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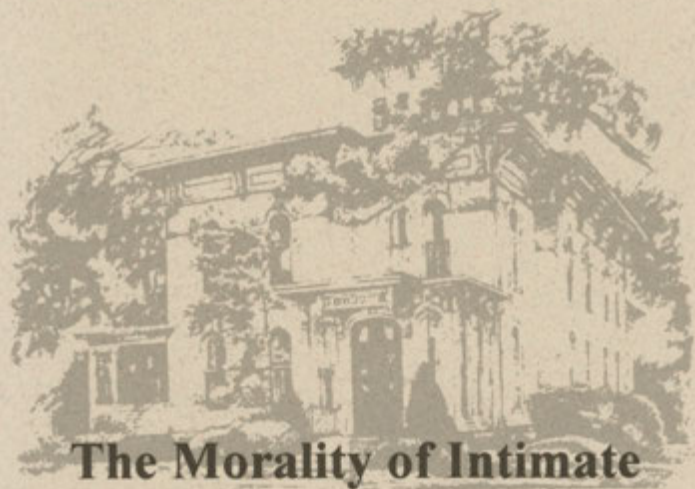
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The Morality of Intimate Faculty-Student Relationships

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The Morality of Intimate Faculty- Student Relationships

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The Morality of Intimate Faculty-Student Relationships

In what circumstances, if any, are intimate relationships between faculty members and students at the same academic institution morally permissible? Relationships can be sexual without the involvement of any intimate romantic feelings, or romantic without any sexual intimacy. By "intimate relationships" I mean those involving either kind of intimacy. Since adult humans should normally be allowed to choose with whom they have intimate relationships, the burden of proof is on the person who would restrict faculty-student relationships to show why they are morally wrong. Although none of my main arguments depend on the gender of the faculty member and student, we need to bear in mind that the vast majority of such relationships occur between male faculty and female students.¹ Gender inequalities in our society are likely to exacerbate the concerns that I discuss in section 2a about female students' ability to give fully voluntary consent to intimate relationships with male professors, and these inequalities also create the danger, which I discuss in section 3, that such relationships may perpetuate negative stereotypes about women.

1. Threats, Deception and Offers

Faculty members who threaten to harm students who refuse to accept their romantic

advances have committed a textbook case of sexual harassment. They have made unwelcome advances, and

[s]ubmission to or rejection of such conduct is used as the basis for decisions affecting an individual's employment status or academic standing.²

The threatened harm may involve unfairly harsh grades, assessments of theses and dissertations as a member of departmental committees, or evaluations of the performance of undergraduate or graduate assistants, or the refusal to write deserved recommendations for scholarships, assistantships, graduate programs or employment. The only relationship in such blatant cases of sexual exploitation is likely to be a single purely sexual encounter, or a succession of them. Making the same threats in order to achieve a romantic relationship is theoretically possible; but even harassers are unlikely to be so deluded as to believe that a threat could produce romantic feelings in their victims. This kind of sexual exploitation of a student is only possible by a faculty member who has professional responsibility, which I define as evaluating or supervising work, for the student. The distinction between students for whom we have professional responsibility, and those for whom we have none, will prove to be central to the morality of intimate faculty-student relationships.

Sexual exploitation of students by professors violates many professional obligations. At this stage of argument, one consideration suffices to condemn their behavior: it is wrong because it is a classic case of using someone solely as a means, without concern for her wishes. The students are coerced into the intimate relationship, by being forced to choose between two unwanted options: having an intimate relationship with the professors, or suffering retaliation for their refusal. While they do indeed choose to enter the relationship, their choice is not voluntary. The professors' actions thus meet Thomas Mappes' definition of using someone for sex:

"A sexually uses B if and only if A intentionally acts in a way that violates the requirement that B's sexual interaction with A be based on B's voluntary informed consent."³

Students' autonomy is also violated, and they are also used, if professors, without making any threats, deceive them into entering an intimate relationship. Thus professors may profess their undying love for students, who are in reality only the latest in a long line of partners, and whom the professors intend to replace with others the following semester.⁴

So called "quid pro quo" offers, in which faculty members offer students an undeserved benefit, such as an unearned grade, in return for an intimate relationship, are slightly more complex.

