



# Poor Policy Publicity

A semester-long attempt to persuade the University to notify students of its anti-harassment policy ends in confusion, unanswered questions and inadequate concessions

By Douglas Dukeman

On December 15, all students at UNC received a memorandum from Chancellor James Moeser by e-mail. The e-mail was titled "FORMAL NOTICE: Policies and Procedures Concerning Sexual and Racial Harassment." The memorandum began by reminding students of the policies on sexual and racial harassment and "emphasiz[ing] strongly the responsibility of each individual to contribute to work and learning environments free of these kinds of discrimination." While students are also protected from *sexual orientation* harassment under the Office of the Dean of Students' anti-harassment policy, which covers "harassment and assault based on sexual orientation" or HABSO, this policy was not included or referenced in the Chancellor's e-mail.

## The Initial Investigation

On January 30, I inquired initially into the reasons for the lack of sexual orientation harassment policy publicity by the Chancellor. His office referred me to the Office of University Counsel located at 300B Bank of America Building on Franklin Street. Apparently, this office is responsible for sending out these e-mails on the Chancellor's behalf at various times during each academic year from his e-mail alias: james\_moeser@unc.edu.

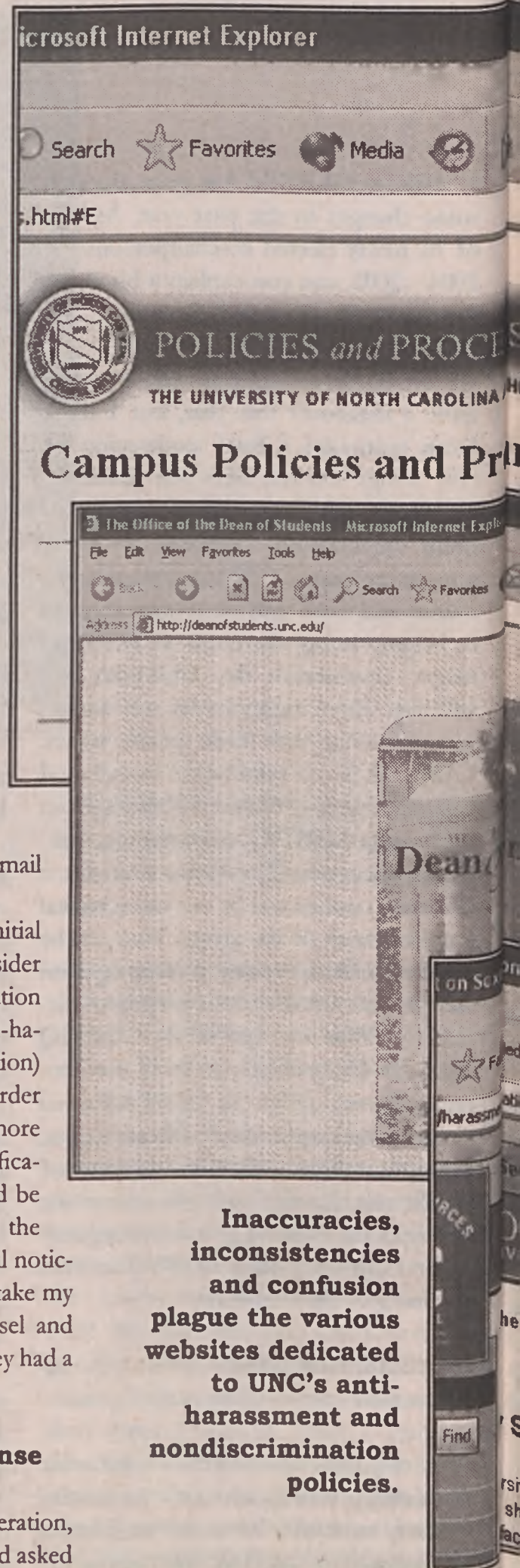
A staff member at the Office of University Counsel initially explained to me the reasons for not advertising the anti-harassment policy on sexual orientation by referring to federal government requirements. She explained that the federal government has no policies on sexual orientation harassment itself. The University is under no federal obligation to advertise its own "internal" policies on sexual orientation harassment. Since it has no need, it should not do so, she said.

Racial and sexual harassment policies, however, are required by federal policy to be advertised widely, and thus the University complies through email notification. To my amazement and disbelief, she noted that if the federal government did not require student notification of these racial and sexual harassment policies, students would not have been informed by e-mail about them either.

As soon as I got over my initial shock, I asked that Counsel consider sending out by e-mail a notification of the HABSO policy (the anti-harassment policy on sexual orientation) immediately to all students in order to rectify the situation. I furthermore stressed that in the future, notification of the HABSO policy should be sent out to students along with the racial and sexual harassment e-mail notices. This staff member offered to take my concerns to the University Counsel and get in touch with me as soon as they had a response.

## The University's Response

After a week's worth of deliberation, the staff member contacted me and asked me to come to the Office of University



**Inaccuracies, inconsistencies and confusion plague the various websites dedicated to UNC's anti-harassment and nondiscrimination policies.**