



Gregory C. DeAngelis
George Eastman Professor and Chair
Department of Brain and Cognitive Sciences

August 29, 2016

To: Dr. Florian Jaeger, Professor of Brain and Cognitive Sciences

From: Dr. Gregory DeAngelis, Professor and Chair of Brain and Cognitive Sciences

Re: Outcome of Policy 106 investigation

Dear Florian,

The purpose of this letter is to follow up in response to the outcome of the discrimination/harassment complaint filed under University Policy 106. As you know, complaints were received suggesting that you had engaged in behavior which constituted sexual harassment or sex-based discrimination under University Policy 106. After a lengthy investigation and appeal, it was concluded that your actions did not amount to a violation of Policy 106. The investigative report did, however, discuss some behavior that is troubling to me, and which, if not addressed or if repeated, could potentially lead to future similar claims. Although the consensual relationships that you had with former students and/or employees were not a violation of policy at the time, at least one of your former consensual relationships clearly would have violated the *current* policy on consensual relationships as outlined in the faculty handbook, the relevant portion of which follows:

Intimate personal relations may compromise the integrity of the faculty-student relationship. "Intimate personal relations" include sexual, romantic, and close family relationships.

Faculty members shall not accept supervisory, evaluative or advisory authority over any student or postdoc with whom they currently share an intimate personal relation, or with whom they have shared such a relationship in the past.

Faculty members shall not enter into romantic or sexual relationships with undergraduate students of the University, or with any members of the University community (including graduate students and postdocs) over whom they exercise the authority of their faculty position



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Failure to disclose an intimate relationship which exists or develops between a faculty member and any student or postdoc who the faculty member supervises, evaluates, or advises may subject the faculty member to disciplinary action and also the forfeiture of the protections of indemnification by the University in the event of legal action.

As Dr. Taubman noted in his appeal determination, in fairness to you, the recent allegations were, of course, not adjudicated under the current standard. However, it is important that you understand what the current standard is.

I view my role, as Chair of the department, to make clear my expectations of you as a faculty member in this department. As a member of our faculty, you help set the standards for others to emulate and you are critical to success of the organization. All words have meaning and that meaning often differs between people and is frequently dependent on circumstance and interpretation. As a faculty member, your words and behavior are subject to constant attention, and they influence the academic environment and workplace to a greater degree than would similar words or behavior from another employee. Thus, it is important that you always consider (1) the power of language in the academic and work environment, (2) the need to maintain appropriate boundaries in interactions with students, and (3) your responsibility to create and maintain a positive and professional work and academic environment.

A few aspects of the investigative report particularly disturbed me on a personal level. The first was the revelation that you had been involved with a student who later sought admission to the department as a graduate student, but you apparently did not disclose the relationship (which had ended prior to enrollment) and later served on her thesis committee. As a matter of principle and professionalism, regardless of whether the relationship had ended, I would always expect a faculty member to disclose a fact of that nature to the department chair or other university official, as it would impact how interactions with that student would be structured to avoid any potential issues of preferential treatment or bias.

Second, although these relationships happened several years ago, I am nevertheless bothered by the reports that you had more than one consensual relationship with current or former students in the department, including a graduate student (who was not under your supervision) and an employee in another research lab who was your former undergraduate student. Although these relationships were found not



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to violate university policies in effect at the time, nor would they currently, I personally feel that this type of behavior is not appropriate for any faculty member. In my opinion, even consensual relationships with students are problematic due to the strongly asymmetric power relationships inherent in them, as well as the potential for claims of favoritism and bias. My goal is to have a department and educational program in which all individuals feel completely comfortable that they can pursue their education and research, be valued for their intellect, and be treated or judged on that basis alone. Thus, the department may pursue a stronger policy regarding consensual relationships.

The third disturbing aspect was the conclusion that you had, on occasion, made inappropriate comments, some of a sexual nature and some not, either in general or in relation to specific women. I understand that you denied most (if not all) of the specific comments attributed to you or were unable to recall having made them, and the investigator did not find any evidence that such comments had been made in recent years. Nevertheless, as chair of this department, I need to ensure that you understand that comments which are sexual in nature or otherwise sexually inappropriate simply are not acceptable in the academic environment or workplace. Given that there have been no recent reports of similar behavior by you, I hope that this is something you have grown to understand over time. Nevertheless, I want you to understand that any recurrence of that type of behavior may be grounds for discipline. To help ensure that previous behaviors do not resurface and to make sure that you understand the significance of engaging in this type of behavior, I am requiring you to complete individualized (1:1) training on respectful workplace behaviors (sexual and other) through Human Resources. This training also will address the dangers and risks inherent in entering into even consensual relationships. Once the University has identified the appropriate trainer, I will ask them to reach out to you to set up the training. I expect that you will complete this training by December 1, 2016.

The last conclusion of concern to me involved a number of instances in which you seem to have pushed personal/professional boundaries in your interactions with students or other trainees. While some trainees may want to engage with faculty in discussions that go well beyond those of a professional/scientific nature, others may want to keep their personal and professional lives completely separate and will feel uncomfortable with any conversation that invades their personal boundaries. Thus, it is important that you always respect personal/professional boundaries in your interactions with students and other trainees.



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Florian, the University, the College, and this Department all value diversity and are committed to equal opportunity and to creating a healthy and vibrant academic and work environment for all people. While you have established a reputation as an excellent scholar and have ably assisted many of our current and former students to excel and thrive in their education and careers, I sincerely hope that you will take some time to reflect on these matters and will work on modifying any of these aspects of your behavior which have not already been modified through experience. You need to remain mindful of your responsibility to promote and support equality in the workplace and an environment that reflects respect for all.

Sincerely,

Gregory C. DeAngelis
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