Since the students are not threatened with harm should they refuse the offer, such offers do not appear to be coercive.⁵ However, we need to consider two ways in which these offers may be de facto coercive. First, even though no threat may be either made or intended, students may perceive the offer as coercive, in view of the professors' immense power to harm them should they decide to retaliate if the students refuse the offer. This power differential has led some people to deny that a student can ever voluntarily enter even into a so-called "consensual" relationship with a professor, in which neither threats nor offers are made. I discuss such relationships below in section 2a. Second, students may be in such desperate need of the benefit that the professor offers them in return for sex that they are practically unable to refuse the offer. They may, for instance, be single parents dependent on financial aid for their studies, and the grade that they have earned in the class may lower their grade point average too far for them to continue to receive financial aid the next semester. In this case, because the professor has exploited their desperate situation, their acceptance of the offer may be less than fully voluntary.⁶ Like threats and deception, exploitation of someone's situation would be wrong in the context of any intimate relationship, and does not show that such relationships between faculty and students are intrinsically wrong.

Regardless of the voluntariness of the student's acceptance of the professor's offer of grades

for sex, we may condemn all such offers for different reasons. They are wrong because giving a student an undeserved grade is an absolute injustice, as well as a comparative injustice for those students in the same class who produce the same level of work, but receive the lower grade that they deserve.⁷ And just like the awarding of any undeserved grade, exchanging grades for sex both contributes to grade inflation, and devalues the degrees granted by an institution.

2. Consensual Relationships Involving Professional Responsibility

The most morally interesting faculty-student intimate relationships are those involving neither threats, deception, nor offers. What objection can we make to intimate relationships in which students and faculty members who have professional responsibility for them freely enter? For simplicity's sake, I will focus mainly on relationships between professors and students in their classes. Unlike many of the cases discussed in the previous section, by hypothesis these intimate relationships are based on the voluntary consent of both parties, and so the presumption in favor of allowing adults to choose their own intimate partners seems applicable. We need to temper any criticisms we make of intimate faculty student relationships with fairness to faculty members and students who, like those who go on to enjoy happy marriages, have healthy, mutually respectful

relationships.

Two main grounds exist for condemning consensual intimate faculty-student relationships. First, regardless of the good intentions of professors, we may question whether fully voluntary consent is ever possible, given the enormous power disparity between them and their students. Second, professors face a conflict of interest that may prevent them from assigning fair grades to the students with whom they are intimately involved.

a. **Doubts about Voluntary Consent**

I begin by disavowing one way of denying that a relationship between a professor and his student can ever be fully voluntary. This is the view that any intimate faculty-student relationship is ipso facto an instance of sexual harassment and, hence, wrong. The first problem with this view is that to lump apparently consensual intimate relationships together with blatantly coercive ones under the single term "sexual harassment" is to ignore morally relevant distinctions. If apparently consensual faculty-student relationships are indeed morally problematic, we would do better to recognize them as a different kind of "sexual misconduct" than that involved in threats and offers.⁸ Second, we must determine the morality of such relationships by argument, not by definition. To define them pejoratively as "sexual harassment" is to presuppose the very point in question, which is whether they are

morally wrong.

Although the attempt to condemn apparently consensual relationships by defining them as sexual harassment is unwise, doubts about the voluntariness of the consent given by students who enter into them deserve serious consideration. Because of the great power differential between faculty and students, which concerns not only power over students' grades, but also power over their self-esteem, which can be seriously damaged by cutting criticisms by professors,⁹ Dziech and Weiner dismiss the notion of students as consenting adults in intimate relationships with professors as a myth.¹⁰ However, further argument is needed to show why the mere existence of a power differential precludes fully voluntary consent to intimate relationships. By analogy, I seem to be quite capable of autonomously deciding to have an intimate relationship with a colleague of my physician, even though this colleague, at least within the confines of the health clinic, has considerably more power than me.¹¹

