

February 12, 1991

Dr. Robert Rhoades
Department of Anthropology
and Linguistics
Baldwin Hall
Campus

Dear Dr. Rhoades:

I would like to alert you to a potential problem within the department. Until last quarter when I graduated, I was a graduate student in Linguistics. On December 15, 1990, I was working in my office with the door open, and one of the faculty members in our program, Dr. Ben Blount, walked in. We started to chat about general things, on topics which you might expect involving a student who had [REDACTED] and was planning to return to [REDACTED]. Suddenly, he moved closer and attempted to kiss me. I immediately rebuffed him, and he stopped at that point. He said then that he deserved to be punched, and added that he thought I appeared "liberal." The reason I am telling you his remarks after this incident is that I want to make it clear that his actions were not innocent.

Because no harm really came of this occurrence, I do not wish to pursue this issue further. However, I feel that something of a similar nature may happen again to someone else, with more serious consequences. Therefore, I wanted to bring this matter to your attention.

Sincerely,

cc: Dean John Kozak



The University of Georgia

Office of Legal Affairs

RECORD OF INTERACTION

TO: FILE

DATE: 2/1/96

FROM: Susan L. Jones
Associate Vice President for Legal Affairs

RE: Anthropology Dept

DISCUSSED WITH: Clif Pannell

We met to discuss allegations of sexual harassment v. Dr Ben Blount, former dept head. There have been 4 allegations. None of the women wishes to go forward with formal charges. Bob Rhoades did meet with Dr. Blount in 1991 when a [REDACTED] student complained. I advised that Rhoades + either Clif or Wyatt need to sit down with Blount + advise him that we view the matter ^{very} seriously, give him a copy of the sexual harassment policy, allow him to offer his version. They need to put him on notice that we will be req'd to take action (through tenure revocation process if necessary) if further incidents occur.



The University of Georgia

Franklin College of Arts and Sciences
Office of the Dean

THE UNIV. OF GEORGIA

FEB 2 2 48 PM '96

OFFICE OF
LEGAL AFFAIRS

February 1, 1996

Dear

We write in response to your letter of early December and the concerns you expressed about an incident that occurred in the Department of Athropology in 1991.

First, the letter you sent to Dr. Rhoades, a copy of which was sent to then Dean John Kozak, was indeed in our office files. Inasmuch as no specific request was called for in that letter, no action was taken by the Dean's Office.

This office is concerned about the incident, and we are reviewing the facts as they have come to our attention. Please inform us if you require any specific action.

Sincerely yours,

Wyatt Anderson
Wyatt W. Anderson
Dean

Clifton W. Pannell
Clifton W. Pannell
Associate Dean

Subject: Incident

From:

Date: Mon, 5 May 2003 12:25:12 -0500

To: kbwash@uga.edu

Ms. Washington,

Thank you for responding as soon as you could. I'll see you tomorrow at 10:30a.m .

Incident In Dr. Benjamin Blount's Office, 257 Baldwin Hall

May 1, 2003 Meeting time: 3:30p.m-5:00p.m

I went to see Dr. Ben Blount at 3:30p.m on Thursday, May 1, 2003 in 257

Baldwin Hall (his office). Dr. Blount told me to come by his office on

May 1. He told me that we should meet before the semester is over. As

I was walking, I saw most of doors were closed. The only door that was

open was the door next to Stephanie Kollman's office. I saw a lady doing something in her computer. The offices next to Dr. Blount's office were both closed. When I entered Dr. Blount's office, he was sitting in front of the computer and looking at the background of the desk-top computer. He later told me that he got a new computer and he was trying to get back his screensaver.

He told me to take a seat. As I sat down, he got up and looked outside his office room door. Then as he went past me to sit, he rubbed my shoulder and asked me how I was doing. Then we started to talk. I had a

list of things I would talk about to him.

I used to meet with Dr. Blount since Spring 2002. I had a Cultural Anthropology class with him in Spring 2002. While I was in his class, I was interested in helping with his research. As an undergraduate student, I was not sure whether I would be able to help. I asked him whether I could help out. Dr. Blount said that I could help out. He assigned me to a project, where I went to the library and researched. As there was very little information on the subject, I could not advance any further.

