“Sex, Lies, and Tenure”:

How *The Trail* Handled Scandal

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“Don’t give $ to a school that screws your kids,” read one sign. “Is your daughter safe at UPS!” read another. “Stop profs that sexually harass, not the women who tell on them!” read a third. Chants with a similar theme rang out across the University of Puget Sound campus as students marched through Jones Circle towards the Student Union building. After only twenty minutes of protesting, the small group of Students Against Sexual Harassment affiliated rallyers had grown to include over 200 people: students, parents, and professors alike. But what had caused the campus to reach such a high boiling point? Sexual harassment.

Though sexual harassment in the workplace and academy has occurred since women entered those places, the actual term “sexual harassment” was coined by a group of feminist activists in Ithaca, New York in March 1975 “to name something they had all experienced but rarely discussed – unwanted sexual demands, comments, looks, or sexual touching in the workplace.” Though women finally had a name for what they had been facing for years, sexual harassment often went ignored or unreported. Sexual Harassment had entered the nationwide spotlight during the Clarence Thomas Hearings. After these hearings, women began to question and pursue their rights regarding

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1 Sundown Stauffer. “‘Sex, Lies, and Tenure’: students rally for action,” The Trail, April 22, 1993, 1.


harassment. Sexual Harassment issues on the small, liberal arts campus of the University of Puget Sound in Tacoma, Washington first came to light in the student-run campus newspaper *The Trail* in September of 1991.\(^4\) Those issues were given voice the following year in the same paper through two major scandals. On April 16, 1992, sexual harassment issues were harshly confronted.

*The Trail* reported and commented on both scandals, shaping them in essential ways, beginning with the toxic atmosphere that preceded the breaking of both. The first half of the scandal was the denial of tenure to several favored female professors, including Beth Kalikoff. Kalikoff alleged that older, tenured, male members of the faculty denied them tenure because they encouraged and aided female students in filing sexual harassment complaints against professors. The second was the resignation of Politics and Government professor Harmon Zeigler. Though the school kept quiet on the matter for quite some time, the paper eventually was able to reveal that he resigned after three women brought sexual harassment complaints against him.

After both stories broke, the three main problems *The Trail* discussed with the University and helped the campus community to discuss began to emerge: inadequate and confusing sexual harassment policy, the University’s silence

\(^4\) *The Trail* is the student-run newspaper of the University of Puget Sound. It is independent of the university’s administration and funded by the Associated Students of the University of Puget Sound. It has been published since 1903, but has been known as *The Trail* since 1911. The paper is published weekly, and during the early 1990s, it was released each Wednesday barring holidays and short weeks.
regarding major issues that affected campus, and unfair and anti-feminist procedures for granting and denying tenure.

*The Trail* not only provided the news coverage of these events however, but also gave students, journalists, alumni, professors, and even parents a forum through which to voice their opinions, debate one another, and tell personal stories. Because of this, *The Trail* played an important role in the way these two events were understood by the campus community and in the way they intersected one another. In addition, it pushed against the silencing of sexual harassment. Thus the paper was able to portray three main issues: inadequate sexual harassment policy, university silence on important issues, and procedures for granting and denying tenure, through a certain frame that could influence the audience. *The Trail presented a forum for feminist ideas that existed but may not have been heard elsewhere on campus; it did this by not only avoiding victim-blaming, but also by supporting feminist ideas and giving voice to the often-silent victims of sexual harassment.*

**Anita Hill and the Toxic National Climate**

On July 1, 1991, George H. W. Bush nominated a man named Clarence Thomas to replace Thurgood Marshall as a justice on the United States Supreme Court. Near the end of his judicial hearings, an interview, in which he was accused of sexual harassment was leaked. The victim was named Anita Hill. Subsequently, Hill was required to testify at Thomas’s confirmation hearings. She relayed the lurid comments that Thomas had made to her. Eventually, Thomas
was confirmed as a Supreme Court Justice regardless of Hill’s allegations.\textsuperscript{5} What is more telling about the incident is how Hill felt during her victimization and how she was treated during the hearings.

When she was first being harassed by Thomas, Hill “struggled to discover a way that [she] might keep [her] job but avoid the behavior.” She believed she had control over Thomas’ behavior, although she knew she did not. At one point, Hill recalled a discussion she had with a friend, in which she considered “changing [her] perfume.” Hill blamed herself for actions she had no control over. She sought ways to change herself in order to make the behavior stop. Even more significantly, Hill revealed in her autobiography, “of all the friends I told, not one suggested that I bring a charge of sexual harassment against Clarence Thomas. No one suggested that I go to the agency with oversight authority… or file a complaint… nor was it clear how I could raise such a claim…”\textsuperscript{6} Hill was silenced even by her own friends. She was not given a way in which she could take care of the behavior he was exhibiting towards her, and the policy regarding how to do so was out of reach to her. In addition, Thomas too attempted to silence Hill telling her “that if [she] ever told anyone about his behavior toward [her], it would ruin his career.”\textsuperscript{7} Through his comment, he implicated his own


\textsuperscript{7} Hill, \textit{Speaking Truth To Power}, 81.
behavior as wrong, and yet still thought it appropriate to prioritize his career above her feelings or rights.

