

## Academic Senate Special Committee on Campus Bullying Report to Academic Senate, December 2020

Context and fact finding:

Anecdotal evidence gathered from a variety of sources and over a years-long time span and campus wide survey distributed in Fall semester 2020 indicate need for heightened anti-bullying measures (see attached survey results)

The Academic Senate adopted a statement on Bullying in April 2015

*“Queensborough Community College is committed to providing a supportive, safe and positive environment in which bullying is unacceptable. Bullying is deemed as unacceptable behavior on any College property, or at any College function, or activity; or through the use of any electronic, digital or printed materials, whether or not such use occurs on College property.”*

The Academic Senate voted in Fall semester 2019 to establish a special committee to investigate need and feasibility of a campus anti-bullying policy

As an outcome of the last collective bargaining agreement both the PSC and CUNY agreed to address the matter of bullying. This effort might conclude with either a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) regarding bullying accepted by both parties as binding or the CUNY Board of Trustees adopting a university policy on bullying. Either outcome would take precedence over anything done at any individual CUNY campus.

At this time QCC has a process operated by HR by which HR acts as a mediator in disputes, as a way to intervene and educate, in hopes that the problematic behavior stops before disciplinary action is needed. This occurs even in cases of alleged administrator abuse.

Some have reported a reluctance to make use of this approach. Thus, a need has been identified for a confidential person or persons for an aggrieved party to talk to or serve as intermediary in advance of reporting the matter to HR.

While we wait for the outcome of the PSC/CUNY efforts, HR has begun to implement heightened communication on the issue with the campus. Communications now direct individuals experiencing workplace stress not explicitly covered by existing violence, discrimination, and sexual harassment policies to contact Martha Aspromatis. On Wellness Wednesday, an email was sent to the entire campus community, and it is planned that such communications will be sent regularly.

Approaches to handling reports of bullying at other CUNY units and other colleges was researched and presented to the Special Committee. One such approach involved the college community having an ombudsman.

Pros –an intermediary is provided who can counsel and guide complainant in problem solving and complaint process without documentation being created and filed.

Cons – creation of such a position might involve an expense, if it is a paid position, and might be duplicative if there are already personnel in the community who are responsible to handle such reports and complaints

In the interim before a PSC/CUNY MOU is agreed upon and/or a CUNY Anti-Bullying Policy is enacted, and understanding that the above would take precedence over any local action the Academic Senate Special Committee on Campus Bullying offers the following recommendations, some of which have been enacted:

HR should continue to send regular email announcements that remind everyone of all types of workplace abuse and whom to speak to for redress (e.g., see announcement below)

HR now prominently features above language on its [HR homepage](#)

FEC and PSC/CUNY and other campus unions should include language on their webpage and in regular announcements that in the event that those who wish to speak about or report any incident or occasion involving what they believe may be bullying are reluctant to do so with a college official then they might make use of the relevant intermediary such as the PSC Grievance Counselor or PSC Chapter Chair for faculty or head HEO for HEO's or the relevant Shop Steward for those who are in other unions, if the potential complainant is uncomfortable speaking with an HR representative. On the Student Affairs webpage there should be a reminder that students may speak with a counsellor or with the Dean of Students.

HR should send a communication to all complainants that the complaint was received, and communication should be sent to inform complainant when the review and any action process has been completed, with careful attention to any and all confidentiality requirements. Failure to do such discourages the reporting of incidents and the filing of complaints.

The Academic Senate Environment, Quality of Life and Disabilities Issues Committee will monitor and report to the Senate annually at its May meeting on the number only of complaints of bullying handled and whether they have been resolved.

In the event that such measures prove to be ineffective and in the continuing absence of a CUNY wide policy or agreement, the Academic Senate should then convene a Special Committee on Campus Bullying to bring forth recommendations for additional measures in accordance with the aspirational goals of the QCC Statement of April 2015.

Committee Members:

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O'Shea, Victoria  
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### **1. Text of HR email to the QCC Community:**

Dear Faculty & Staff:

Diversity, inclusion, and a community dedicated to promoting a culture of respect are central to the mission of Queensborough Community College.

During these stressful times, it is more important than ever that we work together to foster a strong sense of belonging for all members of our campus community, especially our students.

Acts of discrimination, harassment or exclusion run counter to our institutional values, and will not be tolerated. Even while in distance learning mode, Queensborough and CUNY Policies remain in effect.

Every member of our campus community has the right to pursue their academic success and career goals in a safe, positive learning environment:

- If you experience sexual misconduct, we encourage you to contact the Title IX Coordinator, Belinda Delgado, at [BDelgado@qcc.cuny.edu](mailto:BDelgado@qcc.cuny.edu). To access CUNY's Policy on Sexual Misconduct and the CUNY Students' Bill of Rights, please click [here](#).
- If you experience discriminatory conduct, we encourage you to contact the Chief Diversity Officer, Josephine Pantaleo, at [JPantaleo@qcc.cuny.edu](mailto:JPantaleo@qcc.cuny.edu). To access CUNY's Policy on Equal Opportunity and Non-Discrimination, please click [here](#).
- If you experience an incident of workplace violence, we encourage you to contact the Executive Counsel and Labor Designee, Lois Florman, at [lforman@qcc.cuny.edu](mailto:lforman@qcc.cuny.edu). To access CUNY's Policy on Workplace Violence Prevention, please click [here](#).
- If you experience other inappropriate workplace interactions, we encourage you to contact the HR Employee Relations Manager, Martha Aspromatis, at [maspromatis@qcc.cuny.edu](mailto:maspromatis@qcc.cuny.edu).

Additional compliance information and resources can be accessed via the College's [Compliance Guidelines website](#).

Please remember that our [Counseling Center](#) is available to provide our *students* with personal support and other free resources. Likewise, *faculty and staff* have access to the [CUNY Work/Life program](#).

We all share a responsibility to communicate honestly and compassionately with each other. While these difficult times are stressful, Queensborough remains committed to providing a safe and inclusive environment for all.