After I had a class with Dr. Blount, he asked me to visit him. I used to set-up appointments to talk about my classes, my future plans, and my interests in Anthropology. During previous visits in Fall 2002, he started to stroke my knee. When he first stroke my knee, I did not think much of it. He was talking while he did it, so I thought it was something he did while he was talking.

On Thursday May 1, as we were talking, Dr. Blount started stroking my knee with both his hands. Then he progressed to my thigh and between my legs. I felt really uncomfortable, so I crossed by legs (I put my right leg on top of my left leg and locked my legs firmly). I hoped when I crossed my legs, Dr. Blount would stop touching me. Then Dr. Blount leaned back on his chair. He got up once again and said that he wanted to check whether someone was waiting for him. He also added that sometimes his graduate students would wait outside for a long time even if they know that he is talking to a someone. Then he shut the door. When he went back to sit, he stroked my shoulder again. I was

talking about my interests to do study abroad among several other academic topics; in the middle of my conversation, he said, "come here." At first I did not understand what he meant, so I did not move from the chair. Then he leaned forward and tried to kiss me. I felt he was trying to kiss me on my lips. So I turned my head and he kissed me on my cheek. He kissed me on the other cheek too. Then I asked him whether he wanted me to leave. He said that he did not want me to leave. So I continued talking; I felt nervous and shocked with this kind of advances; I felt paralyzed and did not know what to do. Then he went back to stroking my legs again. But this time he tried to force his fingers between my crossed legs. I felt uncomfortable, so I asked him whether he has to be somewhere. He said he had a meeting in 15 minutes. Then he asked me what happened to my elbow when he saw the band-aid on my elbow. I told him I had a shaving accident. Then he said, "You shave your hands. Why do you do that? I never noticed that before." I explained to him that hair retains moisture, so shaving helps keep oneself cooler in the summer. Then he stroked my hands and my palms. He then put his fingers between my fingers. As it was past 4:45p.m, I told him that I had to leave as he has a meeting.

He told me to come by next week--May 6 at 3:30p.m. He also asked my summer plans. I told him I would be here in Athens and would be taking classes. He told me that he would be doing research in the Ga Coast. Then he asked whether I could go by the Ga coast to see him. I told him that it would not be acceptable to my parents.

Then as I left he hugged me and kissed me on both cheeks. While he hugged me, I felt he held me tight for 3-4 seconds and I could feel his hands touching my behind. As I walked out, Dr. Blount called me back. He handed me my umbrella. Then he told me that he would see me next week. Then I left the building. It was 5:00p.m on May 1, 2003 when I left. As I walked out, there was a student sitting on the stairs.

During this visit or any other previous visits, I never invited or consented to any of Dr. Blount's sexual advances. As this meeting has traumatized me and I fear for my personal safety, I will never return to his office. I even fear going to Baldwin Hall, as I am scared I would run into him.

Subject: Student Issue

From: Kimberly Ballard-Washington <kbwash@arches.uga.edu>

Date: Tue, 20 May 2003 09:15:49 -0400

To: bblount@arches.uga.edu

CC: cpannell@franklin.uga.edu

Good Morning Dr. Blount:

I have been attempting to reach you in Athens, but was informed yesterday by your office that you are on the Georgia Coast.

The purpose of my contact with you is to inform you that the Office of Legal Affairs has received a complaint from a student alleging misconduct by you. Pursuant to University policy, I must investigate this matter.

Please call or email me so that we may coordinate a time to discuss this matter further. Additionally, please inform me as to which coastal city you are near, as I will be on the coast on Friday, May 23, 2003, and think it might be beneficial for us to meet on that date, if possible.

Again, please contact me as soon as possible.

Kimberly Ballard-Washington

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Kimberly Ballard-Washington

Associate Director for Legal Affairs

University of Georgia

Office of Legal Affairs

Lustrat House

Athens, Georgia 30602-1693

Phone (706) 542-0006 Fax: (706) 542-3248

E-mail: kbwash@arches.uga.edu

Subject: Re: Student Issue

From: BEN G BLOUNT <bblount@uga.edu>

Date: Tue, 20 May 2003 11:09:47 -0400

To: KIMBERLY M BALLARD-WASHINGTON <kbwash@uga.edu>

CC: cpannell@franklin.uga.edu

Dear Ms. Ballard-Washington:

I was startled and then utterly dismayed to receive your e-mail. I have no idea what this could be about, and I categorically deny that I have done anything wrong. I will call and talk with you about this later this morning.