Before the hearings, it seemed that Capitol Hill wanted to muzzle Hill and in order to do this, some senators tried many of the same silencing tactics that appeared on the University of Puget Sound campus:

In the days before the hearing, senators denigrated my claim maliciously and with total disregard for its validity. Senator Strom Thurmond called the claim the “rantings of a disgruntled employee who had been reduced to lying.” Senator Danforth called it “garbage” and “sleazy,” expressing his concern for the sanctity of the U.S. Senate: “we can’t have this body know as the trash dump of American politics.” Senator Hatch described the charges as “trumped up.” … Marlin Fitzwater, veteran journalist and White House spokesperson… called the charges an attempted “smear…”

They accused Hill of running a smear-campaign, of just wanting attention, or of having a personal vendetta against Thomas. When that did not work to tear her down, they attempted to discredit Hill’s accusations, first by attempting to limit sexual harassment law to only cases of assault or battery qualifying as harassment, and second as claiming that sexual harassment law is “so broad that a person can accuse someone at any time and ruin their reputation.” The hearings made Anita Thomas the white-hot center of a nationwide debate over what constituted sexual harassment and why had been accepted as a normal part of a woman’s career for so many years. This pernicious climate was not isolated to the Clarence Thomas hearings however. It played out very similarly but on a much smaller scale on the University of Puget Sound Campus.

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8 Hill, 153.
9 Hill, 146.
A Toxic Campus Climate

Before news of Zeigler’s resignation or Kalikoff’s denial of tenure ever broke as stories, *The Trail* printed, in September of 1991, an editorial by Maria Kolby that inspired great reaction from the campus and served as a prelude to coming events, illustrating the toxic atmosphere on campus. The title of the opinions piece, “Professors take note: students are not your harem,” used strong and accusatory language. It did not address inter-student harassment, but was directed specifically at the hierarchical professor-harasses-student variety. Kolby used the word “harem” which suggested the idea that some professors, who she was very careful to keep anonymous, were not one-time offenders, but instead harassed many women, and thought “their classrooms [were] ready-made harems for their perusal.”

The title is not the only part of the editorial that depicted some professors as “drooling, sex-starved, [and] abusive.” These educators had “a total lack of respect for [students’] brains, because … all they are is a body to caress.” But Kolby was not just painting a picture of the lecherous professor; she cited several examples of inappropriate behavior that seemed to indicate the existence of a hostile climate on campus regarding sexual harassment. When discussing one of the offending professors, one of the author’s friends advised that, “If you have to

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11 Kolby, “Professors take note: students are not your harem.”

12 Ibid.
go see him, take a friend. He’s a lech, I’m serious. Don’t go into his office alone, OK?!” Another friend spoke excitedly about her budding relationship with a professor: “I just can’t believe he’s attracted to me and thinks I’m smart! He’s so intelligent! You don’t think it’s wrong that he’s a professor do you? I mean, I’m not taking a class from him anymore…” A third friend described a professor that often would brush his female students breasts when he would pass by or work closely with them. Each of these examples shows the uncomfortable and confusing situations that women were being forced into. Sexual harassment was happening to multiple women and that harassment was coming in multiple forms from multiple professors; the imbalance of power between professors and female students made itself apparent. The last anecdote Kolby shared was the story of a friend who was not just harassed, but also sexually assaulted by a professor. Kolby explained, “she was a freshman. She was shy. She never told.”

This particular example of a student being muted after experiencing sexual harassment illustrates another part of the campus climate: the secrecy and invisibility of problems with sexual harassment. “Unfortunately,” Kolby explained, “the nature of professor-student sexual fun-and-games is like a flirt with incest. People rarely talk about it, and when they do it’s in hushed whispers, with select individuals.” According to sociologists Billie Dziech and Linda Weiner, there are several reasons for the “self-imposed silence of student victims, which contributes to the continued invisibility of the problem,” and each of those

13 Ibid.
reasons boils down to fear and shame. Sexual harassment is infrequently discussed, and when it is, “the victim is often viewed as a precipitant or an actual participant in crimes with sexual components unless strong nonconsent and resistance can be demonstrated by the presence of serious injury.” Sexual harassment victimizes women and can have long-term psychological and physical impacts on their lives. The issue of silence played a major role in the events on the University of Puget Sound campus. The campus had a climate of silence, and *The Trail* served, opposingly, as a forum that opened lines of communication; authors wrote about issues that couldn’t be discussed elsewhere. By choosing to print articles that gave voice to unheard issues, *The Trail* allowed those issues to play out within its pages.

