



PERSONAL AND CONFIDENTIAL

November 10, 2025

Professor Dietram Scheufele  
Department of Life Sciences Communication  
College of Agricultural and Life Sciences  
Via email: [scheufele@wisc.edu](mailto:scheufele@wisc.edu)

Dear Professor Scheufele:

I am writing pursuant to section [9.06.C.3 of the UW-Madison Faculty Policies and Procedures \(FPP\)](#), to convey my intentions related to the complaint brought to the Office of the Provost on October 10, 2024, regarding your conduct as a member of the faculty. I have concluded that just cause exists to pursue dismissal pursuant to FPP section 9.03. Pursuant to FPP 9.06, I invite you to participate in voluntary and confidential settlement negotiations.

As indicated in former Provost Charles Isbell's correspondence to you dated November 5, 2024, he received a complaint filed against you pursuant to [FPP Chapter 9](#), dated October 10, 2024. Specifically, the complaint alleges that you engaged in possible violations of policy<sup>1</sup>, including of Faculty Legislation II-332: Defining Language Describing Hostile and/or Intimidating Behavior - UW-Madison Policy Library UW-872 (as attached): Consensual Relationships - [UW-Madison Policy Library UW-5048](#); Sexual Harassment and Sexual Violence - [UW-Madison Policy Library UW-146](#); [Discrimination and Harassment – Regent Policy Document 14-6](#), and Faculty Policies and Procedures Chapter 8.02 regarding conduct that adversely affects the performance of your responsibilities to the university– [UW-Madison Policy Library UW-808](#).

In that November 5, 2024, letter you were notified that Provost Isbell had selected two co-investigators - Emily Stenhoff and Jenna Konruff, Civil Rights and Compliance Investigators- to conduct the investigation into the allegations, as required in FPP 9.06A. You were given the opportunity to state an objection to the selection of investigators, and you did not raise an objection to his selection. The OC investigators have now completed the investigation. You received a copy of the Final Investigative Report (FIR) dated September 19, 2025, and the Appendix to the FIR, from the Office of Compliance. Please advise if you need another copy.

I am writing to notify you of my intent to invoke dismissal, pursuant to FPP 9.06.C, and Board of Regents of the University of Wisconsin Chapter 4 ([UWS 4](#)).

In making my determination, the evidence to which I refer is the FIR and appendix submitted by OC investigators on September 19, 2025. The OC investigators were charged with investigating the following allegations:

1. Engaging in multiple, non-disclosed, consensual sexual/romantic relationships recently, and over the course of several years, that Dr. Scheufele initiated/engaged in with female [REDACTED] in LSC, who, simultaneously, were his [REDACTED]s

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<sup>1</sup> In evaluating whether behavior violated policy, the investigator applies the policy in effect when the behavior occurred.

██████████); and/or who were also taking his classes while engaged in the consensual sexual relationships.

2. Pressuring female [REDACTED] to flirt with him; making inappropriate explicit, sexual, and intimate comments to the female [REDACTED] and advisees in private social media platforms such as Signal, an application designed to never collect or store any sensitive information as they are end-to-end encrypted, private, and secure, as well as soliciting and having uncomfortable late night private dinners and/or drinks with a female student that may have constituted an assault.
3. Conditioning the professional and academic benefits that his faculty position provides to female [REDACTED] upon behaving and looking in a certain way for Dr. Scheufele. Conditioned benefits included, but are not limited to, invitations to research meetings and collaborations, offers of research funding and the selection of teaching assistants, decisions on paper authorship and conference attendance, and the allocation of [REDACTED] and network resources.
4. Academically and professionally retaliating against female [REDACTED] involved in sexual relations with Dr. Scheufele who wanted to withdraw from his class or end their romantic relationship, or who have rejected his flirtatious advances. This included not receiving research funds, withholding information, leaving them off of emails regarding research, not responding to their multiple requests to meet with them or provide guidance/advice regarding their research.
5. Issuing both promises of benefits to avoid exposure, and threats of retaliation, if the female [REDACTED] exposed their discomfort. This also included intentionally isolating the students that Dr. Scheufele was in relationships with from one another and other students and faculty members.
6. Making academic, professional, and compensation promises to employees/former advisees who were engaged in previous sexual relationships with Dr. Scheufele.
7. Treating less favorably students who did not respond to his flirtatious statements and gestures by excluding them from academic opportunities such as meetings, and denying [REDACTED] [REDACTED].
8. [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]
9. [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED].
10. Failure to meet his responsibilities as an [REDACTED] by exhibiting subtle retaliatory behaviors specifically through neglect of advisory duties and purposely ignoring his students' needs or giving them the "silent treatment" in his role as an [REDACTED].
11. Making derogatory comments publicly and in private to others in LSC, including to female [REDACTED] who were involved in the consensual sexual relationship with Dr. Scheufele, regarding intersectional gender and sexual-bias and discrimination, physical appearance, and intellectual competency of current and former [REDACTED] that he disliked, including some faculty members.
12. Using drugs [REDACTED], in the presence of [REDACTED]

The OC investigation included a careful review of relevant documents and information, interviews with you and the complainants as well as five additional witness interviews. On March 25, 2025, complaining parties and you had the opportunity to review the Initial Investigative Report (IIR) and evidence file and submit statements, clarifications or additions they felt were relevant prior to the OC making final findings of fact or conclusions. Responses to the IIR were due no later than April 4, 2025. You requested an extension to submit a response, which was granted by the OC, and you provided a response to the IIR on April 18, 2025. Each of the complaining parties also provided responses to the IIR. An Amended IIR was issued on June 16, 2025, requesting all parties responses to that Amended IIR by June 30, 2025. You requested an extension to submit a response to the Amended IIR and that extension was granted. You provided a response to the Amended IIR on July 7, 2025. All complainants also submitted responses to the Amended IIR by the due date.

### Relevant Policies

FPP Section 8.02, Faculty Duties and Responsibilities, provides, in part:

A. FUNDAMENTAL RESPONSIBILITIES. The university faculty are responsible for teaching, research or other scholarly activity appropriate to the discipline, and public service. Furthermore, every faculty member has an obligation to maintain professional honesty and integrity, to seek knowledge and to share that knowledge freely with others. No member of the faculty shall be absent from his/her classes or other regular duties at the university except by the permission of the chancellor or appropriate dean. Faculty members shall avoid a concentration of class hours that is detrimental to effective teaching. It is the responsibility of faculty members to carry out duties assigned by the department, and to share in the governance of the institution as a whole.

The Consensual Relationships Policy, [UW-5048](#) provides in relevant part as follows:

It is the policy of the University of Wisconsin–Madison that consensual relationships that might be appropriate in other circumstances are not appropriate when they occur between:

1. an employee of the university and a student over whom the employee has or potentially will have supervisory, advisory, evaluative, or other authority or influence, or
2. an employee of the university and another employee over whom the employee has or potentially will have supervisory, advisory, evaluative, or other authority or influence.

Even where negative consequences to the participants do not result, such relationships create an environment charged with potential or perceived conflicts of interest and possible use of academic or supervisory leverage to maintain or promote the relationship.

Romantic or sexual relationships that the parties view as consensual may still raise questions of favoritism, as well as of a potential abuse of trust and power.

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E.). Instructors/employees who are found in violation of one or both policies will be subject to disciplinary sanctions up to and including dismissal.

FPP Section 9.03, Cause for Dismissal, provides, in part:

No faculty member shall be subject to dismissal except for just cause, based upon a determination that the faculty member's conduct directly and substantially affects adversely, to a degree greater than that reserved for disciplinary action, the ability to carry out satisfactorily his/her responsibilities to the university.

## Office of Compliance Findings

The OC FIR concludes that you, the Respondent, violated UW-5048 (Consensual Relationship Policy). The purpose of UW-5048 is to ensure that the employment and academic environment is free from real or perceived conflicts of interest when UW employees, students, and affiliated individuals, in positions of unequal power, are involved in romantic or sexual relationships. In addition, the report identifies actions or behavior on your part that support the findings that you also violated FPP 8.02. Specifically, the FIR states:

1. Respondent violated FFP Chapter 8.02 by a standard of clear and convincing evidence because he engaged in the following: Respondent made private, derogatory comments to █1 regarding █1's and other students' protected class characteristics (including gender/sex stereotypes, marital status, and parental status), as well as physical appearance and intellectual competency of current and former █. As found above [in the FIR], Respondent made numerous sexist inappropriate comments to █1 (his █ at the time) that women, including her, lacked intelligence generally and he mocked █1 as a █. Respondent shared with █1 his sexist views on women in academia who choose to marry and have children, implying they were not sufficiently committed to their education or career. Respondent also made intimidating comments to █1 about other students perceived incompetence and lack of success and told █1 to be like he and W5. Respondent spoke poorly of W2 to █1, in relation to his lack of loyalty, and deceptively used his authority to shut down the DEI group led by W2. Respondent simultaneously acknowledged and touted his own privilege on the bases in which he privately disparaged students in the department. The OC finds that Respondent's comments to █1 about herself, himself, and others lacked integrity required by faculty under FPP Chapter 8.
2. Respondent also violated FFP Chapter 8.02 by a standard of clear and convincing evidence when he repeatedly insulted █3, his one-time █ to her colleagues, making offensive remarks regarding her █ and physical appearance/presentation, and when he publicly berated her in a █ meeting, referring to her as lazy and unlikely to be employed. These behaviors lacked integrity and honesty required by faculty under FPP Chapter 8.
3. Respondent also violated FFP Chapter 8.02 by a standard of clear and convincing evidence because he engaged in the following: Respondent used drugs (specifically marijuana) in the presence of █. As found above, Respondent used marijuana with █1 at his home, as well as with █1, W1, W2, and W5 in a social setting. These behaviors with students lacked integrity required by faculty under FPP Chapter 8.