Ben Blount



The University of Georgia

Franklin College of Arts and Sciences
Department of Anthropology

17 November 2003

Ms. Kimberly Ballard-Washington
Office of Legal Affairs
University of Georgia
Campus – Lustrat House

Dear Ms. Ballard-Washington:

In reference to your letter of 20 June 2003, I was instructed to attend a workshop regarding sexual harassment, or, if a workshop was not scheduled, to review a video on the subject available at the UGA Training and Development Office. Since I neither was informed about a workshop nor saw any notice or advertisement of one, I checked out a video, as instructed. In fact, I wish to confirm that I checked out from the Training and Development Office the video *Sexual Harassment Orientation for College and University Faculty and Administrators – The Classroom and Beyond: Faculty Conduct* on 12 November 2003 and reviewed the video on 13 November 2003. In addition, at the suggestion of staff at the Training and Development Office, I downloaded from the web and printed out on 17 November 2003 the new Non-Discrimination and Anti-Harassment Policy. I reviewed the new policy and have a copy in my files.

I trust that I have met the conditions stipulated in your letter of 20 June 2003, and that the conditions of the agreement have now been met.

Sincerely yours,

Benjamin G. Blount
Professor



The University of Georgia

Office of Legal Affairs

PERSONAL and CONFIDENTIAL

June 20, 2003

*Ben Blount
Sexual Harassment*

CAMPUS

RE: Sexual Harassment Complaint

Dear

The purpose of this letter is to convey to you the outcome of the sexual harassment investigation which I recently conducted into allegations that you had been inappropriately touched, among other things, by Dr. Benjamin Blount. As I previously informed you, Dr. Blount denies that he engaged in any harassing conduct with you. My findings, however, are that Dr. Blount has violated the University's Sexual Harassment Policy. I have, therefore, entered into an informal resolution with Dr. Blount. Dr. Blount has agreed to the following:

- *He will receive a letter of reprimand from Dr. Wyatt Anderson, Dean, College of Arts and Sciences;*
- *He will attend a sexual harassment training class offered by University Training and Development. If no class is offered prior to November, 2003, he will review the sexual harassment training video, entitled *Sexual Harassment: Issues and Answers*, available for check-out from the UGA Training and Development Video Library. He must provide me a written statement confirming that you have attended the training class or reviewed the video on or before November 20, 2003;*
- *He will eliminate your personal interactions (including, but not limited to mentoring) with Undergraduate students;*
- *He will not serve as supervisor for any Undergraduate student; and*
- *He will not interfere with the academic pursuits of the complainant in this matter, including not discussing the complainant, in any manner with the Anthropology Department faculty or staff. Additionally, he will not perform any action to preclude the student from her academic pursuits in the department or in her pursuits of graduate studies (at the University of Georgia or elsewhere).*

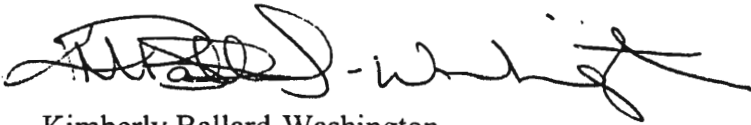
Dr. Blount was further informed that it is a violation of the sexual harassment policy to

retaliate against any person who has made a report of sexual harassment or participated in the investigation of a sexual harassment complaint. Therefore, he may not retaliate against any of the individuals involved in this matter. If there is a determination that he has retaliated against anyone or otherwise violated the sexual harassment policy in the future, he will be subject to disciplinary action.

I trust that this resolution will allow you to continue in your studies at the University without any negative interference. Please contact me if you have any questions or wish to discuss these matters further.

Have a safe summer!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kimberly Ballard-Washington', written in a cursive style.

Kimberly Ballard-Washington
Associate Director for Legal Affairs

KBW:mek



The University of Georgia

Franklin College of Arts and Sciences
Department of Anthropology

November 24, 2003

Jason Lane
Assistant Director for Legal Affairs
Office for Legal Affairs
Lustrat House
University of Georgia
Athens, GA 30602-1693.