According to Elias Baumgarten, the reason why students' lack of power with respect to their professors impairs their ability to make autonomous decisions about intimate relationships is because "students clearly do transfer to their relationships with teachers feelings that have been shaped by their bonds with parents and others from their past."¹² This transference, which can involve intense feelings that continue long after the professor no longer has

professional responsibility for students, along with the fact that students may view the professor as a parental figure who can be trusted to look after their interests, makes students especially vulnerable, and interferes with their ability to "exercise their own usual degree of competent judgment."¹³ The fact that students look up to professors as authority figures magnifies the harm that professors cause by threats, deception, and exploitation. To be betrayed by an intimate partner is always traumatic, but when the partner is an authority figure whom the student trusted the betrayal is especially devastating.

However, we still need more explanation than Baumgarten gives of exactly why transference interferes with students' ability to give fully voluntary consent to an intimate relationship. One possibility is that students may transfer to their professors the obedience that they were taught to give their parents throughout their childhood, thus making it very difficult for them to turn down a professor's romantic advances. This tendency to obedience may be especially pronounced in the case of female students who have been socialized to comply with the wishes of men, especially relatively powerful men like college professors. The simplest way of connecting the power differential between students and professors to doubts about students' autonomy, though, makes no reference to transference. The problem is that students may fear the abuse of professors' power to retaliate against them if they

either refuse to begin or decide to end an intimate relationship. Such retaliation, which is only possible when the professor has professional responsibility for the student, may involve grades or other forms of evaluation. Hence fear of retaliation, rather than an autonomous desire for intimacy, may be the student's motivation for entering and continuing the relationship.

But, as Baumgarten concedes with regard to his concerns about transference,¹⁴ while this danger shows that some intimate faculty-student relationships are problematic, it seems insufficient to condemn them all. The burden is always on professors to ensure that students have made an autonomous decision to have an intimate relationship with them, and professors are morally accountable for any psychological harm to the students that follows from their failure to do so. Nonetheless, as long as professors meet this burden--for instance, by assuring the students that neither their accepting nor rejecting the romantic advances will have any impact on their academic status in the professor's class--most students appear to be perfectly capable of giving fully voluntary consent to their relationship. To presume otherwise, and to pass paternalistic rules to protect students, may harm them by treating them as if they were children or mentally ill, instead of competent adults capable of making autonomous decisions. In addition, in view of the importance for women's search for greater power and participation in

academia of developing personal alliances and friendships, any institutional rules that restrict their freedom to form relationships are suspect.¹⁵

This is not to deny that students can suffer immense harm as a result of consensual relationships with their professors. If such a relationship turns sour or ends, the professor may retaliate against the student and, even if the professor does not retaliate, their professional interactions may become awkward and even traumatic for the student. These risks may make intimate relationships with professors imprudent, especially for graduate students, who typically have closer relationships with professors, and whose careers are more dependent on their support, than undergraduates.¹⁶ However, an imprudent decision need not be inautonomous, and we should respect the ability of adult students to competently assess the risks of intimate relationships with their professors and act accordingly. So, while I do consider intimate relationships between professors and their students to be immoral, for reasons to be explained in the next subsection, my judgment is not based on concerns about students' voluntary consent.

A "hard" or "strong" paternalist argument for condemning and banning all such faculty-student relationships would concede that students can make autonomous decisions to enter them, and justify the ban by sole reference to the severe harm to students that can result. However, hard paternalism is

plausible only in the case of activities, such as using heroin or other IV drugs, that will almost certainly lead to substantial harm to self. And consensual faculty-student romances, which may have neutral or even beneficial results for students, do not present a sufficiently high risk of severe harm to students to justify such a draconian ban on paternalistic grounds.

