

# UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

*Twin Cities Campus  
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Office for Equity and Diversity*

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March 17, 2020

Ms. Susan McKinney, CRM  
Director, Records & Information Management  
University of Minnesota

Dear Ms. McKinney:

In response to the inquiry recently received by your office, please find attached a summary that may be publicly shared upon request with regard to EOAA's 2019 investigative findings involving allegations of a hostile environment based on gender within the Department of Mathematics and Statistics ("the Department") at the University of Minnesota Duluth.

- During the 2018-19 academic year, the University's Office of Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action (EOAA) received concerns that former and/or current female department members had experienced unwelcome conduct based on gender from other Department members. A 2019 investigation by the EOAA substantiated that some of the reported unwelcome conduct based on gender occurred and that, at times, it unreasonably interfered with some female department members' work performance and created an environment that a reasonable female department member would find to be intimidating, hostile or offensive. While EOAA did not find that the conduct of any one individual constituted discrimination in violation of University policy, EOAA did make a finding that the University's policies prohibiting discrimination were violated by the aggregated gendered conduct of multiple individuals, which contributed to an environment in the Department that multiple women reasonably found to be hostile or offensive.
- Among other things, this finding was supported by credible reports and other evidence from numerous staff and faculty members, both male and female, that female department members were, at times: 1) expected to manage disproportionately more service and administrative tasks than their male counterparts; 2) expected to interact in a less assertive and more friendly manner than their male counterparts, in accordance with gender stereotypes; and 3) interrupted, talked over, or subjected to offensive gendered comments, when their similarly situated male colleagues were not.
- EOAA did not find that any one individual was responsible for engaging in this conduct in violation of University policy. Rather, EOAA based its findings on evidence of conduct by a number of department members and the cumulative impact of that conduct. EOAA did not find evidence suggesting that department members who engaged in the above-described conduct did so with an intention of causing harm or offense to women within the Department. Still, EOAA found that, taken together, their conduct, at times, had the impact of unreasonably interfering with some women's work performance and creating an environment that was intimidating, hostile or offensive to female department members

- Allowing such an environment to persist within an academic department can undermine: the morale of its staff, faculty and students, the hiring and retention of women and individuals from other under-represented groups, the productivity of department members, the commitment of department members to the Department and college, and the Department's reputation.
- EOAA's findings recognized that the Department is by no means alone in facing issues of this kind, and that these concerns in part reflect broader issues within our society at large.

If you have any questions about the above summary, please let us know.

Sincerely,



Tina Marisam, Title IX Coordinator and Director  
Office of Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action



Annalisa Peterson, Associate to the Director  
Office of Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action