



# Webinar

## ‘And HR Did Nothing!’ — Navigating in a Gotcha Culture

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September 17, 2019

KNOWLEDGE | RESOURCES | ADVOCACY | CONNECTIONS

# Webinar

## Presenters



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# Learning Objectives

At the conclusion of this webinar, participants should be able to:

- Clarify HR's sometimes contradictory ethical obligations
- Describe strategies to respond to ethical issues in a way that protects the institution and addresses employee concerns
- Create a plan for protecting their own professional reputations

# Poll Question

Has it gotten harder to work in HR in the last few years?

- a) Yes; it is **much** harder.
- b) Yes; it is **somewhat** harder
- c) I haven't noticed a difference.
- d) No; it's actually easier.



# What to do when you have a problem at work, and human resources won't help you

Áine Cain Feb. 23, 2017, 1:50 PM

TECH • 100 BEST COMPANIES TO WORK FOR

## HR Is Not Your Friend. Here's Why

By Claire Zillman and Erika Fry February 16, 2018



HUMAN RESOURCES ► MANAGEMENT CAREERS

## Reasons Why Employees Hate HR

What HR Managers Can Learn From Common Employee Gripes



BY SUSAN M. HEATHFIELD • Updated April 21, 2019

Employees hate Human Resources for a variety of reasons—some are logical reasons based on bad experiences with HR teams. Whereas other reasons why employees hate

ebn

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HR failed on sexual harassment. Now what?

[Conference](#) Benefits Forum and Expo

7 questions employers should ask when preparing for wellness

Fre cu

## HR failed on sexual harassment. Now what?

By Kathryn Mayer

Published January 29 2018, 3:57pm EST

More in  
[Sexual harassment](#)  
[Benefit compliance](#)  
[Employee communications](#)



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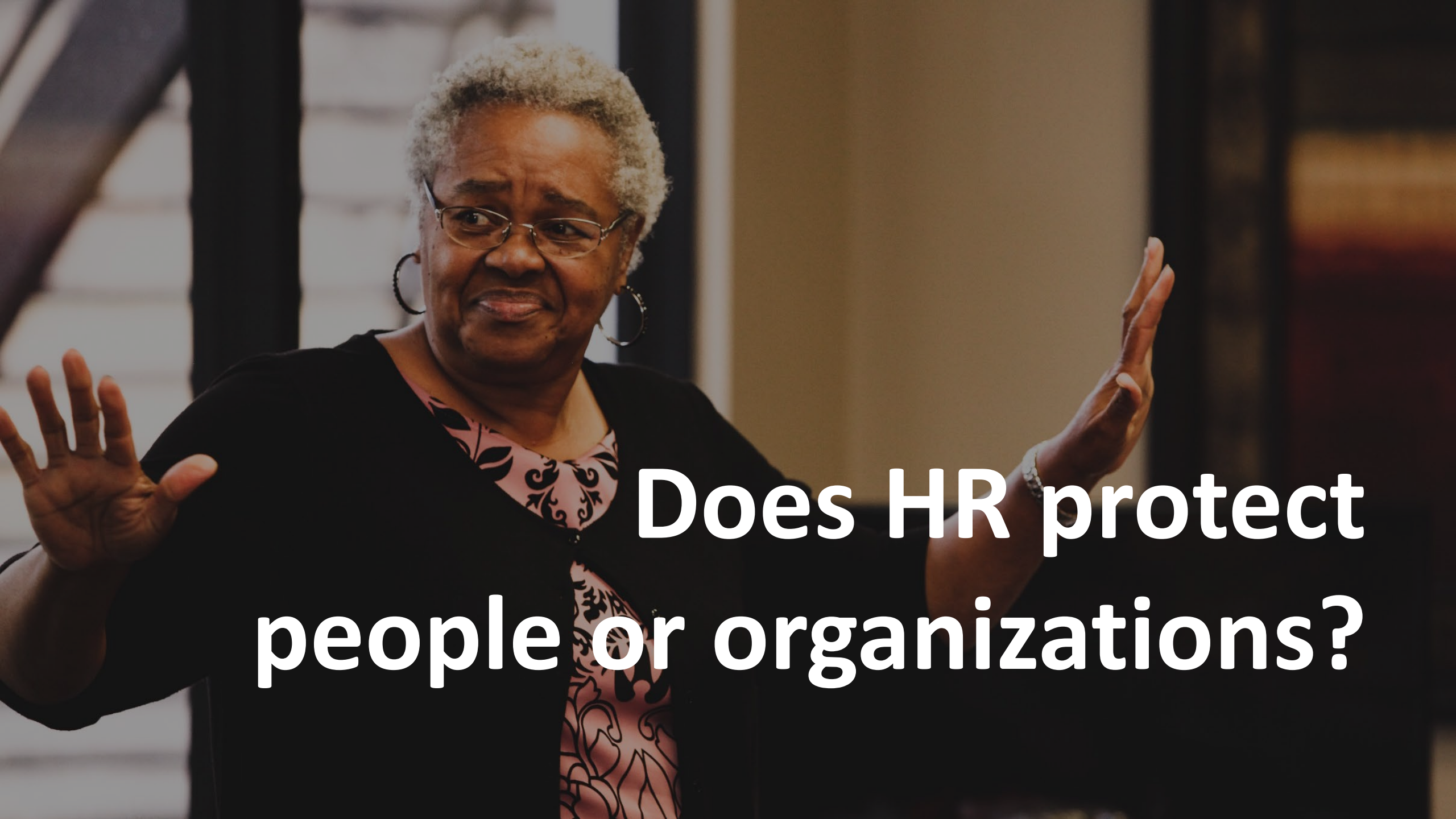
After a female employee at Vice revealed to the firm's human resources department that she had been groped at the media company's holiday party, the HR director reportedly her to "laugh it off," and [gave similar advice](#) to other staffers who disclosed they had been sexually harassed.



