

STATEMENT FROM PRESIDENT LAWRENCE SCHOVANEC:

As some of you may be aware, the Texas Tech University Department of Biological Sciences was, in part, the subject of an online article last year in The Verge magazine. While the article was primarily concerning an allegation of sexual harassment at the Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History involving a former Texas Tech Biology graduate student, the article also depicted the Biology Department as having an atmosphere hostile to women. That accusation was based, in large part, on an approximately 10-minute video taken from a much longer retirement ceremony for Dr. Robert Baker, in which two speakers – one from Texas Tech, and the other from outside of Texas Tech made several “jokes” aimed at Dr. Baker that were inappropriate and offensive.

In response to the article, Provost Michael Galyean and I directed the Texas Tech Office of Equal Employment Opportunity and the Texas Tech Office of General Counsel to perform an inquiry into the allegations regarding the Biology Department in the article. That inquiry consisted of three elements:

- 1) Allegations against Dr. Baker;
- 2) Whether there was an atmosphere of gender bias in the Biology Department; and
- 3) The content of the video posted in the article.

During the course of the inquiry, faculty and graduate students were interviewed, including individuals mentioned in the article. Also, multiple requests were sent to Biology Department faculty, staff, and graduate students to be interviewed as part of the inquiry. One of the requests was submitted to the author of the article in hopes that he would encourage his sources to be interviewed. We received no responses from our request. In addition to the interviews, there were a number of letters received in support of the Biology Department and specific faculty mentioned in the article, as well as some expressing concern over the video posted in the article.

At the conclusion of the inquiry, the following findings were made:

- 1) The inquiry did not reveal any formal or informal allegations of a sexual nature against Dr. Baker, nor did anyone come forward with anecdotal information of inappropriate sexual conduct by Dr. Baker;
- 2) Other than as discussed in #3 below, and a very few remote isolated statements that were addressed at the time they were made, there was no evidence of an atmosphere of sexual bias in the Biology Department; and
- 3) The video posted in the article contains statements that were found to be offensive. The retirement ceremony was an invitation-only event held, almost two years prior to the Verge article, on the Texas Tech campus at a venue separate from

the Biology Department. A video of the entire ceremony was posted on a private, non-Texas Tech website site at the request of some of Dr. Baker's friends shortly after the event. The video in the Verge article represents approximately 10 minutes out of an over two-hour event. There were no complaints received regarding the event at the time it was held, nor of the posted video; however, there were members of the Biology Department who were understandably offended by the contents of the video when it was posted as part of the article. While Texas Tech University does not in any way defend the statements in the video, the inquiry revealed that those statements do not reflect an atmosphere of sexual bias in the Biology Department, nor do they reflect a pattern of inappropriate sexual bias, conduct, or attitudes by either Dr. Baker or the speakers on the video.

Texas Tech University and the Texas Tech Department of Biological Sciences deeply regret that the statements in the video were made. The Biology Department has, of its own volition, engaged in training for faculty and graduate students to have a better understanding of issues regarding sexual harassment and bias in the workplace, as well as in the academic setting. As a result, the Biology Department will be a better place for all students, faculty, and staff.