

STANFORD  
UNIVERSITY

OFFICE OF THE GENERAL COUNSEL  
Debra L. Zumwalt  
Vice President and General Counsel



Telephone (650) 723-6397  
Facsimile (650) 723-4323  
zumwalt@stanford.edu

November 27, 2017

CONFIDENTIAL

Seo-Young Chu  
seoyoung.chu@gmail.com

Dear Dr. Chu,

Based on your request and following up on my assistant's 11/13/17 email to you, I have reviewed the investigation findings related to the concerns you brought forward in the year 2000. What follows is a summary of those findings:

In September of 2000, you made a complaint of inappropriate sexual conduct by Professor Jay Fliegelman, who you indicated was your graduate advisor. You stated that beginning in the Winter Quarter of academic year 1999-2000 and continuing throughout that academic year, Professor Fliegelman pursued a sexual relationship with you, and engaged in a continuing pattern of sexual talk and comments, including numerous telephone calls and messages you characterized as unwelcome and disturbing. You also alleged that he engaged in an incident of nonconsensual sexual contact with you in February of 2000. As part of the investigation, both you and Professor Fliegelman were interviewed, along with a number of other witnesses including students and faculty.

The investigation found that you and Professor Fliegelman exchanged personal information about yourselves with one another, including about sexual matters. He indicated that this was part of your mutual friendship and banter; you indicated that you felt pressured by him to participate in this communication.

The investigation also found that Professor Fliegelman made numerous calls to you, which included recorded messages with sexual content. This was confirmed by other witnesses. You stated that the communications were unwelcome and disturbing; his version of events was that it was joking and playful banter.

In addition, the investigation found that in February of 2000, there was one incident of oral-genital contact, which was initiated by Professor Fliegelman in his home, following his playing a porno video. You stated that the sexual contact was preceded by your stating that you were uncomfortable and wanted to leave. Professor Fliegelman disputed that, and stated that when it happened there was no indication by you were not consenting, and that he stopped as soon as you indicated you were not comfortable.

Although there were no other witnesses to this incident, the investigation found that you made contemporaneous reports to others that were consistent with your assertion that the contact was nonconsensual.

Based on the investigative findings, the Provost concluded that Professor Fliegelman engaged in a pattern of unwelcome verbal conduct of a sexual nature, and engaged in an incident of physical sexual contact under circumstances that were extremely inappropriate and in which your assent could be questioned.

The University therefore concluded that Professor Fliegelman's conduct was in violation of the University's sexual harassment policy, and professional misconduct in its own right. The punishment imposed included a two-year suspension, being barred from the department during that time, a significant financial sanction, mandatory counseling on matters relating to sexual harassment, and an admonition that any further professional misconduct would lead to his likely dismissal from the University.

For his part, and although disagreeing with the many of the investigative findings, Professor Fliegelman indicated as part of the investigation his own regret concerning this matter as follows:

"I deeply regret, sincerely apologize and will accept the consequences for any emotional pain I caused Ms. Chu. Such pain was the last thing I wanted to happen to someone whose champion in the English department I always tried to be. I also realize that the kind of relationship we had was totally inappropriate, simply and unambiguously wrong, and threatening to the work environment. I am very ashamed, chastened, and repentant."

\* \* \*

While this completes the summary of the investigative findings, I did want to add some additional information about the ways in which the University has evolved in developing policies relating to relationships between faculty members and students. In 2013, Stanford became one of the first universities to put policies in place prohibiting sexual or romantic relationships between faculty and undergraduates, and likewise prohibiting such relationships between graduate students and faculty who oversee their work. The current iteration of this policy can be seen here: <https://adminguide.stanford.edu/chapter-1/subchapter-7/policy-1-7-2>. In both our online and live trainings for all faculty members, we review this policy and emphasize that relationships that might be perceived as being equal and consensual by an individual in a higher authority position may be less consensual than he or she thinks, when viewed from the perspective of the person in a position of lesser authority. Hence our prohibition.

On behalf of Stanford University, let me express how sorry I am that you have suffered as a result of a faculty member's misconduct. You did the right thing by bringing this issue forward back in 2000, and we are grateful to you for doing so.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Debra L. Zumwalt/UM". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Debra L. Zumwalt