

# Sexual harassment exposed during lecture series

**Ann Feeney-McGovern**  
*Capital Times Staff*

Dr. Bernice Sandler, senior associate for the Center for Women Policy Studies in Washington, D. C., compares sexual harassment to rape.

She said both crimes are treated like a joke, have remained a hidden problem for a long time, and have a long history of silence by the victim. According to Sandler, people also have a tendency, in both cases, to blame the victim.

Sandler, who has crusaded for gender equality in the workplace and on college campuses since 1970, said, "Sexual harassment is an issue of change and controversy. Sexual harassment is not nice, and it is illegal."

In her speech, which launched Penn State Harrisburg's Spring Lecture Series on Thursday, Feb. 13 in the Capital Union Building, Sandler referred to the recent Anita Hill-Clarence Thomas allegations of sexual harassment.

She said although she was disappointed with the outcome of the hearings, she sees change in the way men and women view

sexual harassment.

"Women's voices were opened," Sandler said. "Women told other women-- and perhaps just as important, women told men when sexual harassment happened," she said.

Although women are the primary victims of sexual harassment, men have also reported harassment.

"The law covers men as well as women," Sandler said. "Sexual harassment is not solely a women's issue."

Sandler defined sexual harassment as "unwelcome sexual behavior that occurs in a context where one person has power over another."

Representative Karen Ritter, 13th legislative district (Lehigh County), Sharon A. Lambley, human resources director at Hershey Foods, and Edmund Tiryak, Esq., an attorney who specializes in defending the rights of the disadvantaged, also spoke.

The lecture was the first of four scheduled programs planned for Penn State Harrisburg's Spring Lecture Series. The theme of this semester's series is controversy and change.

An informal, but effective, remedy for dealing with sexual harassment is a simple letter to the harasser, said Bernice Sandler, during her evening presentation on the subject.

She suggested the victim send a registered letter to the harasser and include these three sections:

1. *A factual description of what happened.* Sandler emphasized that this section should stick to the facts. The writer should not call the harasser names or make threats. For example: "On Friday, February 14, you said..."

2. *Describe how the harassment has made you feel.* For example, "I am very upset."

3. *Say what you want to happen.* For instance, "I would like you to reevaluate my grade," or "I would like you to treat me with the same professional respect you do other employees."

Sandler said this letter by itself stops harassment in 90 percent of cases. Often the harasser is surprised and embarrassed by the direct, simple description of his actions and the effects they cause. The only people it doesn't stop are sadists, who take delight in causing pain, she said.

In addition, she said, victims of harassment should keep a diary with dates, locations and possible witnesses of harassment incidents.



Photo by Mike Starkey

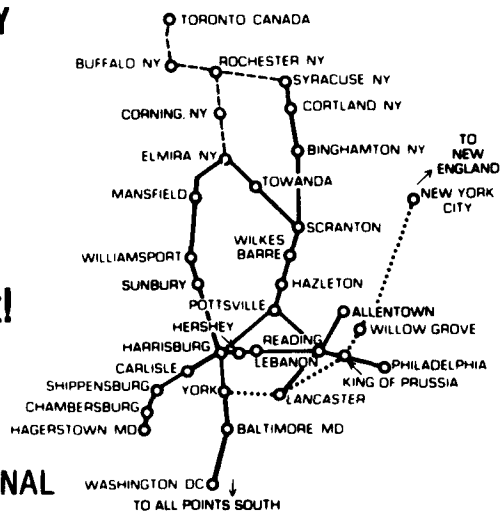
Bernice Sandler awaits her turn at the podium during the "Gender Equality" program held Feb. 13 in the Student Center of the Capital Union Building. The program featuring Sandler and three other key speakers was the first of a four-part lecture series being offered by Penn State Harrisburg.

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Pennsylvania with a bachelor's degree in medical technology.

She received a master's degree in business education from Wharton's executive program, and a doctorate in parasitology.

San Jose State University was founded in 1857, and is the oldest public university in California.

The university has about 30,000 students, which is about 10 times more

than Penn State Harrisburg, and offers more than 100 programs in eight schools.

The other finalists for the position are:

Tomas Aciniega, president of California State University at Bakersfield; Doris Michiko Ching, vice-president for student affairs at the University of Hawaii at Manoa; Sheila Kapan, chancellor at the University of Wisconsin in Parkside; Gerry Meisels, provost for the University of South Florida; and Joseph Watson, vice-chancellor of undergraduate affairs at the University of California in San Diego.

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