Dear Jason Lane,

I arrived at the University of Georgia at the end of 1997 from overseas to take up a position as an Assistant Professor of Anthropology. As I had left a tenured position, I was scheduled to come up for tenure and promotion in my first year. Initial consideration vote by the departmental faculty occurred late Spring 1998 with the final departmental vote took place at the end of that summer.

Immediately after my arrival, Dr Blount offered his assistance as a senior and experienced member of the faculty in my preparation for tenure. He began by inviting me for coffee every few days, during which time he would provide advice on the department, the university, and particularly my tenure case. He noted on several occasions that he currently served on the tenure committee at the university or college level (I now don't recall which), and thus was very involved in the process. (Although I now understand this means he had no influence on outside the department, at the time the process was a complete mystery to me and I was lead to understand otherwise.)

By early March, I was starting to become very uncomfortable. Blount would touch me on the arm and knee when talking to me. This then escalated to suggestions that he would like a more intimate relationship, then to explicit sexual suggestions. I withdrew from the coffee dates, closed my office door, and tried to avoid the entire situation.

I was reticent to confront the behaviors because at the time I believed he held considerable influence over my tenure case and I therefore didn't want to anger him in any way. Additionally, as part of my job the person I should be working with most closely in the department is his wife (Dr Ehardt) and I was extremely worried that any confrontation with Blount would also damage that relationship, and hurt her more personally. As I was completely new in the department at that time, I was unable to judge how other faculty would respond: I simply had not had enough time to get to know anyone and was at a loss as to how to proceed beyond dealing with the behaviors myself and withdrawing as much as possible.

Although I began avoiding Blount as much as I could, it transpired we both attended the Society for Applied Anthropology annual meetings in San Juan in late April. During those

meetings I was constantly pursued, pressured, and pushed in a sexual way whenever I ran into him (although I was trying to avoid him, the meetings are very small in scale so this was hard). Upon returning to Athens, he came to my office. Despite some reservations about what the long term consequences might be, I decided to confront the behavior directly. I told him I was extremely uncomfortable about his sexual insistence, that I felt compromised because of the upcoming tenure vote, and asked him to leave me alone. This directness on my part only seemed to strengthen his resolve, and I noted in my appointment book the next day he came to my office 4 or 5 times, each time making a request for time together under more intimate circumstances (including going away together that weekend). I became increasingly insistent he leave me alone, and locked my door. I then kept it locked and avoided the department as much as was possible for the next few months until my tenure vote was taken. I did at that time sit down and spoke with another then untenured colleague, Dr Brosius, to whom I explained the problems I was having and the distress it was causing. I should also note that Blount and wife Ehardt are extremely close friends with another couple in the department, so I certainly felt at the time that taking on one person could segue into conflict with four tenured faculty. In a very small department, this was a huge concern to an assistant professor. (I now believe this was an unfair reading of the other couple, but at the time there was no way to know.)

Thus until the time my tenure vote came around in 1998 I was avoiding the department to avoid the problem of the escalating sexual pressure by Blount, whose office is in the same corridor as mine. It was a very stressful time since until the tenure vote was done I was very unsure how my rejection of him would play out. After a positive departmental tenure vote was made, however, his advances stopped immediately and his demeanor changed markedly -- although not necessarily for the better.

Subsequently and up to the present day, I have had a very difficult and even sometimes outrightly hostile working relationship with Blount. I have tried to be polite and professional with him and have avoided confrontations to every extent possible. But, whether I interpret it rightly or wrongly, I have felt ever since my tenure vote that Blount specifically targets me to make my professional life less comfortable, productive, and pleasant than it would otherwise have been. I find him to be disproportionately critical of my performance both in public and to others in my absence. I will give just two recent examples. I understand he was the only faculty member who actively spoke out against my qualification for promotion to Professor during recent consideration by the Full Professors, and apparently did so in very strong terms. While Full Professors of course reserve the right to propose a candidate unqualified, it is hard to believe that his singularly negative professional opinion of me is unrelated to this history of harassment. It is also my impression that in his current position as Graduate Coordinator in the department he has paid more negative attention to me than any other faculty member. (The Department Head, Ervan Garrison, and the Office Manager, LaBau Bryan may be able to provide some perspective on each of these cases respectively). His antagonism toward me creates other problems, including that I have a very difficult working relationship with his wife, Dr Ehardt: I see this as yet another spill-over effect of Blount's ongoing harassment since I have worked constantly to be as respectful and professional with her as possible and cannot explain the genesis of that tension on any other basis.