Poll Question (check all that apply)

What has made practicing HR harder?

- a) More/changing employment regulations
- b) Harder to attract talent
- c) Employees more empowered to express their concerns
- d) More demands for pay transparency and/or equity
- e) #MeToo
- f) HR is increasingly blamed for bad institutional behavior



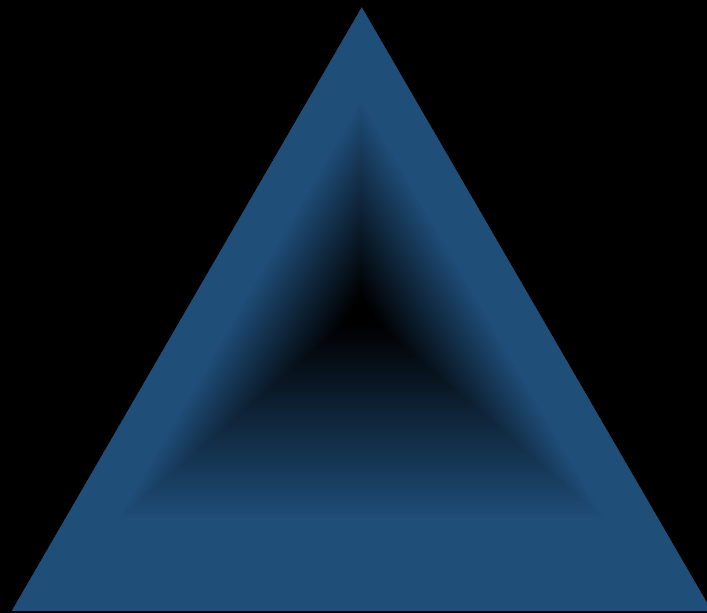
**Does HR protect  
people or organizations?**

Poll Question (choose one)

HR's primary role is to protect:

- a) The organization
- b) The employees

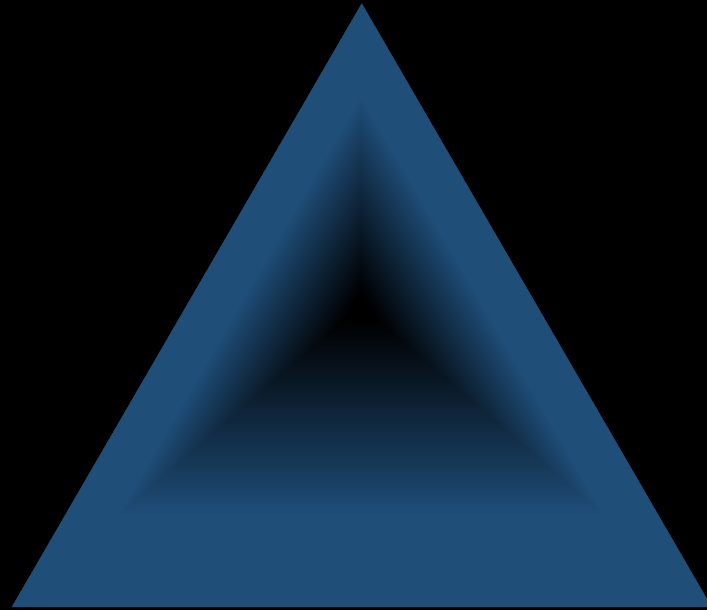
**COST**



**QUALITY**

**ACCESS**

**YOURSELF**



**EMPLOYEES**

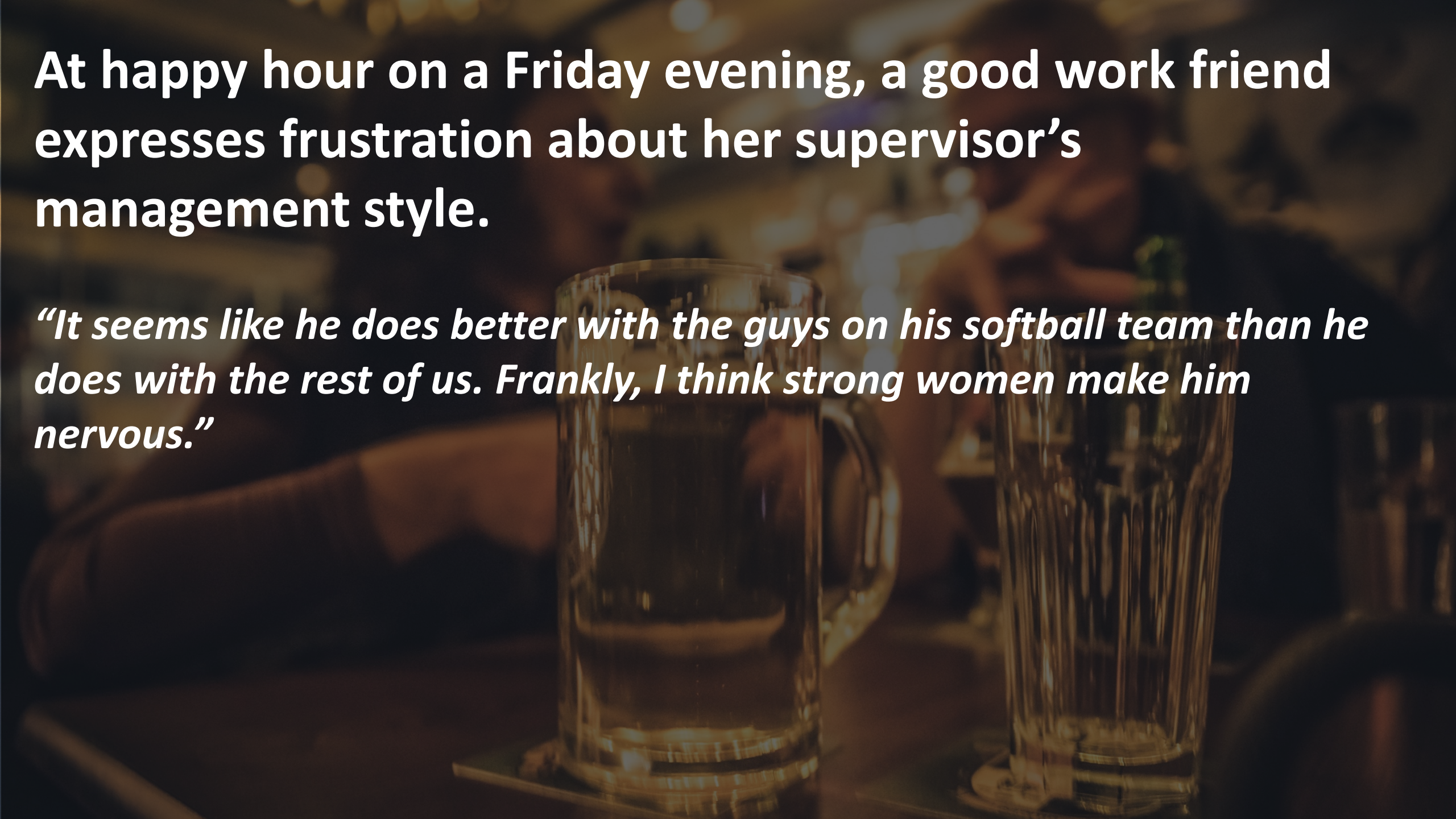
**INSTITUTION**





# SCENARIO 1



A dimly lit bar scene with two glasses of beer in the foreground. The background is blurred, showing other patrons and bar elements. The lighting is warm and low, creating a relaxed atmosphere.

**At happy hour on a Friday evening, a good work friend expresses frustration about her supervisor's management style.**

***“It seems like he does better with the guys on his softball team than he does with the rest of us. Frankly, I think strong women make him nervous.”***



# Poll Question (choose one)

## What would be your best response?

- a) Without revealing this to your friend, you decide to speak to the supervisor to let him know you have heard concerns about the way he treats women.
- b) You strategize on ways she might forge a better connection with her supervisor.
- c) Tell her you are obligated to report the concern to your institutional equity office and do so upon leaving the bar.
- d) Later that evening, send your friend an email documenting the conversation and providing her with a referral to your institutional equity office.

# Poll Question (choose one)

## What would be your best response?

- Without revealing this to your friend, you decide to speak to the supervisor to let him know you have heard concerns about the way he treats women.
- **You strategize on ways she might forge a better connection with her supervisor.**
- Tell her you are obligated to report the concern to your institutional equity office and do so upon leaving the bar.
- Later that evening, send your friend an email documenting the conversation and providing her with a referral to your institutional equity office.



At happy hour on a Friday evening, a good work friend expresses frustration about her supervisor's management style.

*“It seems like he does better with the guys on his softball team than he does with the rest of us. Frankly, I think strong women make him nervous.”*

You offered some advice about how to connect with him and expressed regret that she was so frustrated.

Four months later, you are named in a lawsuit that claims you failed to investigate gender-based inequities.



