moore. On one occasion when Shada was spelling a word for a fellow graduate student, Dr. Moore interrupted her by stating, “This is America, not Lebanon.” Out of the blue one day, Dr. Moore asked Shada if she was wearing a bra and commented that she was “looking good.

More than a few times, Dr. Moore commented that he wondered what her body looked like underneath all those clothes and asked Shada if she ever gets hot. Last month, Dr. Moore told Shada that she could not attend a department social event because it was only for Americans. The last straw was last week, when Shada told everyone she was going out for lunch and asked if anyone wanted her to bring something back. Dr. Moore started naming a lot of different food items. When Shada asked how he expected her to carry all those items, Dr. Moore commented that she should carry it on her head since “that’s what Arabs do.”

Shada contacted her academic advisor and the Dean of Students Office.
What’s Your Name?

Rosa, Lisa and Carly were in the common lounge in their residence hall watching television. After Rosa and Lisa started talking and laughing loudly, Carly confronted them because she could not concentrate on her show. There was an exchange of words between Carly and Rosa that became heated. During this exchange, Carly said, “You people come here and think you can act however you want,” and called Rosa a “stupid Puerto Rican.” Rosa then slapped Carly in the face and shoved her. Lisa left to get the CA and to call ISUPD.

Guiding Questions

➢ Is this situation problematic? Why or Why not?
➢ What are the primary issues?
➢ How would you handle this situation if the student or employee came to you?
➢ Would you refer the case? If so where? If not, why?
➢ What additional information would you require to assess the situation?

Put yourself in the position of the supervisor.

➢ What might happen if you do nothing?
➢ What could happen if you leave it to the two students to work out?
➢ What should you do next?
CASE: Two Sides To A Coin

Two students who work part-time in an office on campus are having trouble getting along in the office. Their supervisor interviews each of them. Both report that they used to be great friends and often went out for beer together after work. The male student asserts that the tension resulted from his rejection of the female student's sexual advances. He claims that ever since he rejected her, she has said nasty personal things to him and about him to other members of the office staff, creating a hostile work environment. The female student says that the tension resulted from the male student's condescending attitude and disrespect for her work. She claims that the other student belittles her and denigrates everything she does in the office.

Discussion Questions

Put yourself in the position of the supervisor.

1. What might happen if you do nothing?

2. What could happen if you leave it to the two students to work out?

3. What should you do next?