Professor Susan Owen of the Communication Studies and Theatre Arts departments in a letter to the editor, expressed agreement with Kolby’s editorial, on the matter of sexual harassment. She praised Kolby’s initiation of discussion on such a sensitive and often ignored subject. Owen also drew attention to the power difference between professors and students and uses that dynamic to

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16 Paludi in *Ivory power: sexual harassment on campus* discusses the effects that sexual harassment has on victims: “Among one sample of victims, 78 percent reported feeling angry, 48 percent felt upset; 23 percent were scared; 27 percent felt alone, helpless, guilty, and alienated... The physical symptoms frequently reported by these victims included: gastrointestinal disturbances, jaw tightness and teeth grinding, anxiety attacks, binge-eating, headaches, inability to sleep, tiredness, nausea, loss of appetite, weight loss, and crying spells” (78-9).
argue that what Kolby defined as “casual harassment” actually falls in to the category of “pre-mediated harassment” or “stalking.” 17 Owen ascertained that perhaps what was happening on campus was even more serious than Kolby diagnosed. David Droge also praised Kolby for bringing up serious issues for the University. Droge made several comments directly about the climate at the University, first explaining that the campus must “develop an environment which reinforces the right of any person—in this case young women—to resist unwelcome advances and demand institutional protection from those advances.” 18 By encouraging the University to develop these conditions, he is indicating that attitudes empowering students to resist did not already exist on campus. Continuing, he blatantly stated that the University of Puget Sound was “absent a climate that supports an individual’s right to resist unwanted advances ….” 19

Other letters to the editor disagreed with Kolby’s commentary, however, perhaps illustrating the campus climate better than anything else. One student’s letter contained derogatory arguments against Kolby’s editorial. Lyle Keplar began his letter, “Upon reading the imminently [sic] threatening editorial about male professors on the UPS campus…,” and continued with an anti-feminist rant:

If the majority use methods to establish and maintain their influence, power, what have you, at the expense of everyone else, then tar and feathers are applied quite liberally by the ‘discriminated.’ … However,

19 Droge, “Letter to the Editor.”
the 'discriminated' justify using these exact same methods with the self-serving attitude that they are simply protected whatever they consider to be their 'own.' Interesting contrast.\textsuperscript{20}

In this portion of his letter, Keplar asserted that when the majority (in this case, males,) defame their female counterparts, the men are punished and potentially publicly humiliated for their actions. However, when women accuse men of bad behavior, they are also taking part in defamation, but they face no punishment because it is seen as a form of protection. Keplar was, at best, accusing women of lying about the male majority in order to get ahead. At worst, he was denying that sexual harassment that took place was the fault of the men, and thus was implicitly blaming victims for what has happened to them,

Keplar continued:

The editorial also smacked of politically correct thought (PCT) … and the feminist’s most celebrated vehicle: Date rape. As for PCT, I am fully entitled to look anywhere I damn well please and to think anything I so choose as long as my actions thereof do not fall outside the prevailing law of the land. … From the femyle [sic] camp the chauvinist rhetoric I am hearing is … biased, prejudiced, base, complete with low mud-slinging character attacks …\textsuperscript{21}

Keplar, in this section of his letter, supported an idea prevalent in anti-feminism by using “politically correct thought” as a battering ram of sorts. He took the idea that people should speak in a way that doesn't actively offend others, and turned it against feminists. He continued to accuse women of lying, claiming that date rape is a made up idea that feminists use to get ahead. He continued to objectify women through the male gaze by asserting that he could "look anywhere [he]


\textsuperscript{21} Keplar, “Letter to the Editor.”
damn well [pleased].” He contends that it is his right to look at women in inappropriate ways, thus downgrading women to objects. If women were merely objects, then assault and harassment were simply acceptable manifestations of masculine desire.

Keplar didn’t stop there, however. His next point was to call feminists chauvinists and call those that engage in feminist writing, such as Maria Kolby, names that imply the lowness of their characters. His letter, as a whole, functioned as a silencer; Keplar sought to muzzle feminists and victims as well as end the discussion of sexual harassment on campus by implying that sexual harassment and assault are not real problems and calling true stories nothing but “mud-slinging.” If attitudes of accusing victims of lying, blaming victims, condemning feminist thought, and silencing discussion of sexual harassment prevailed on campus, it indicates that biases were set against women, blaming victims of sexual harassment and accusing them of simply chauvinistically defaming professors’ characters. His letter is one of the only examples of this explicitly anti-feminist thought published in The Trail during this period. However another letter encouraging silence in a less acrimonious way was published at the same time as Keplar’s.

Florence Sandler, of the Women’s Studies department responded in a letter full of inherent hypocrisy. While at the same time encouraging those who had been sexually harassed or assaulted to step forward and end their silence, 

22 Ibid.
Sandler implied that Kolby was simply spreading rumours. She claimed that the “stories” that Kolby told in her article are “like nursery rhymes, getting repeated by each generation, long after their origin has been lost.” Little did Sandler know, Kolby was not making up stories, but was a victim of sexual harassment at the University of Puget Sound herself, a fact that would become apparent a year later when she wrote a first hand account as an alumnus.