Baumgarten's strongest argument against intimate relationships between professors and students for whom they have professional responsibility is an epistemological one. While I have raised objections to his reasons for doubting the autonomy of students' decisions, he correctly points out that the morality of a professor's pursuit of such a relationship hinges on the accuracy of the professor's judgment that the student gives full voluntary consent to it. Given both the difficulty of ascertaining whether the student really does give full voluntary consent, and the likelihood of self-deception on the part of the professor, whose romantic ardor may cause him or her to suppress doubts, Baumgarten argues that a strong presumption exists against intimate faculty-student relationships that will be outweighed only in rare cases.¹⁷

Baumgarten's epistemological argument creates a strong burden on professors to be aware of the danger of self-deception and to take great care to ensure that students have given fully voluntary consent to intimate relationships. However, while we may reasonably condemn an activity that poses a high

risk, if not the certainty, of a substantial harm, the danger of inautonomous decisions by students is not high enough to justify the condemnation of all intimate faculty-student relationships. Conscientious professors can take steps to reduce the risk of inautonomous decisions by adult students with whom they are involved to a sufficiently low level that blanket condemnations of their intimate relationships on the ground of this risk would be unfair to such faculty members and their students.

Our concerns about the voluntariness of students' participation in intimate relationships with their professors seem to be less urgent when students themselves initiate the relationship. Neither threats, deception, nor exploitation of the students appear possible at the beginning of the intimate relationship, although they may begin once the relationship is underway. However, Zalk argues that the very fact that some professors freely play this role of "receptive non-initiator", while considering it wrong for them to try to initiate romances, indicates that they recognize the moral risks of such relationships. And it seems wrong to draw "the line between morality and immorality at who does the asking." The inequality in power between faculty and students, argues Zalk, makes all intimate relationships between them exploitative of the student, regardless of who initiated them.¹⁸ While student-initiated romances are less likely than professor-initiated ones to involve conscious

coercion, deception or exploitation of the student, Zalk is correct that, once the relationship is under way, any concerns we have about the morality of these romances will not be allayed by considering their origin. However, the force of this subsection is precisely that we have not yet found a reason for condemning all intimate faculty-student relationships on the ground of the risk of harm to students.

Student-initiated romances raise the possibility that some students may use professors for their selfish end of receiving a higher grade. They may deceive professors into believing that they have a genuine romantic interest in them and exploit their loneliness, thus preventing the professors from giving fully informed consent to enter the relationship. Such actions are wrong, but they inflict minimal harm on professors, over whom the only power students have is emotional. The worst that can happen is that professors will feel humiliated when they are abandoned when students have received the desired grade. In contrast, unscrupulous professors can seriously damage students' academic careers, and can inflict serious psychological damage on students who regarded them as trustworthy superiors. The main victims when students use professors to improve their grades are the other students in the class, who receive lower grades than they deserve compared to the students who use the professor. The minimal damage that is inflicted on professors who are used by students in this way, and the unlikelihood of

students' either having the ability to fool professors or the courage to run the risk of facing professors' retaliation should they discover the fact that they are being used, give little reason to condemn all intimate faculty-student relationships.

b. Conflicts of Interest

The most powerful objection to intimate faculty-student relationships makes no reference to doubts about students' autonomy. It is based, instead, on the enormous difficulty of professors' giving fair, impartial treatment to students with whom they are intimately involved. Unlike explicit sex for grades offers, in which the awarding of unfair grades is deliberate, in the case of consensual relationships the unfairness in grades and other benefits is likely to result from unconscious bias in favor of the intimate partner.

Peter Markie has argued convincingly that friendships between faculty members and students for whom they have professional responsibility are wrong.¹⁹ Certain features of friendship--in particular, the fact that when two people are friends, "each makes a commitment to the other to give the other's welfare special consideration"²⁰--make it extremely difficult for professors to fulfill their duty of equal consideration to all their students. Even if professors use blind grading to minimize the danger of bias, the special consideration they will give their friends will likely include extra help on assignments, more

discussion of the class material, career advice, and other benefits that will not be given to those students (we may assume the vast majority) who are not their friends.²¹ In response to the objection that professors who give extra help to their friends do no wrong as long as they give all other students high-quality instruction and an adequate level of help, Markie points out that the higher grades earned by the friends who produce better work because of the extra help the professor has given them will give them a competitive advantage for jobs and graduate school places over equally talented students who are not the professor's friends.²²

Markie's argument seems to apply with even more force as an objection to intimate faculty-student relationships, since intimate relationships normally include friendship, and involve even more of an emotional commitment to the partner's interests than does friendship. How can professors give equal consideration to all of their students when they are intimately involved with one of them?

