

SEXUAL HARASSMENT PREVENTION CASE STUDY

Lucy is a student in Math 1050 who comes to the drop-in tutoring center several times a week. She has received help in previous semesters from many different tutors, male and female, who have been competent and professional. She has enjoyed the atmosphere, where student tutors are helping other students. She is outgoing and has engaged in casual conversation with the tutors as she has worked with them, including complimenting them on "awesome" clothes, asking how they were doing in their own classes, talking about campus and social events, joking about professors, etc.

In the past, Lucy has enjoyed working with Lance because of how he explains things and because of his friendly, joking demeanor. He's complimented her before on her clothes, they've briefly joked about dating and the USU social scene, and she's casually mentioned some of her academic and career goals. She's flirted a bit with Lance, but hasn't meant it to be anything serious; it's just how she acts with most guys.

After working with Lance a few times this semester, Lucy notices some changes in his behavior that concern her. Lance sits closer to her than in the past and has physical contact with her, which Lucy finds uncomfortable, including putting his hand on her shoulder as he sits down; leaning his knee against her knee as he is working with her; putting his hand over hers to stop her writing when he points out an error in her problem. She's noticed that he seems to always be looking at her when he is not helping another student. On one occasion, he even winked at her when she looked up to see him watching her.

On another occasion, when another tutor came over to help her, Lance told the tutor to go work with another student whose flag was up. Lance explained that he would help Lucy since he had helped her earlier. Lucy thought that was quite odd, but wondered if maybe the Academic Success Center's tutoring policies or procedures had changed. Today, Lance said something that Lucy found a bit creepy and definitely embarrassing. He started joking about how they "should just start dating, since we see so much of each other anyway" in the tutoring center. While Lucy and the tutors have joked around before, Lance's comment seemed to "cross the line" — it felt too personal to her, and he didn't say it in a joking way.

Lucy is having a hard time feeling comfortable coming to the tutoring center. She's not sure if she is misinterpreting Lance's behavior and doesn't want to cause problems for him. But, his behavior just doesn't feel right to her any longer. Lucy has thought about using one of the other tutoring sites, but the hours and location don't work as well for her. Plus, Lance really is an excellent tutor and has helped her so much in past semesters.

Excerpt from Utah State University Tutor Training Manual

http://www.usu.edu/arc/classes/pdf/tutor_manual.pdf

Discuss the following questions in Blackboard

- Can Lance's behavior be considered sexual harassment? Explain.
- What is the responsibility of the Tutorial Center in this situation?