Sandler also shared a story of a student who attended a faculty party and later filed a sexual harassment complaint about an incident that occurred at the party with a professor in attendance. The staff, Sandler explained, decided that such an event could not have happened, and resolved that the young woman was simply a liar. Sandler’s main argument revolved around the idea that women make up stories because they “are angry with their professors, … or want the glamour role that the story gives them.” Her letter contained the same silencing factors that Kelpar’s letter did. Why would a woman want to raise her voice about experiences with sexual harassment when the faculty might accuse her of lying because of anger or desire for attention? It appears, through analysis of Kolby’s editorial and its responses, that the University of Puget Sound was fostering an environment of women living in fear and shame, with stories of sexual harassment swirling. The campus was toxic place where it was only a matter of time before the climate reached a critical point.

\[\text{\footnotesize References}\\
\text{24 Sandler, “Letter to the Editor.”}\]
How the Stories Broke

News of Beth Kalikoff’s tenure denial broke in an editorial by Maria Kolby in the March 12, 1992 edition of the *The Trail*. The article, which appeared in the opinions section as opposed to the news section, entitled “Kalikoff tenure decision should shame, embarrass English Department,” advanced several claims against the process used to deny Kalikoff tenure. It is important to note that the article was an editorial, as this allowed the author to advance claims that are not necessarily substantiated and to supplement that information with her own opinion and bias. The first claim was that the University would not answer any questions – “not even to Beth, let alone to students.” Her second complaint was that all that Kalikoff was told by the administration was “that her failing was in the fourth clause— the clause after ‘teaching,’ ‘scholarship,’ and ‘service’— of ‘collegiality.’” To determine their eligibility for tenure, faculty were evaluated in four categories: “proven excellence in teaching,” “distinct evidence of professional growth and service,” “the needs of the department, school, or program and the university,” and “existence of those personal and professional characteristics that promise to make the faculty member and effective member of the university for the balance of his or her career.” Kolby asserted that the final clause had “wording and intent… so vague that those making the decisions can use this clause as a general home for department in-fighting and personal

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prejudices,” and that this is exactly what occurred in the tenure denial of Beth Kalikoff.27

Kolby’s final claim was one that supports the feminist ideal of equality between the sexes. She explained that not only were a mere two of ten tenured English Department professors, but also that “the committee that refused Kalikoff’s final appeal was composed of five men.”28 Through these examples, Kolby suggested that the patriarchal power structure of the University created a means through which to not just exclude women but to completely shut them out all together. Adam Burdick, in the March 26, 1992 edition of The Trail concurred with Kolby’s sentiments in his letter to the editor. “I am not completely convinced of gender equality within the University,” he wrote. “I feel sorrow and anger when a teacher as loved as Beth Kalikoff … is turned away.”29 But Kolby’s article, once again, did not go without contest.

A letter from the Faculty Advancement Committee appeared in the March 19, 1992 edition of The Trail, just one week after Kolby’s article refuting the previous editorial. According to the Committee, any faculty member being evaluated for tenure is given a summary of letters submitted to the Committee and has the right to meet with the Committee and President of the University before any final recommendations are given to the Board of Trustees. In addition, the Committee asserted that it considers a large body of evidence that includes

27 Kolby, “Kalikoff tenure decision.”
28 Kolby, “Kalikoff tenure decision.”
several different types of evaluations as well as submissions from the candidate him or herself. Thus, they claimed, Kolby’s argument of personal prejudice playing into tenure decisions was untrue. Lastly, the Committee explained that women were not being denied access to positions of power on the University of Puget Sound campus as evidenced by the recent approval of the hiring of Susan Parr as President. They asked if Kolby could really “claim that women are being excluded from positions of power when the new chief administrative officer will be a woman?” But this, just as Kolby’s article, was also an editorial, which allowed the authors to accuse her of writing “inaccuracies and half-truths” as well as “[insulting] the character and judgment of all the people involved.”

In addition, the Committee included statistics about the numbers of women given tenure and on staff that do not necessarily make sense. The Committee claimed “since 1985-86 45% of the tenure track faculty hired have been women (from an applicant pool consisting of only 28%).”30 On the surface, this example seems to show that women were being granted tenure almost as consistently as men, from a smaller pool of applicants. However, 45% of fewer people is still fewer people. Regardless of the percentage, there would still have been far fewer women granted tenure than men. The Committee also failed to mention, however, that the smaller pool of applicants meant that the university was hiring fewer women in the first place; the faculty was weighted toward a

much higher percentage of men than women. It was, in fact, slightly more male-heavy than the national average of 32.5 percent female faculty members.\footnote{Bernice Resnick Sandler, Lisa A. Silverberg, and Roberta M. Hall, \textit{The chilly classroom climate: a guide to improve the education of women}, (Washington, DC: National Assn. for Women in Education, 1996), 29.}

The response of the Faculty Advancement committee was so defensive that, while seeking to show Kolby’s article exaggerated and misleading, it actually highlighted the truth contained within it. Their main argument, claiming that women weren’t being excluded from positions because a woman wasn’t excluded from one position, seemed to be a major logical fallacy. It made it appear that they were willing to try any argument to discredit Kolby’s words. The article spit unsubstantiated and confusing statistics at the reader in an attempt to gain legitimacy, but instead it made the tone of the article read as prickly and paranoid.

