

HYPOTHETICAL 1: What Discipline—If Any—Is Warranted?

Professor Higgins is a tenured finance professor at State University. Professor Higgins' Department chair has come to consult with you as provost. The Department Chair shares with you the following information and about what, if anything, he can do.

1. Professor Higgins refused to attend the faculty session on using new grading software last fall and he now refuses to use the new grading software adopted by the institution. He still enters the grades in pencil on a spreadsheet and submits them to the registrar directly.
2. The departmental colleagues of Higgins have complained to the Chair about Higgins' lack of cooperation in terms of teaching assignments and class scheduling. Higgins always grabs the Tuesday/Thursday sections at 10:00 a.m., and is never seen on campus MWF. He routinely fails to attend departmental meetings—about five out of 16.
3. His departmental colleagues also are irritated with Higgins' refusal to serve on any committees. He has failed to participate on any departmental curriculum or syllabi formulation committees for the past two years. He hasn't served on any doctoral committees since the late 1980s and he has not been a member of a university-wide committee for the past 10 years.
4. Professor Higgins refused to teach a seminar on finance theories five years ago. Since then he has taught the same three courses every semester.
5. Students have also complained to the Department Chair about Professor Higgins. Apparently he bars the entry of any late arriving students. He also has a "last row" rule: in his introductory courses, no first year students are allowed to sit in the last row of the lecture hall.
6. Parents of students have complained that in about 1/3 of Higgins' classes he shows films, such as "How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying," "Wall Street," and "Working Girl."
7. Students have also complained that Higgins' reading list includes no books or readings later than 1968, and that he routinely fails to cover syllabi topics by the end of the semester. He also fails to assign any case studies.
8. Students and departmental colleagues have expressed concern that at least some of the students from Higgins' courses have not met the minimum qualifications for the institution's advanced finance courses.
9. Students also complain that Professor Higgins spends too much class time talking about his dairy business, his experiences as a legislator, current events, lawsuits in which he has been involved, and the societal influence of bankers.

Hypothetical 2: What Discipline—If Any—Is Warranted?

Professor Ellen Smart is a tenured professor of psychology at State University. She has been on the faculty for twenty years, and is a respected scholar. Although she has had a history of difficult relationships with her departmental colleagues, students have been generally satisfied with her teaching. She has mentored several graduate students who have gone on to successful academic careers.

Tom Thumb, one of Professor Smart's doctoral students has come to you, the department chair, with a problem. Professor Smart chairs his dissertation committee and has served as his mentor for several years. Tom has recently defended his dissertation successfully, and has lined up several job interviews at prestigious universities. Tom tells you that over the past six months, Professor Smart has made him "uncomfortable." She makes numerous personal comments to him in front of other students (but not in front of faculty), and has taken to leaving notes on his car when she doesn't see him during the day. She has frequently invited him to her apartment for dinner (she is single), and he has accepted those invitations a couple of times, but "feels funny" about continuing to accept these offers. Since he is now declining those invitations, he says that the comments and notes have become more frequent, and more personal. He feels that Professor Smart is "smothering" him, but has been reluctant to confront her about them. He now feels that he needs to get a new advisor while he makes the final changes to his dissertation, which the committee approved contingent upon his making changes that are satisfactory to Professor Smart.

You, the department chair, then meet with Professor Smart, who is "outraged" at what Tom has told you and says that he is "just trying to make up for his mediocre academic performance." You have already checked his grades, and Professor Smart has given him in A in every course in which she has taught him. She storms out of your office, saying that she will "fix this problem."

The following week, Tom comes to see you again. Professor Smart has apparently written to all of the universities at which Tom has interviews, accusing him of academic misconduct and a lack of personal integrity. She has also refused to approve the final changes to his dissertation. When Tom learns of these actions, he is back in your office, demanding that you "do something about this travesty."

What would you do with respect to Tom's dissertation? Job interviews? What would you do, if anything, about Professor Smart's conduct?