Interestingly, Markie points out that his argument does not necessarily condemn intimate relationships that do not involve friendship.²³ We can easily imagine a purely sexual affair between student and professor, as well as an immature folie-a-deux that has no emotional depth. However, while such friendship-free intimate relationships do not involve the mutual commitment to special consideration that Markie believes prevents fair, equal consideration of

all of a professor's students, they generate other sources of bias that will likely have the same effect. A purely sexual affair is often exhilarating, and professors will naturally be inclined to be lenient in judging the work of persons who are giving them so much pleasure, and they may--consciously or not--believe that giving high grades will make the continuation of the affair more likely. Similar thoughts apply to the passionate folie-a-deux, which may be full of declarations of love, but lack any sincere concern for the partner's well-being. The emotional exhilaration that professors derive from such an affair may meet deep psychological needs, and once again hinder their ability to judge their partners' work fairly and objectively.

Of course, we cannot declare a priori that all professors who have an intimate relationship with their students will succumb to these conflicts of interest. The reason why such professors are, nonetheless, acting wrongly is that they are recklessly ignoring a grave moral risk. By analogy, Solomonic judges doubtless exist who would be capable of conducting their romantic partners' trial in a fair and impartial way; but any judge who failed to declare her conflict of interest and remove herself from the case would be universally condemned.²⁴

The moral prohibition for which I am arguing imposes only a minimal sacrifice on professors and students: waiting until final grades are turned in, or whenever the faculty member's professional

responsibility for the student is over, before acting on or even discussing their mutual attraction. The reason why they should not even discuss any attraction between them is that a future, promised romance is just as likely to present the professor with a conflict of interest as a current intimate relationship.

Two reasons exist for regarding the danger of a conflict of interest as a more substantial ground for condemning intimate faculty-student relationships than the danger that the student may not give fully voluntary consent. First, whereas a conscientious professor can go a long way to minimize the danger that the student is not acting autonomously in entering the relationship, both the temptation to favor an intimate partner in grades and other benefits, and the difficulty of identifying one's own bias, will be too great for the vast majority of professors. Second, the conflict of interest argument is based in part on preventing harm to third parties, as well as the intrinsic injustice of giving undeservedly high grades, and is thus less controversial than paternalistic restrictions designed to prevent students from harming themselves by making inautonomous decisions.

3. Consensual Relationships Outside the Context of Professional Responsibility

What about professors who have intimate relationships with students for whom they have no professional responsibility, for instance students who

major in a different department, who never have and never will take one of the professors' classes, whose work they will never have to evaluate as part of a departmental or institutional committee, and whom they will never supervise as an undergraduate or graduate assistant? My objection to intimate faculty-student relationships--that they involve a conflict of interest--is inapplicable here, since conflicts of interests can only arise when the professor has professional responsibility for the student. The professor seems to be just as morally free to pursue a romance with the student as a maintenance worker, chef, fellow student, or anyone unconnected with the academic institution would be. Yet some people oppose any romance between any professor and student at the same academic institution.²⁵ Let us examine reasons that might support this view.

Perhaps these relationships are wrong because of the potential for a conflict of interest. The students with whom professors are involved may change their major, making it much more likely that the professor will have professional responsibility for them. However, this danger does not justify the condemnation of all intimate faculty-student relationships, since the couple can take simple precautions to ensure that the conflict of interest does not arise. If students need to take a class that the professor with whom they are involved teaches, they can take it with another instructor. In the very unlikely case that they need the class for graduation

and the professor is the only person who teaches it, the professor should ask a colleague to grade their work. If this proves impossible, then the students should either change their major, or end the relationship. Students should not change their major to the department of professors with whom they are involved, for the same reason that professors should not have intimate relationships with any of their departments' majors: the danger of conflicts of interest arising from grades, thesis committees, departmental examinations, and supervision of student assistants is too great.

The case of former students who are still enrolled at the college is more problematic. While professional responsibility is over, and the steps just outlined will ensure that conflicts of interest do not arise in the future, an additional objection arises to intimate relationships in these circumstances. This is that other people may perceive that the relationship involves one of the improprieties that we have condemned: coercion, grades for sex offers, or a conflict of interest. Such perceptions may also arise in the case of any faculty-student romance, whether or not they involve former students, and we need to evaluate whether they provide a strong reason for condemning intimate relationships outside the context of professional responsibility.²⁶

They do not, for the simple reason that the morality of an action depends primarily on realities, not perceptions. At most, the fact that other people

may falsely believe that a faculty-student romance involves improprieties may make it imprudent for the partners to pursue it, or at least to allow themselves to be seen together publicly. We should not allow our moral judgments to be determined by other people's false perceptions, especially when they are based on prejudices. By analogy, even today some people may view interracial couples with suspicion. Rather than contemplating the possibility that an African American male and a white female may genuinely love and respect one another, some people may make ominous suggestions about "jungle fever." Maybe the woman is influenced by stereotypes about African American males' sexual prowess, and the man is motivated by the desire to "prove" himself by having a relationship with a woman of the dominant white race. We would not entertain the fact that some people would make these speculations as a serious moral objection to an interracial relationship that is based on genuine love and respect. Similarly, the possibility that some people will falsely accuse a faculty-student couple of grades for sex or other immoralities does not make their intimate relationship wrong. The burden is on these other people to abandon their false and prejudiced beliefs, not on the couple to end their relationship in order to accommodate these beliefs. And while these beliefs may lead faculty-student couples to conceal their relationship, any moral harm caused by this concealment²⁷ is the fault of the people whose false

and prejudiced beliefs make it necessary.

Other people's perception that professors are biased towards one or more students does provide an objection to intimate relationships between students and professors who have professional responsibility for them. This perception may weaken the credibility of the professors' evaluations in general, and thus harm all of their students.²⁸ Unlike the mistaken perceptions that I reject as reasons against faculty-student romances, when the professor has professional responsibility for the student this perception is based on a real conflict of interest.

Another respect in which other people's perceptions are relevant to the morality of intimate faculty-student relationships within a context of professional responsibility arises from the insecurities that many women naturally feel in our male-dominated society: a female student in a consensual relationship with her male professor may wonder whether her success in the class is due to the instructor's favoritism rather than her own ability, and these self-doubts may seriously harm her chances of success. Worse still, other people may harbor the same suspicions about favoritism, thus reinforcing prejudices, which are harmful to women in general, that women can only succeed by sexual manipulation.²⁹ Once again, while an individual professor may resist the temptation to favor his intimate partner, other people's perceptions of favoritism are based on a real danger of bias due to

the conflict of interest.

What of objections to faculty-student relationships that question whether the student is capable of giving fully voluntary consent? Even if we concede what I denied in section 2a--that doubts about the autonomy of students who have intimate relationships with their professors are sufficient to support a blanket condemnation of all such relationships--these concerns seem far less urgent in the case of professors who have no professional responsibility for the student with whom they are involved. Granted, by virtue of their status as professors, faculty members have more power than students, who may look up to them as authority figures. But only when professors have power and authority with respect to students is there a risk that the students may feel compelled to accept the professors' advances, because only in this case need the students fear retaliation should they turn the professors down. By analogy, it seems absurd to question my ability to give fully voluntary consent to an intimate relationship with someone who has far more power than I do, say a prominent judge or politician; unless, that is, she has direct power over me, as would be the case if the judge were presiding over my trial.

Underlying these exaggerated concerns for the autonomy of a student who has a romance with a professor outside the context of professional responsibility may be the age difference between the

professor and student. However, like the contention that the power differential precludes fully voluntary consent by the student, the belief that a fully consensual relationship cannot exist because of the age difference proves too much. It would also count against the many healthy intimate relationships that exist in all walks of life between partners of vastly disparate ages.

