

**Final Investigative Report
Michigan State University
Office of Institutional Equity**

Date: January 7, 2019

Re: [REDACTED] / Rebecca Gill (#182-2018) and William Jacoby

Background

On January 11, 2018, the Office of Institutional Equity ("OIE") at Michigan State University ("University") received an anonymous report stating that, about five or six years ago, Professor William Jacoby ("Respondent") asked a then graduate student, [REDACTED] "What are you going to do for/give me?" after she had asked Respondent for academic advice on her dissertation project.

Claimant [REDACTED] was contacted by OIE after she made an anonymous post about her experience with Respondent and was informed about the existence of a report. OIE asked Claimant [REDACTED] if she wanted to participate in this investigation. Claimant [REDACTED] agreed to participate and decided to provide a statement to OIE.

On January 18, 2018, Valerie Sulfaro ("Dr. Sulfaro"), a former student of Respondent at the University of South Carolina, sent a letter to OIE requesting that MSU re-open an investigation of Respondent's alleged sexual harassment of a former MSU student named Rebecca Gill ("Claimant Gill"). Dr. Sulfaro's letter also stated that she had "additional information to offer" based on her own experiences with Respondent that supported Claimant Gill's allegations.

On January 30, 2018, OIE contacted Claimant Gill to discuss the allegations brought forward by Dr. Sulfaro. According to Claimant Gill, Respondent sexually harassed her in the summer of 2002.¹ Claimant Gill further alleged that Respondent had recently authored a letter, published on the *Political Science Rumors* website, in which he denied Claimant Gill's allegations of sexual harassment that she publicly discussed during the 2018 Southern Political Science Association Conference ("the Conference"). Claimant Gill alleged that Respondent's letter and subsequent actions were a form of retaliation against her.

The University commenced an investigation into these alleged violations of the [REDACTED] University Policy on Sexual Harassment² and of its current Policy on Relationship Violence and Sexual Misconduct ("RVSM Policy").

Issue(s)

- I. Whether Respondent engaged in conduct that subjected Claimant [REDACTED] to sexual harassment in violation of the [REDACTED] University Policy on Sexual Harassment.
- II. Whether Respondent engaged in conduct that subjected Claimant Gill to retaliation in violation of section R of the RVSM Policy.

¹ An allegation of sexual harassment that occurred in 2002 was reported to the University involving Respondent and Claimant Gill. After interviewing Claimant Gill, it was determined that jurisdiction did not exist at MSU, but rather the University of Michigan. OIE contacted the University of Michigan Office of Institutional Equity and transferred the report and information to that institution. The matter was closed with MSU.

² The allegations involving Claimant [REDACTED] occurred in [REDACTED]. The investigation must apply the standards set forth in the Policy as written at that time.

Summary of Findings

After investigation and review of the available evidence, OIE has determined by a preponderance of the evidence that Respondent sexually harassed Claimant [REDACTED] then a graduate student in the MSU Department of Political Science, in violation of the [REDACTED] University Policy on Sexual Harassment. Specifically, OIE found that in [REDACTED] Respondent propositioned Claimant [REDACTED] for sexual favors in exchange for his academic guidance regarding her research and paper. This behavior constitutes sexual harassment, as Respondent made Claimant [REDACTED] submission to his proposition a term or condition of an academic activity. Respondent's conduct was also severe and pervasive enough to unreasonably interfere with her education and create a hostile environment for her at the University.

In the case of Claimant Gill, OIE found the evidence insufficient to determine that Respondent engaged in acts of retaliation against her through the alleged publicly-released letters, denials, and/or orchestration of a whispering campaign.

Jurisdiction

The [REDACTED] University Policy on Sexual Harassment, which existed at the time of the alleged incident involving Claimant [REDACTED] applied to the University community – faculty, staff, and students – in several contexts, including conduct that occurred on-campus. Claimant [REDACTED] was an MSU student and Respondent was an MSU employee at the time of the reported [REDACTED] incident. The conduct is alleged to have occurred on campus. For these reasons, OIE determines that it has jurisdiction to investigate the allegations involving Claimant [REDACTED]

The current RVSM Policy applies to all relationship violence, sexual harassment, and sexual misconduct committed by or against a member of the University community when the conduct occurs on campus, in the context of a University program or activity, or when there are continuing adverse effects on campus or in a University program or activity. In the case of Claimant Gill's report of retaliation, Respondent was an MSU employee at the time of the alleged retaliation against Claimant Gill. The alleged conduct has caused continuing adverse effects on MSU's Political Science department by generating negative national attention to the department. Further, faculty members have expressed concern that the public perception of the department could affect the recruitment and retention of faculty and students. For these reasons, OIE determines it has jurisdiction to investigate the allegations involving Claimant Gill.

Investigation

Claimant [REDACTED]

On March 2, 2018, Kroll investigators³ Kenya Faulkner and Alexander Orban, on behalf of OIE, interviewed [REDACTED] [REDACTED] ("Claimant [REDACTED]" a former MSU student, regarding the report of a sexual proposition made by Professor William Jacoby ("Respondent"). Claimant [REDACTED] was advised of OIE process and protocol pursuant to the Relationship Violence and Sexual Misconduct Policy, including investigator neutrality, the investigation process and timeline, the prohibition against retaliation, and the availability of interim measures. She also reviewed and signed the Claimant Information Form.

Below is a summary of Claimant [REDACTED] statements:

Claimant [REDACTED] is [REDACTED] enrolled in a PhD program in the Political Science Department, where the incident took place. She received her PhD degree in [REDACTED]

Claimant [REDACTED] first came in contact with Respondent in the [REDACTED], when she was a PhD student and took Respondent's [REDACTED] class. Claimant [REDACTED] described

³ Kroll is a global investigations and risk management consulting firm headquartered in New York, NY. In February 2018, MSU retained Kroll to assist in OIE investigations of alleged violations of the University's RVSM policy.