For the rest of Spring semester, \textit{The Trail} did not publish anything more on the topic of sexual harassment or the denial of tenure to Beth Kalikoff. However, the concerns were still there, because in November of the next fall, sexual harassment seemed to once again be a hot topic, and articles about the “subject that concerns us all” were published again.\footnote{John Tocher, “Well, Dr. Parr?: A letter to the president on a subject that concerns us all”, \textit{The Trail}, November 5, 1992.} A brief article by student John Tocher published November 5, 1992, addressed President Parr directly, assuming that she was “undoubtedly aware that there have been several rumors circulating around the campus of incidents of sexual harassment on campus
committed by a member of the faculty/staff." Tocher presented an argument that is distinctly feminist. He illustrated two possible ways that a situation of a faculty member harassing a study could play out. The first way, he suggested, was that the University bring any allegations or incidents to light. Doing so would be beneficial to both the campus community and the victims themselves: heightening awareness, serving as a model of how the complaint system should work, and providing relief to victims of sexual harassment. The other path, he stated, was that the University would stay silent. If the University were to take this path, none of the positive results explained before would take place.

Tocher called for openness on the part of the University, and argued that it would be beneficial and a much brighter prospect. His pro victims-rights and anti-silence stance highlighted his feminist position that “covering up the problem of sexual harassment would be almost as bad as the deed itself.” The Trail itself gave Tocher a chance to express his feminist perspective. In a forum that was supportive of his ideas and absent of judgement, Tocher expressed his thoughts freely, addressing the University itself. There would have been few other ways for him to be able to address the administration of the school.

During these months, there were, in fact, no editorials published by The Trail that blamed the victims or approved of current university policy. Editorials that were published were feminist in their views. Monica Guffey, in a letter to the editor also published November 5, shared a similar attitude with Tocher’s against

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33 Tocher, “Well, Dr. Parr?”

34 Ibid.
silence and in favor of victim-support. “Women in the academy should be treated as equals” she argued.\(^{35}\) She supported her reasoning with examples of inappropriate behavior and a discussion of how “women caught in this situation of harassment by a faculty member are struck in an awkward and delicate position. In addition, she made the argument that the University is business that acts as a middleman for students to pay faculty.”\(^{36}\) Thus victims of sexual harassment were paying to be harassed. She encouraged the University to make it clear that sexual harassment was intolerable and to stop sheltering the reputations of such abusers. Several editions later, on December 3, 1992, another article in support of victims was published. In it, student Jon Wolfer attempted to persuade readers to think about “the hottest topic on campus these days” through the eyes of the victims. He considered how victims might feel about themselves, about faculty, about trust, and about their futures.\(^{37}\)

In contrast to the start of Kalikoff’s ordeal, news of Politics and Government professor Harmon Zeigler’s abrupt resignation on November 9 was a front-page news story. The story, entitled “Zeigler resigns, university unable comment,” ran on November 12, 1992. As the title implies, the article explained that Zeigler had resigned and that university officials and faculty were keeping their mouths shut about the matter. The article did not even have a photo of the


\(^{36}\) Monica Guffey, “Sexual harassment cannot be ignored.”

professor, but only an anecdote about students arriving in class on the day of his resignation and not knowing about it. Student Eric Borné, the author of the article expressed his frustration that no one at the University, including the Politics and Government department and its professors, the Associate Dean, the Dean of Students, the assistant to the President, and the President of the university herself would give The Trail any information about the occurrence. The frustration of the writer was apparent, and would not be relieved until after winter break when the staff’s number one Christmas wish of being “able to print the whole story surrounding Harmon Zeigler’s private resignation,” would come true.

Even as The Trail became a forum for discussion of the major issues on campus, it still retained its editorial bias towards feminist points of view. In addition, The Trail still provided an apparatus through which all members of the University community could express themselves freely, including the often-silenced victims of academic and sexual harassment, and did not give voice to individuals or groups that would have pointedly anti-feminist arguments, blame the victims, or support the culture of silence that surrounds harassment.

38 Eric Borné, “Zeigler resigns, university unable to comment: Rumors fly, but the University claims it is a ‘private matter,’” The Trail, November 12, 1992, 1.

Sexual Harassment Policy

Even before Christmas, the ambiguous and confusing nature of The University of Puget Sound’s sexual harassment policy was called into question. President Susan Parr held that the harassment policies were “sound and that the consequences of violating those policies [were] clear.”40 However, students were already calling those policies into question. In an article by student Erika Konopka entitled “Ambiguous sexual harassment policies spark controversy,” the confusing differences between sources of information regarding sexual harassment procedure were pointed out. This article also quotes the feminist future founder of Students Against Sexual Harassment, Sydney Van Atta, who became an important player in the fight to clarify sexual harassment policy in order to “educate the campus and to protect the victims of sexual harassment from a system that is ill-equipped to deal with these problems.”41 Here The Trail again favors a more feminist view of events on campus, supporting an individual and a club that have a clear feminist voice.