There are several reasons I have not come forward before. First, with a very small department that includes his wife on faculty, the possible damage it could do to other people and the department (a department I note with more than enough inter-personal problems already)

seemed inestimable but seemed like it would be considerable. Second, when I came here I was coming up for tenure and subsequently have been moving rapidly toward promotion to Professor. I felt vulnerable on both counts.

There are two main reasons I am coming forward now. One is that the department consideration for my promotion to Full Professor is now completed so I feel more professionally secure. But most particularly, I have more recently become aware that my experience was not singular, and particularly distressingly that students in our department have been similarly pressured and harassed. They deserve my support.

Sincerely

SETTLEMENT AGREEMENT, RELEASE, AND COVENANT NOT TO SUE

Whereas, Dr. Ben Blount, Professor of Anthropology, has notified Dean Wyatt Anderson of the Franklin College of Arts and Sciences, of his intent to resign from his employment with the University, effectively terminating his employment as of May 7, 2004.

Whereas, the University has conducted a preliminary investigation involving allegations of sexual harassment in the workplace involving Dr. Blount but no determination has yet been made and will not be made due to the resignation of Dr. Blount.

Now Therefore, the parties agree as follows:

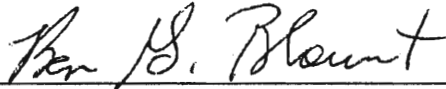
1. Dr. Ben Blount has resigned from his employment at the University as of May 7, 2004 by letter dated January 15, 2004. Dr. Blount will work at the University until May 7, 2004 in his current capacity. In the interim period between the date of this letter agreement and May 7, 2004 Dr. Blount must abide by the policies and procedures of the Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia and the University of Georgia, including but not limited to the University's anti-harassment and non-discrimination policy.
2. Dr. Ben Blount withdraws any pending request(s) for hearing(s), grievances, complaints or legal actions, from any department, agency, and/or court, wherever they may be, arising from the circumstances surrounding this agreement and any claims and charges against any supervisors within the Department of Anthropology and the Franklin College of Arts and Sciences or any other University employees.
3. The University will not supply an office or any other resources to Dr. Blount, including those related to support for current or pending research grants, after the effective date of his resignation.

In consideration of the foregoing covenants and promises,


1. Dr. Ben Blount hereby releases and forever discharges the University of Georgia, the Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia, their members individually and their officers, agents and employees from any and all claims, demands, rights and causes of action which he now has or may have had, including claims for attorney fees, arising from the facts and circumstances of his employment with the University of Georgia.
2. Dr. Ben Blount hereby agrees and covenants not to enter into any suit, action, or other proceeding at law or in equity or make any claim or demand of any kind or nature against the Board, or their respective officers, agents, employees, representatives, successors, and assigns, by reason of any claim which he now has or which he may have had against said parties.
3. Dr. Ben Blount hereby agrees and covenants not to disclose the facts, allegations and claims comprising or relating to said claim, the fact of this settlement, or the terms of this agreement, to any third parties. Both parties agree to maintain the confidentiality of this agreement and circumstances surrounding this agreement, except as required by law or as necessary to conduct University business.

This agreement does not constitute a waiver in whole or in part of sovereign immunity by the University of Georgia or the Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia. This agreement will not be admissible in any proceeding except to enforce the terms thereof.

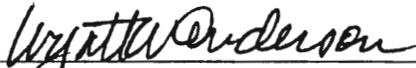
Dr. Ben Blount hereby acknowledges and warrants that he is of sound mind, that he has fully read and understands all the terms and conditions set forth herein, and that he is entering into this agreement, release and covenant not to sue voluntarily and without any promise or benefit other than as set forth herein.



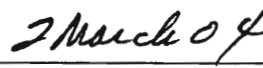
Dr. Ben Blount



Date



Dean Wyatt Anderson
Franklin College of Arts and Sciences
University of Georgia



Date