

INDIANA UNIVERSITY  
SOUTH BEND

May 11, 2007



Karen L. White, Associate Vice Chancellor for  
Student Services  
1700 Mishawaka Avenue  
South Bend, Indiana 46634

OFFICE OF  
JUDICIAL AFFAIRS

Dear Vice Chancellor White:

I have completed my investigation into the complaint against Robert L. Francis. The complaint was filed by [REDACTED], dated 02/13/2007. The complaint stated below:

Robert Francis interviewed me, along with the other cast members in The Vagina Monologues, for an article he was writing for the student newspaper, The Preface. The interview happened the week prior to the show, and his comments to me, along with his comments to the other cast members, were highly inappropriate, lewd, disrespectful, and sexually explicit in nature.

In my interview, he first asked me if I were a junior or a senior. When I told him that I was a lecturer in the English Department, he asked, "How'd they let a pretty little thing like you get a job?" While the interview likely should have ended there, I decided to continue it, because I really believe in the mission of The Vagina Monologues, and I wanted it to be well publicized.

He then asked me which monologue I was performing, and I told him it was about hair, and that my character makes a decision not to shave her vagina for various reasons, but especially because she has a moment of realization that the decision is, in fact, hers. I went on to talk about the cultural implications of shaving, when Robert interrupted me to tell me that he had once "shaved [his] girlfriend's pussy" and it looked "clean and pretty and she really liked it."

At this point in the interview, Robert had only written down one sentence of what I had said, and that would be the only sentence he wrote from our whole interview -- probably 10 minutes -- because he went on throughout the rest of the time to talk about his short stories, one of which was about a bisexual woman fighting with another woman underwater, and how she "got off on a piece of coral." He also discussed his seven volume internet pornography novel called "The Adventures of Christina," and asked me "why feminists don't like stories about women getting off." I have to admit that

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I didn't listen closely to his descriptions of the book because I was highly uncomfortable and felt that the "interview" was really inappropriate. I pointed to my stack of papers and told him that I had to get going to start grading. He asked for my credentials, and then he said, "It's not every day I get to sit next to a pretty lady like you," or some variety of that statement. I was too much in a hurry to get out of there to hear that sentence clearly.

In conversations with other cast members, I have been equally appalled at Robert's comments to them. Of course, this is hearsay, but it still has bearing, I believe, on his completely inappropriate actions. One of the women told me that he'd said, "For a 51 year old woman, you're still hot and tight." He asked another if she didn't agree that a woman was encouraging rape by wearing a short skirt. He told another cast member that he was "okay with lesbians" because he had lost his virginity to two of them.

Robert attended the dress rehearsal of *The Vagina Monologues* on Thursday, February 22, and also both performances on Friday and Saturday thereafter. He made a further inappropriate comment to me there, after Saturday's show. As I was walking out, he tried to stop me and asked if I had been "practicing my moaning." I took this to be an implied question about my personal life, and I was offended. I did not respond, and kept walking.

Altogether, I felt disrespected, misrepresented, misunderstood, and disregarded as a professional woman, and while his comments would have been appalling were they made to any woman at all, I found them particularly disturbing because he knew, right away, that I am a professor on this campus.

The above behavior is a violation of *The Code of Students Rights, Responsibilities and Conduct, Part II: Student Responsibilities:*

H. Be responsible for their behavior, and respect the rights and dignity of others both within and outside of the university community. The university may discipline a student for the following **acts of personal misconduct that occur on university property**, including but not limited to academic and administration buildings, residence halls, athletic and recreational facilities, and other university-serviced property, such as sororities and fraternities:

5. Conduct that is lewd, indecent, or obscene.

19. Stalking or hazing of any kind whether the behavior is carried out verbally, physically, electronically, or in written form.

- b. Hazing is defined as any conduct that subjects another person, whether physically, mentally, emotionally, or psychologically, to anything that may endanger, abuse, degrade, or intimidate the person as a condition of association with a group or organization, regardless of the person's consent or lack of consent.

Mr. Francis was notified that it was my responsibility to conduct an informal conference with a student once a report has been filed. He was also notified that it was mandatory that he appear for the conference, Tuesday, March 20, 2007 at 2:30 p.m. in the Judicial Affairs Office, A115a.

In addition he was informed that:

1. He was allowed to bring an advisor with him; however, they will not be allowed to participate in the conversation. They are allowed to observe only.
2. He was allowed to bring someone with him who may speak to his character.
3. That he was not required to answer any questions and that silence would not be taken as an admission of guilt.
4. And lastly, he was informed that if I determined that if he did not make every effort to attend this informal conference, it may be conducted in his absence.

Robert Francis attended the informal conference and brought a character witness to speak on his behalf.

He denied the allegations in the complaint and submitted the enclosed supporting document. (See attached)

Mr. Francis was flabbergasted that professor Smits had reported him. In addition, he felt discriminated against by the members of the V-Club because he was a male. The V-Club is responsible for putting on the *Vagina Monologues* every year as a fund raiser.

I talked at length to Robert about appropriate behavior, appropriate conversation, sensitivity to a group of which you are not a member, and the proper role of a reporter in the course of covering a story.

Robert was very defensive, appeared to be righteously indignant, interrupted me often, and was argumentative. However, he did respond to my corrections of his behavior.

Robert stated:

- he believed that it was a misunderstanding. He stated that he believed that the interview was over and that they were having a personal conversation; he was trying to bond.
- he has been told that he could be a feminists and that Professor Smits never expressed any discomfort.
- He never mentioned rape, never used the word, pussy; he used the word vagina
- That he attended rehearsals because he was doing the story
- That when he called her, "pretty little thing"; he was being complimentary

Roberts's character witness, Ruth Carrillo Hernandez stated the following:

- She is his cousin and roommate, and case manager
- He did not mean disrespect 100%
- He is socially inept, he can be frustrating and can be a brick wall when it comes to social situations
- He was happy after the interview and agonized over hurting people
- He will think things over and his behavior does change
- He could be the poster boy for what the V-Club is trying to do

There is a letter from Robert Francis' Veteran's Representative, Indiana Workforce Development. (See attached)

I interviewed [REDACTED], a member of the V-Club, who was also interviewed by Robert. She stated that he made her very uncomfortable from the beginning starting with the way he looked her up and down.

She admitted that she did not let him know how she was feeling because she tried to disassociate herself during the entire interview.

My recommendation is as follows:

- I would like to bring Robert, [REDACTED], and any willing member of the V-Club together for a one way listening session; Robert needs to hear from the women how his interactions with them made them feel. **He will only listen.**
- Immediately following the listening session, Robert will have a processing session with Jim Hurst, Director of the Student Counseling Center and follow any recommendation of Dr. Hurst.
- Robert will view a movie/documentary assigned by me and will write a reflection paper to be turned in to me by July 31, 2007

- Any further referrals of this nature will result in additional sanctions

Sincerely,

*Charlotte Pfeifer*

Charlotte D. Pfeifer, Director  
Judicial Affairs

CDP:ldg

CC:

