

Zero Tolerance for Sexual Misconduct: How to Make it Happen

Michael Balter

Michael Balter is a science writer, formerly with Science and now working mainly for Scientific American and The Verge (Vox Media.) He taught science journalism for many years at New York University and Boston University.



Over the past year or two, the scientific community has seen an explosion of alleged cases of sexual harassment and sexual misconduct in fields as diverse as astronomy, molecular biology, and paleoanthropology. In the past, most of these cases would almost certainly have not seen the light of day. But a growing awareness of the seriousness of the problem, especially in field research, is now emerging, helped by considerable news media attention to episodes involving major scientific figures. It might also be said that the number of women who are either senior in their careers or well established has now reached a critical mass, to the point that they are able to make their voices of protest heard. Balter will describe in detail his journalistic investigations of two cases. One involves allegations at the American Museum of Natural History, and the other an episode at the Smithsonian's National Museum of Natural History which possible roots at Texas Tech University. He will also discuss in some detail the kinds of enhanced guidelines and procedures now being adopted by numerous scientific organizations to enforce a "no tolerance" policy for sexual misconduct and harassment.

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