Now we should not deny that professors' status, accomplishments, intelligence, worldliness and other qualities may be major reasons why students find them attractive.³⁰ But this indicates neither any nefarious intentions on the part of professors, nor a lack of autonomy on the part of the students with whom they are involved. In any relationship attraction is based on the partners' qualities. And while an attraction that is based solely on admiration for a person's status, rather than on her more personal qualities, would be a superficial basis for a romance, it would certainly not preclude an autonomous decision to act on that attraction.

So arguments against intimate faculty-student relationships outside the context of professional responsibility are unsound.

4. Policy Implications

In the light of the foregoing arguments, what policies should colleges and universities pass concerning intimate faculty-student relationships? Existing sexual harassment policies already impose

sanctions for coercion of students to participate in intimate relationships, and the blatant unfairness of quid pro quo offers is sanctionable as unethical and unprofessional conduct. A separate policy is needed, however, for actually or apparently consensual relationships that avoid these blatant improprieties.

The most important implication of this paper is that policies must make the crucial distinction between relationships within and those outside a context of professional responsibility. They should impose sanctions on faculty members who have intimate relationships with students for whom they have professional responsibility. Rather than giving merely prudential warnings about the "risks" involved in such relationships, policies should state that these risks make them immoral, and thus make faculty members who have them subject to the substantial penalties that most institutions impose on unethical behavior. They should explain why intimate relationships that cross lines of professional responsibility are wrong. While we have seen that the risk of lack of voluntary consent on the student's part is not a conclusive reason against such relationships, it deserves mention as a substantial danger. The main rationale for this prohibition, though, should be the unavoidable conflict of interest that arises for the professor with regard to the student. Policies that make vital distinctions, and that are backed by explicit and compelling rationales, are far more likely to command the respect and

compliance of faculty members than blanket prohibitions, which they are more likely to dismiss as archaic and moralistic taboos.³¹

Rationales should refer to actual threats to students' ability to give fully voluntary consent, and actual conflicts of interest, rather than to people's perceptions, which may or may not be accurate, of these dangers.³² If we pass clearly-justified policies forbidding faculty-student romances when a conflict of interests exists, false perceptions of impropriety in the case of intimate relationships between faculty members and students for whom they have no professional responsibility are less likely to arise in the first place. Rather than lumping together all intimate faculty-student relationships, members of college communities will learn that morally relevant distinctions apply, and refrain from automatically assuming the worst when they see faculty-student couples.

Policies that follow these guidelines protect academic communities from intimate faculty-student relationships that really are harmful, while showing maximal respect for faculty members and students in two ways. First, they respect the prima facie right of adults to pursue consensual relationships with whomever they please. Second, they respect the ability of professors and students alike to comprehend and act on morally relevant distinctions between relationships that occur in different circumstances.

NOTES

1. See Michele Paludi and Richard Barickman (eds.), Academic and Workplace Sexual Harassment: A Resource Manual (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991), p. 21.
2. This is part of Zacker and Paludi's extension of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission's definition of sexual harassment to apply to academic settings. See Sue Rosenberg Zalk, Judy Dederich, and Michele Paludi, "Women Students' Assessment of Consensual Relationships with Their Professors: Ivory Power Reconsidered," ibid., p. 108.
3. Thomas A. Mappes, "Sexual Morality and the Concept of Using Another Person," Thomas A. Mappes and Jane S. Zembaty, Social Ethics: Morality and Social Policy, 4th. Edition (New York: McGraw-Hill, Inc., 1992), p. 206.
4. Billie Wright Dziech and Linda Weiner, The Lecherous Professor: Sexual Harassment on Campus (Boston: Beacon Press, 1984), pp. 75-76.
5. According to Richard Taylor, whereas professors who coerce their students into sex are universally condemned by students and would risk being fired, those who offer grades for sex do not

"outrage" most students, and would not risk being punished by their institution. See Having Love Affairs (Buffalo: Prometheus Books, 1982), p. 41. Given the powerful moral objections to such offers that I describe below, I doubt whether either students or college administrators are as morally blind as Taylor would have us believe.