After Christmas, the fight continued and finally the opponents of the current policy gained a small amount of ground. The controversy on campus garnered enough attention to prompt a policy review by the Professional Standards Committee.42 This review was by a group that didn’t necessarily want

to see a change in policy, but instead simply wanted to “focus on and reiterate” the current policy. This emphasis on just restating the existing policy was not enough for students. In addition, the “Question of the Week” on February 11, 1993 encouraged students to ask members of the Professional Standards Committee, chairs of departments, and deans of the University about the Code.43 One week later, the “Question of the Week” encouraged students to ask ASUPS members and administration about how they intended to confront “the administration in the face of real issues (i.e. sexual harassment….”44 The Trail also provided readers with a double-page spread all about sexual harassment. It informed readers by giving them an overview of University of Puget Sound policies in comparison to the policies of other nearby institutions.45

In addition, it detailed the confusing and contradictory process a victim would be forced through while attempting to file a complaint, as explained in each publication.46 The academic handbook advised that students seek out “the dean of the University, the personnel director, or the dean of students” if they wished to


45 Rachel Vorberg-Rugh, “What they have that we don’t….” The Trail, March 25, 1993.

filed a sexual harassment complaint. The Dean of Students’ publication on the issue entitled If it Happens to You… Sexual Harassment, advised that “student complaints first be brought to the ‘department’ chairman’ and then, if that option is not acceptable, to the Dean of Students or the Dean of the University.” Under procedures outlined in the Faculty Code, “a student is not allowed to bring a claim against a faculty member”; instead “university administrators ‘prosecute’ the professor and use the victim’s testimony or affidavit as mere support for their ‘case.’ The procedures make no provision either to inform the student of the board’s decision or to provide the student with counsel during the process.” The obvious inconsistencies in policy were what students were demanding be changed. They also wanted the policies to be completed in a manner that outlined victims’ options and rights.

On February 2, 1993, Sydney Van Atta made another appearance in The Trail. In her letter to the editor, she proposed a legal defense fund to provide an alternative to the administration’s policies. She also clearly laid out a few existing issues within the sexual harassment policy and the administration’s stance beyond its contradictory nature. For instance, she defended the idea that a pro-active stance against sexual harassment would not jeopardize victims as a letter


48 The Students of Puget Sound, “Sexual harassment policy flaws outlined for trustees in petition.”

49 Sydney Van Atta, “When you’re sexually harassed…”
to the editor the previous week had suggested.\textsuperscript{50} Instead, she argued that it would instead protect them and protect future potential victims. She also explained that “failing to take steps to prevent sexual harassment may create liability” and “the mere existence of a policy against sexual harassment is not enough to free an institution from liability” as backed by the Supreme Court case \textit{Meritor Savings Bank vs. Vinson (477 U.S. 57, 1986)}\textsuperscript{51}. In addition, she explained the failure of the logic being used by the Dean of Students who claimed, “shedding light on the inadequacies of the University’s policies … might discourage future victims from bringing their claims to the administration’s attention.” This logic, Van Atta argued, reduces the administration’s stance to “‘Don’t rock the boat, you might jeopardize the school’s image.’”\textsuperscript{52} The importance of that image didn’t matter to Van Atta at all as she considered victims’ rights. She believed that there needed to be a neutral alternative to the University administration to provide victims of sexual harassment with a safe

\textsuperscript{50} An anonymous letter to the editor published on February 11, 1993 suggested that by demanding that the university address sexual harassment policy, it was not allowing the university to protect “those female students whose lives have already been disrupted enough and who wish to pick up the pieces and move on.”

\textsuperscript{51} As described in Paludi and Barickman, in 1986, \textit{Meritor Savings Bank v. Vinson} was a Supreme Court case in which the justices “unanimously affirmed that ‘sexual harassment claims are not limited simply to those for which a tangible job benefit is withheld (‘quid pro quo’ sexual harassment), but also includes those in which the complainant is subjected to an offensive, discriminatory work environment (‘hostile environment’ sexual harassment).’” Because the “educational mission of a college or university is to foster an open learning and working environment,” his decision was later applied to academic campuses.

place to make complaints and through which to achieve justice. Her convictions were so strong that Van Atta formed Students Against Sexual Harassment (S.A.S.H.), a forum and organized body dedicated specifically to protecting students from facing sexual harassment.53

It seems that by March 18, 1993, the administration finally realized that students were not going to back down on this issue. At President Pierce’s (nee Parr) fireside dinner, she addressed University policy involving student allegations of sexual harassment and the hearing process that those victims faced.54 She proceeded to form a group called the Advisory Committee on Sexual Harassment whose role was to “help President Pierce in educating the campus about issues surrounding sexual harassment.”55 The students submitted an open letter to the Board of Trustees that was written to “express [their] frustration with the University’s sexual harassment policies and to ask [the board’s] help in solving current problems.”56 Finally, Bernice Sandler, a scholar famous for her work in a project called “the Chilling Classroom Climate for Women,” spent a day on campus teaching workshops and assessing the


55 Sara Freeman, “Pierce forms Committee on sexual harassment,” The Trail, March 18, 1993.

56 The Students of Puget Sound, “Sexual harassment policy flaws outlined for trustees in petition.”
University’s new policies. The visit of this feminist academic signified that the worst of the fight about sexual harassment policy was drawing to a close.