4. Respondent also violated FPP Chapter 8.02 by a standard of clear and convincing evidence because he had an overly familiar, informal relationship with W3, in which he engaged in conversation and email correspondence with W3 on topics outside of work, made offensive comments to W3 regarding her competence/personality, made sexualized comment(s) to W3, and made inappropriate comments about death/violence to W3. These behaviors with W3 lacked integrity required by faculty under FPP Chapter 8.
5. Respondent was found responsible for violating UW-5048 (Consensual Relationship Policy) related to ■■■1 and W1. Using that finding, the OC also finds that Respondent violated FPP Chapter 8.02 by a standard of clear and convincing evidence because his action in have consensual relationships with students lacked honesty and integrity required by faculty under FPP Chapter 8.
6. Respondent engaged in unwelcome sexual conduct toward ■■■1 at the ■■■■ work conference. Using that finding, the OC also finds that Respondent violated FPP Chapter 8.02 by a standard of clear and convincing evidence because a faculty member engaging in unwelcome sexual conduct toward a student lacks honesty and integrity required by faculty under FPP Chapter 8.
7. Respondent also violated FPP Chapter 8.02 by a standard of clear and convincing evidence because, as found above, he made evasive representations to the OC of his relationships with various students (■■■1, W1, W3) most of which were found to have been blatantly untruthful descriptions of his behavior and communications. Thus, his actions in this investigation largely lacked honesty and integrity required by faculty under FPP Chapter 8.

#### Consideration and Consultation:

I have considered the charges, reviewed the relevant policies, Office of Compliance Final Investigative Report dated September 19, 2025 and Appendix to Final Investigative Report. I have thoroughly reviewed and considered the information Respondent has provided. Respondent denies any inappropriate behavior relating to students. However, written documentation involving multiple students/advisees over a number of years weighs against believability of the outright denial. Pursuant to FPP 9.06.B, following receipt of the FIR and Appendix, on November 4, 2025, I met with past faculty chairs of the University Committee and the Committee on Faculty Rights and Responsibilities. They advised me as to the action that should be taken in this matter.

#### Conclusion:

My review of the totality of the findings and evidence suggests that your behaviors represent significant violations of university rules and policies. I find that your conduct directly and substantially affects adversely, to a degree greater than that reserved for disciplinary action, your ability to carry out satisfactorily your responsibilities to the university.

Before formally invoking dismissal, pursuant to FPP 9.06C(3), I invite you to participate in voluntary and confidential settlement discussions. If you choose to accept this invitation, please contact my office (608.262.1304 or [Provost@provost.wisc.edu](mailto:Provost@provost.wisc.edu)) on or before Monday, November 24, 2025. If you do not

engage in voluntary and confidential negotiations by contacting my office by Monday, November 24, 2025, to schedule a meeting, I will move forward to issue a final decision. At that time, you will have the right to appeal the decision. Such an appeal would lead to a hearing conducted by the UW-Madison Committee on Faculty Rights and Responsibilities (CFRR) in accordance with [FPP 9.07-9.09](#).

Sincerely,



John Zumbrennen  
Interim Provost and Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs

Attachments:

1. Attachments\_Intent to Discipline
  - a. Faculty Legislation II-332: Defining Language Describing Hostile and/or Intimidating Behavior - UW-Madison Policy Library UW-872
  - b. Memo Referral to Provost CALS Oct 2024 dated October 10, 2024, from Dean Gillaspy
  - c. Scheufele Initial Notice Letter Provost Isbell dated 11.05.2024
- cc: Glenda Gillaspy, Dean, College of Agricultural and Life Sciences  
Heather White, Associate Dean for Faculty Affairs, College of Agricultural and Life Sciences  
Gesina Carson, Senior University Legal Counsel, Office of Legal Affairs  
Lauren Hasselbacher, Assistant Director of Civil Rights Compliance and Title IX Coordinator  
Kent A. Weigel, Vice Provost for Faculty & Staff Affairs