

From: CHEST staff, May 11th, 2018

To: Wendy Patitucci (RFCUNY) and John Rose (Hunter)

This email is to notify you of our thoughts and bring forward a unified response to the sexual misconduct incident/s during Chestfest on Friday, May 4th, 2018. Our goal is to establish a path for CHEST to continue to thrive and grow while addressing grievous actions that have occurred.

Regarding Chestfest:

1. On Friday, May 4th, Jeffrey Parsons [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Those in attendance were junior CHEST staff, including research assistants, project coordinators, Hunter students, as well as senior staff including our Deputy Director Tom Borkowski and Director of Operations Carlos Ponton. Many of us have been traumatized by the [REDACTED] we witnessed and by seeing our friend and coworker casually humiliated, harassed, and bullied in this way by Jeff.

Earlier that night, there were several instances of bullying, physical aggression, and sexual harassment committed by Jeff such as forcibly removing several employees' shirts and forcibly unbuttoning an employee's pants to expose his underwear to everyone.

In addition, earlier in the night Tom Borkowski was also seen placing his head between the legs of a junior staff member and later inviting them back to his house.

Both Tom and Carlos were filming events taking place on stage throughout the night. Carlos, in particular, was likely filming during the incidents described above. We expect that Hunter and RFCUNY will ask both Tom and Carlos for any footage they have of the night.

2. The response by Jeff and [REDACTED] has been abysmal. If it was anyone else at CHEST, particularly someone not belonging to senior staff, who had committed these heinous acts, they would have been fired or suspended before Monday May 7th. None of us would have been expected to arrive at work for business as usual with the offender sitting a few seats away at his desk - working, planning video shoots, and celebrating with cast members from outside of CHEST, all of which Jeff did this week.

Likewise, a meeting *should have* immediately been organized on Monday to inform us of the actions taken to ensure this person is not a threat to employee safety or well-being and that everything is being done to ensure that our coworkers who experienced sexual harassment are supported and empowered to heal and to return to work.

Jeff sent an apology to CHEST on Saturday 5/5/18 that was insulting to those who were victimized and to everyone who was traumatized by the sexual misconduct that Jeff perpetrated against them. To describe what happened as "ruining our celebration" and creating an "uncomfortable environment for everyone" is dismissing and minimizing not only the actions we witnessed, but the additional bullying, coercion, and harassment that occurred throughout the night by Jeff.

3. Immediately following Jeff [REDACTED] the crowd at the bar dispersed and some gathered outside. Tom Borkowski was seen immediately leaving the vicinity without intervening or offering

support or assistance to [REDACTED] or any other affected staff present. Since the event, Tom has made unreasonable requests to complete work for distressed staff instead of supporting them or even inquiring as to whether they needed support. As of one week since May 4th, there has been no other formal contact from Tom to staff about the event or next steps.

4. Jeff's notice of stepping down as Director sent on 5/8/18 is a vague and unconvincing action towards accountability. There is no description of what "stepping down" means, whether he is going to continue being present at CHEST, whether he will continue to receive a salary, and whether Hunter or RFCUNY will acknowledge what happened and strip him of his professorship. Again, if this were any other employee at CHEST, they would not have received the privilege of deciding their own fate based on their rules and what is most convenient for them. The fact that Jeff was slated to begin a sabbatical shortly before the sexual harassment incident - in effect a paid year long vacation - does not escape us and is adding insult to injury.

Our response:

We CHEST staff members who have invested our time and effort into the mission of CHEST: to research and create interventions to support vulnerable and marginalized folks in their desire to rise up and better their lives, want to see CHEST's mission mirrored in its internal operations. We would like RFCUNY and Hunter College to take immediate action to urgently address these deplorable actions through the following actions:

1. Jeff Parsons, who physically and emotionally humiliated our friends and colleagues, should not be allowed to take a sabbatical - a paid vacation and reward for excellence by the university. He should be terminated immediately without a severance package from Hunter, RFCUNY, and other potential affiliates.
2. Jeff should not be allowed in either the 3rd or 9th floor of CHEST effective immediately to prevent re-traumatizing the staff and forcing us to be in his presence.
3. Tom should be terminated immediately without a severance package as well and should not be allowed on the 3rd or 9th floors of CHEST in order to ensure that staff members feel safe to continue working at CHEST.
4. CHEST should remain open and its current projects should continue to be fully operational. This includes offsite projects such as those at Boom!Health and Bridging Access to Care. The staff supported by all CHEST projects should be protected from losing their jobs along with their immigration status for those to whom this applies. Students should maintain their positions and any funding they have received. Students specifically in Jeff's program should be protected from any harm his actions may have caused or potentially will cause to their careers.
5. A message should be sent by both institutions acknowledging the harm that has befallen employees and ensuring the full support of the institutions to CHEST staff and students in this time of trauma and transition. The institutions should also acknowledge the actions taken to hold Jeff accountable and their commitment to justice and transparency, emphasizing their continued support of CHEST staff, students, and community.
6. Hunter and RFCUNY should address individual complaints from CHEST staff regarding both the events of May 4th, as well as prior events that have taken place at CHEST that highlight additional misconduct.