**University Silence**

The second issue that *The Trail* helped campus to discuss was the silent front that the University of Puget Sound was putting forward. Before winter break, the University had been absolutely tight-lipped about Harmon Zeigler’s dismissal, claiming that because it was a private matter, they couldn’t give out any details. However, Zeigler himself had no problems speaking with the *Tacoma News Tribune* on December 30, 1992, about “University officials [forcing] him to resign without a hearing after female students made accusations of sexual conduct.” *The Trail* staff looked to University officials for some kind of statement, and yet no statement was given. *The Trail* also cited Karyle Kramer, a victim of sexual harassment by Zeigler. *The Trail* made it clear that they supported Kramer and not Zeigler, and they ended the article with a quote by Kramer: “I wish the university would just stand up instead of letting Zeigler look like the victim…I wish they would let the students and community know they’re not going to stand for it. To me that’s not the message they’re sending.” The University allowed its public relations to be a matter of not speaking at all. Zeigler was able to spin the


story in his own favor. Because the University didn’t decisively explain that
Zeigler violated several women and was given the option to face the ethics
committee, but in fact didn’t appear at his own Professional Standards
Committee hearing, Zeigler had to be taken at his word. The University offered
zero resistance to his assertions.

An editorial in the same January 28, 1993 edition expressed the
frustrations that were on campus during this time: “Their lips are sealed and
they’re letting Harmon Zeigler make them look bad,” the editorial read,
continuing, “If university officials think they are saving themselves from bad P.R.
they are dead wrong. Nothing is causing the students to lose respect for this
university faster than the wretched state of denial the administration is in about
the facts of Harmon Zeigler’s resignation.” Another editorial in the February 11,
1993 edition of the paper shared similar sentiments: “The University behaves as
a family: a dysfunctional, superficially happy family that forces its members to
keep secrets, to keep quiet, and to not tell outsiders the problems that plague its
walls” wrote Katharine Dvorak. She expressed her irritation that the University did
not respect her or other students enough to tell them the truth, which, she
asserted, they were entitled to know as members of the University. A third
student responded a few weeks later with a letter to the editor claiming that

59 Florence Sandler and Don Pannen, “Letter to the Editor,” Tacoma News

60 “Someone tell us the truth,” The Trail, January 28, 1993.

61 Katharine Dvorak, “The ivy and green façade of our proud university,” The
perhaps, President Parr, regardless of her gender, was an “old boy” in disguise. “I may not understand the nuances with which this situation is wrought,” he explained, “however, I cannot escape the shame I feel regarding your de facto refusal to publicly recognize this issue.”

Most interestingly, perhaps, is the way that *The Trail* chose to print two first hand student accounts of sexual harassment on campus. *The Trail* opened its pages to victims, and encouraged the end of their silence. By allowing those examples the paper truly served as a forum for unheard voices. One article, by Courtney Meagher, detailed the way her professor harassed her, with inapposite staring, inappropriate touching, and infelicitous remarks. She also discussed the way the University treated her, the victim, with no respect. The teacher did not have to face an ethics committee and thus was never punished for what he did because he admitted to doing it. When she first reported the harassment to the appropriate school official, the official asked her if she had just misinterpreted an inside joke. The victim of sexual harassment was forced to take a class with her harasser because he was the only person teaching an upper level course mandatory for graduation. Meagher also explained the psychological effects of sexual harassment, stating “I would wake up for class every morning for that particular class and feel nauseous… I convinced myself that I must be coming

down with something, and stayed in bed. As soon as I would make the decision not to go to class, I would feel better.”

Another story, written by former student Maria Kolby, who originally started the discussion of sexual harassment on campus with her article “Professors take note: students are not your harem,” was published April 1, 1993. Kolby explained the situation of an admired professor dating her friend, and a celebratory dinner with the two of them resulting in the professor kissing Kolby and forcing his tongue into her mouth. She also detailed her own emotional and psychological strife. The most troubling portion of the article was, perhaps, Kolby’s description of how she sought help from Beth Kalikoff. After encouraging Kolby to file a complaint, Kalikoff explained her own fears to Kolby. Because her tenure decision was coming up soon and she had already helped women file complaints against tenured members of the English department, she feared that “she would be endangering her tenure decision and that [Kolby’s] claim would be less valid if [her] supporting faculty member was a woman already accused of rabble rousing female students to cry sexual assault.” After filing her complaint, accompanied by a tenured member of the English faculty, Kolby was told by the Dean of the University that her abuser admitted openly to his behavior but claimed that he wanted to assure Kolby that “he ‘had not meant it that way’ and that he was sorry [Kolby] had ‘misinterpreted the events of the evening.’” The abuser received a permanent mark in his record, but also did not have to face an

