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## Research Methods Class Releases Results of Survey on the Male Perspective of Sexual Harassment

Maine Perspective

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# Maine Perspective

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## Academic Computing Advisory Committee to Look at the Future of Computing on Campus

The coming year could be a benchmark in computing and computer technology at the University of Maine.

Students on the Orono and Bangor campuses will have access to several new computer clusters as a result of the newly established Technology Fee revenues. The upgrading and expansion of the labs mark the biggest boost to student computing on campus since the 1985 bond issue that was earmarked for the purchase of academic personal computers.

And this fall the new 21-member Academic Computing Advisory Committee will begin to look at the status of campus computing and the direction it should be headed in the future

- a process most agree is long overdue yet politically charged.

"We have needed for some time to take a careful look at the directions of computing on our campus," according to Interim President John Hitt. "The computing environment at UMaine is changing rapidly, and the advent of the campuswide network and the Technology Fee will only accelerate the pace of that change. While rigid standards restricting user choice are not acceptable in University computing communities, we need a group of colleagues and students to work with the administrative leadership of the campus to define broad, general standards and to identify pressing needs and promising approaches to their solution."

The Committee was formed last April by Hitt, then vice president for Academic Affairs, at the request of the Task Force on Budget and Program Review. Made up of three students, two Faculty Senate representatives, representatives of each of the nine Colleges, vice presi-

*continued page 5*

## Research Methods Class Releases Results of Survey on the Male Perspective of Sexual Harassment

Last spring, students in a Child Development and Family Relations Research Methods class conducted a random survey among third- and fourth-year male students at the University of Maine to begin to determine the rate of sexual harassment on campus and the men's perceptions of sexual harassment.

The 14 women who designed the survey were well-versed in the literature concerning sexual harassment. All of them had first-hand knowledge of harassment.

When the survey results were tabulated, the women researchers were not surprised by the numbers.

They were shocked.

Of the 159 third- and fourth-year male students at the University of Maine surveyed in the newly released report: "Sexual Harassment at the University of Maine: The Male Students' Perspective":

■ 39 percent have made unsolicited sexual remarks to a woman; almost 83 percent (of the total) considered making unsolicited sexual remarks to a woman an act of sexual harassment.

■ Nearly 35 percent said they have placed sexual pressure on a woman even though she says "no"; almost 87 percent considered placing sexual pressure on a woman even though she says "no" an act of sexual harass-

ment. Nearly 35 percent said they have intentionally stared at a woman to make her feel uncomfortable; nearly 43 percent considered staring at a woman to make her feel uncomfortable an act of sexual harassment.

■ 26 percent have touched or grabbed a woman in an unwanted or unsolicited way;

*continued page 2*



### I N P E R S P E C T I V E

Look Who's On Campus	page 3
Memorial Union Revamping	page 4
Bread and Puppet Theatre	page 6
Health-Wise	page 14
Experiment Station	page 16

95 percent consider touching or grabbing a woman in an unwanted or unsolicited way an act of sexual harassment.

■ Almost 22 percent admitted making obscene phone calls.

■ Nearly 16 percent admitted to having forced or tried to force women into sexual intercourse.

■ Almost 12 percent said they have intentionally frightened a woman walking on campus; more than 44 percent considered intentionally frightening a woman as sexual harassment. The same number said they have threatened a woman until she gave in and had sex with them; nearly 83 percent said threatening a woman until she gave in and had sex with them was an act of sexual harassment.

■ The respondents considered rape to be a "somewhat common" to "common" campus occurrence.

■ Those surveyed rated all 13 "scenarios" in the survey from "serious" to "very serious."

"The incidence of sexual harassment and rape found through this research parallels the figures found by researchers on other campuses," the Report said. "These rates are shocking. Consistent with previous research, men in this sample also demonstrated dangerous ignorance about issues of sexual harassment. Specifically, many respondents did not consider gender-based aggression to be sexual harassment. Also, the data illustrate that a significant portion of men at the University of Maine do not realize that to force a woman to have sex is to rape her."

According to Robert Milardo, UM associate professor of family relations who teaches the Research Methods in Child Development and Family Relations course, the figures do not serve as an "indictment" of the University of Maine, but rather "an indictment of society and the community at large. These students don't exist apart from that context," he said.

"The mission was to find out how much sexual harassment and rape there was among the men surveyed, and how do men evaluate the actions in terms of seriousness," according to Milardo. "It was a real important topic to the Research Methods students. Most of these women had had direct experience with harassment. The students decided

to focus on the perpetrators to see what they were thinking and admitted to doing. The students didn't expect to achieve what they did.

"I also knew the literature and knew that the rate of rape in the U.S. was high - no less than 25 percent of all women have been raped in their lifetimes. But when I saw the numbers (extrapolated to represent a campus with approximately 2,100 male third- and fourth-year students) that said 300 men at the junior and senior levels had attempted or participated in a rape, it was no longer just an intellectual enterprise but one that brought me to tears."

The Research Methods students found that sexual aggression is considered common-place, "perhaps even 'normal,'" according to survey participants. Acts depicted as specifically including physical force or violence received the highest ratings of seriousness among the men, indicating that they indeed recognize the severity of sexually aggressive behavior, even if they also consider it to be common-place.

Although respondents most often labeled raping or attempting to rape a stranger as sexual harassment, fewer men considered threatening a wife or girlfriend until she gives in to sex to be harassment. "A critical finding is that men differentiate between forcing sexual intercourse and committing rape," the Report said. A fairly large percentage of those who admitted forcing or attempting to force intercourse actually believed that they were not attempting to rape the women. They labeled rape scenarios as more serious than those in which a man forced sex on a woman; a considerably larger percentage indicated they had threatened a wife or girlfriend until she gave in than those who admitted raping.

"The (Research Methods) students did make a lot of comments (as the survey progressed)," Milardo said. "They were angry at those men who don't understand what they're doing. And they were angry at society that ignores their needs. At the same time, they felt empowered in that they knew what is going on and this survey served to channel their empowerment. As a result, they felt strongly about providing the survey to the widest possible audience as one element in the prevention equation.

"In addition, the men taking the

survey also made comments. One of the continuing comments was the strong endorsement for more programming to continue to dialogue about rape and sexual harassment issues. There are many men who are aware of the problem and overwhelmingly offended by the rapist culture."

Sixty-eight percent of the survey respondents indicated that the issue of sexual harassment is important to them personally. According to survey authors, "the other 32 percent must learn that sexual aggression damages their own lives and the lives of people they love.

"Too often," the Report noted, "'rape prevention' merely takes the form of night-time escort services, increased lighting in select areas of campus, cautions to women students to avoid certain social events, and warnings to women to avoid walking anywhere alone, particularly at night. While these measures are absolutely essential given the current rape-prone climate on university campuses, they do not address the underlying problem. Rape prevention must go beyond controlling women's activities; men must be taught

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