6. Mappes resists calling such offers "coercive", and instead regards them as exploitation of a person who is already "under coercion" because of her desperate situation, and thus as a way of using someone for sex that does not involve coercing her. See "Sexual Morality and the Concept of Using Another Person," pp. 213-16.

8. The danger of undeserved grades and other benefits is the basis of my main argument against consensual intimate faculty-student relationships, even when no offers are made. See below, section 2b.

8. See Nancy ("Ann") Davis, "Sexual Harassment in the University," Steven M. Cahn (ed.), Morality, Responsibility, and the University: Studies in Academic Ethics (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1990), pp. 153-58.

9. Zalk et al, "Women Students' Assessment of Consensual Relationships with Their Professors," pp. 101-3.

10. Dziech and Weiner, The Lecherous Professor: Sexual Harassment on Campus, pp. 74-77.
11. Elias Baumgarten, "Conflicting Affairs," Teaching Philosophy 9:3 (Sept. 1986), p. 258.
12. Ibid.
13. Ibid., p. 259.
14. Ibid.
15. For more detail on this criticism of paternalistically-motivated restrictions on intimate faculty-student relationships, see Frances L. Hoffmann, "Sexual Harassment in Academia: Feminist Theory and Institutional Practice," Harvard Educational Review Vol. 56, No. 2 (May 1986), pp. 111-15.
16. I am grateful to Lorraine Hardingham, who commented on this paper at the 1996 meeting of the Canadian Society for the Study of Practical Ethics, for a compelling account of the dangers of intimate relationships between graduate students and their professors.
17. Baumgarten, "Conflicting Affairs," pp. 259-60.
18. Sue Rosenberg Zalk, "Men in the Academy: A Psychological Profile of Harassment," Michele A. Paludi (ed.), Ivory Power: Sexual Harassment

on Campus (Albany: S.U.N.Y. Press, 1990), 152-53.

19. Peter J. Markie, "Professors, Students, and Friendship," Cahn (ed.) Morality, Responsibility, and the University, pp. 134-49.

20. Ibid., p. 142.

21. Ibid., pp. 141-43.

22. Ibid., pp. 144-46.

23. Ibid., note 17.

24. Markie, ibid., p. 144, gives a similar analogy concerning judges and friends.

25. See, for instance, Steven M. Cahn, Saints and Scamps: Ethics in Academia (Totowa, N.J.: Rowman and Littlefield, 1986), pp. 36-38.

26. Cahn gives an argument of this nature to condemn faculty-student romances even when the professor has no professional responsibility for the student:

Even if a student is not enrolled in a professor's class and never intends to be, their liason suggests to the other members of the academic community that this faculty member does not view students from a professional standpoint. (Ibid., p. 37)

27. According to Cahn,

If an attempt is made to keep the liason secret, the professor's integrity is compromised. In any case, such efforts at concealment almost always fail, thus besmirching the professor's reputation for honesty. (*Ibid.*)

28. See Markie, "Professors, Students, and Friendship," p. 143.

29. See Nancy ("Ann") Davis, "Sexual Harassment in the University," pp. 164-65.

30. See Taylor, Having Love Affairs, pp. 41-45.

31. Nancy ("Ann") Davis makes a similar point about sexual harassment policies, "Sexual Harassment in the University," p. 169.

32. Thus, for instance, the University of Iowa's policy, which carefully explains the danger of conflicts of interest, unwisely refers to the danger that "relationships that the parties view as consensual may appear to others to be exploitative" (emphasis added). The policy is cited by Zalk et al, "Women Students' Assessment of Consensual Relationships with Their Professors," p. 108.

Biography

Nicholas Dixon is an Associate Professor of Philosophy at Alma College. He specializes in applied ethics, and has published articles on the free will problem, teaching the history of modern philosophy, handgun control, sportsmanship, filial obligations, abortion and animal rights.

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