Granting and Denying Tenure

Here lies the third major issue discussed by staff and students through the Trail: unfair and anti-feminist procedures for granting and denying tenure. On January 28, 1993, The Trail ran a question of the week on the front page. That question was “Why were Laura Laffrado, Beth Kalikoff and Diana Marré denied tenure, all in the last three years?” All three had been dismissed based on the “collegiality” clause. When The Trail spoke with Beth Kalikoff and ran a guest editorial by Kalikoff, several interesting and inflammatory facts were revealed. First, Kalikoff revealed, “sometimes [her] colleagues have criticized students [they] shared for expressing feminist views in their classroom.” In addition, Kalikoff explained, “in an atmosphere when feminism is seen as threatening and ‘male bashing,’ a sexual harassment complaint will be incendiary.” In her editorial, Kalikoff defined the “collegiality” clause that was used to deny her

64 Maria Kolby, “’Hey, whoa, he did what?:’ One alumna’s story,” The Trail, April 1, 1993.


tenure. “Informally, this clause has been labeled by some who would no doubt deny it, as the ‘asshole clause,’ the ‘whistle-blower clause,’ or the ‘she won’t sleep with me clause’--the way to fire someone who was otherwise achieved excellence in teaching, research, and service.”

The collegiality clause that Kalikoff discussed was a judgment based on the “existence of those personal and professional characteristics that promise to make the faculty member and effective member of the university for the balance of his or her career.” The vague wording of this statement was significant. Kalikoff argued that allowed for tenure to be denied based on basically any point; it acted as a catchall clause to make sure that professors, especially women refusing to bow to the patriarchy, could be denied a permanent position at the university. *The Trail* got behind Kalikoff, publishing several articles that agreed that her tenure denial was unfair. The articles published also seemed to think that professor Laura Laffrado was also denied tenure using the same clause. These professors, on staff editorial argued were scholars of national prominence, highly ranked by students, published authors, and frequently used by the Admissions office to promote the school.


In addition, *The Trail* chose to publish an enlightening letter from Professor Juli Evans of the School of Occupational Therapy and Physical Therapy. Evans explained that following the denial of tenure to these professors, the morale amongst female professors was “abysmal” and that faculty felt “estranged and disenfranchised.” “It is my understanding,” Evans wrote, “that one of the grievous sins of Professors Kalikoff and Laffrado was to assist undergraduates to avoid taking courses from colleagues who the undergraduates feared and loathed. They – horrors! – reputedly advised students around certain perceived impediments to their educational or emotional health and safety.” The sarcastic tone of Evans’ letter highlights her feelings towards the issues surrounding tenure denial. By saying the opposite of what she meant, she amplified her feminist belief that Kalikoff and Laffrado were rejected from the university because they refused to submit to the patriarchy and let the offenses of their male colleagues slide. Evans even admitted to helping young women avoid classes with professors “whose reputation was… that of a predatory reptilian.”  

After several letters from staff members illustrating the morale amongst the female and untenured faculty, an Alum explaining that “the University of Puget Sound will no longer have my support, my money, or my pride,” and one especially harsh opinion piece that accused President Parr of having “swept these firings, along with an unavoidable sexual harassment nightmare, under the 

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carpet” and just “hoping they’ll go away,” the University took action to change the tenure review policy. The 2011 version of the Faculty Code requires only that a professor engage in “superior professional achievement.” And though Beth Kalikoff and Laura Laffrado were never granted the tenure that The Trail showed them as having deserved, the Code has changed to avoid such anti-feminist treatment of tenure-seeking professors in the future.

**Conclusion**

It was when these three issues reached a fever pitch that the “Sex, Lies, and Tenure” rally took place. According to an advertising posted that was put up around campus, the rally and open-mic forum was made to address two issues. The first issue:

The Administration has not adequately addressed the twin problems of sexual harassment and tenure. It’s time that students and faculty make their opinions heard!

And the second:

We demand a safe and honest educational environment at UPS where students can be free from sexual harassment and where teachers don’t lose their jobs for helping students avoid predatory professors. The Trail depicted the events very favorably and with great appreciation for the


74 Students Against Sexual Harassment, Sex, Lies, and Tenure Poster, University of Puget Sound, April, 1993.
goals. In addition, the resignation of the Dean of Students, David Dodson, and the stepping down of Dean of University, Tom Davis in the April 29, 1993 edition of the newspaper were portrayed positively.

Sexual harassment in workplaces, in schools, and even in social gatherings is a problem that women have faced for many years, and as evidenced by the many high profile sexual harassment cases through the 90s to the present. It is interesting to note that at the same time that these events were occurring at the University of Puget Sound, the scandal surrounding Supreme Court Nominee Clarence Thomas occurred. What happened at the University of Puget Sound presents, on a much smaller scale, the same issues. The same atmosphere ensued and the same tactics were used in an attempt to silence Anita Hill as *The Trail* strove against on campus. And those issues still exist today; the sexual harassment accusations that former Republican Presidential candidate Herman Cain faced from several women from a previous workplace are just one example.

Because of this, it is important that we are able to understand the phenomenon of sexual harassment and the coverage of these scandals on a much smaller level because they serve as a microcosm of what happens in the larger world. It is also important that students, faculty, and administrators are aware of the history of their University and that they know what men and women before them fought for in order to prevent such a maelstrom from tearing the campus apart again.
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