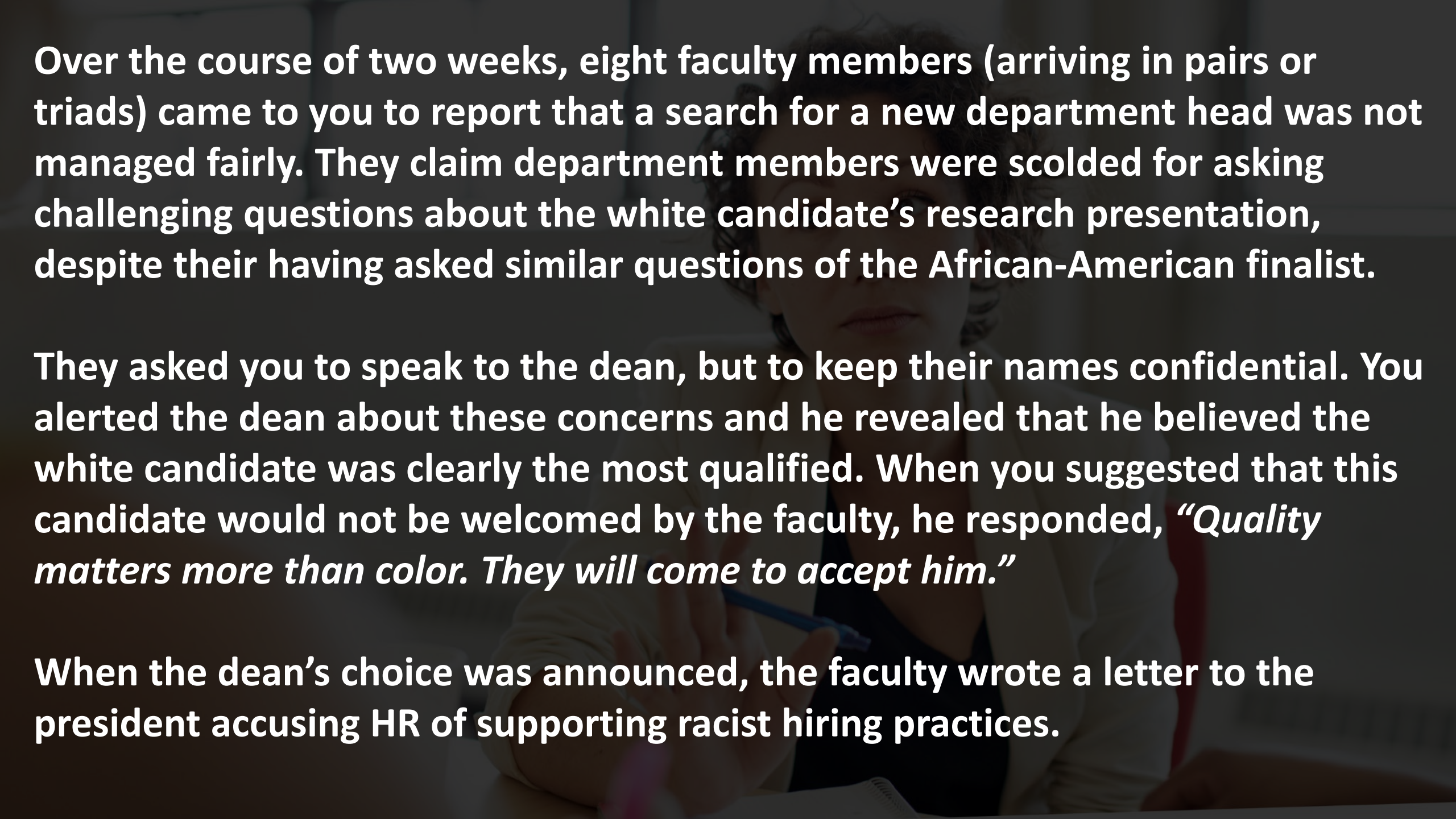
The background is a warm, out-of-focus scene of a bar or pub. Several people are visible, their faces blurred, engaged in conversation. The lighting is soft and golden, typical of indoor bar lighting. In the foreground, two glasses of beer are prominently displayed on a dark surface. The glass on the left is a large, textured mug filled with a golden beer topped with a thick head of foam. The glass on the right is a tall, slender, textured glass, currently empty. The overall atmosphere is cozy and social.

# **TAKEAWAYS & STRATEGIES**



A woman with curly brown hair, wearing a white blazer over a dark top, is seated at a table. She is looking slightly to her left with a focused expression. Her right hand is raised, palm facing forward, with fingers slightly spread, as if she is explaining something or gesturing during a discussion. She is holding a blue pen in her right hand. The background is a bright, out-of-focus office space with large windows. The text "SCENARIO 2" is overlaid in large, white, bold, sans-serif capital letters on the right side of the image.

# SCENARIO 2



Over the course of two weeks, eight faculty members (arriving in pairs or triads) came to you to report that a search for a new department head was not managed fairly. They claim department members were scolded for asking challenging questions about the white candidate's research presentation, despite their having asked similar questions of the African-American finalist.

They asked you to speak to the dean, but to keep their names confidential. You alerted the dean about these concerns and he revealed that he believed the white candidate was clearly the most qualified. When you suggested that this candidate would not be welcomed by the faculty, he responded, *"Quality matters more than color. They will come to accept him."*

When the dean's choice was announced, the faculty wrote a letter to the president accusing HR of supporting racist hiring practices.

# Poll Question (choose one)

How could you have avoided being accused of wrong doing?

- a) Sent a memo to the faculty saying that you met with the dean to share their concerns and explained that he was unwilling to change his decision
- b) Urged the faculty to report their concerns to the institutional equity office
- c) Met with the provost to express the risks inherent in this decision and then followed up with a memo thanking her for meeting with you and considering the concerns of the faculty
- d) Explained that you would talk to the dean but were not in a position to force the dean to hire their preferred candidate and promised to let them know once you had the conversation



A woman with curly brown hair, wearing a white blazer over a dark top, is seated at a table in a meeting. She is gesturing with her right hand, holding a blue pen. The background is a bright, out-of-focus office space with large windows. The text "TAKEAWAYS & STRATEGIES" is overlaid in large, white, bold, sans-serif capital letters across the lower half of the image.

# TAKEAWAYS & STRATEGIES



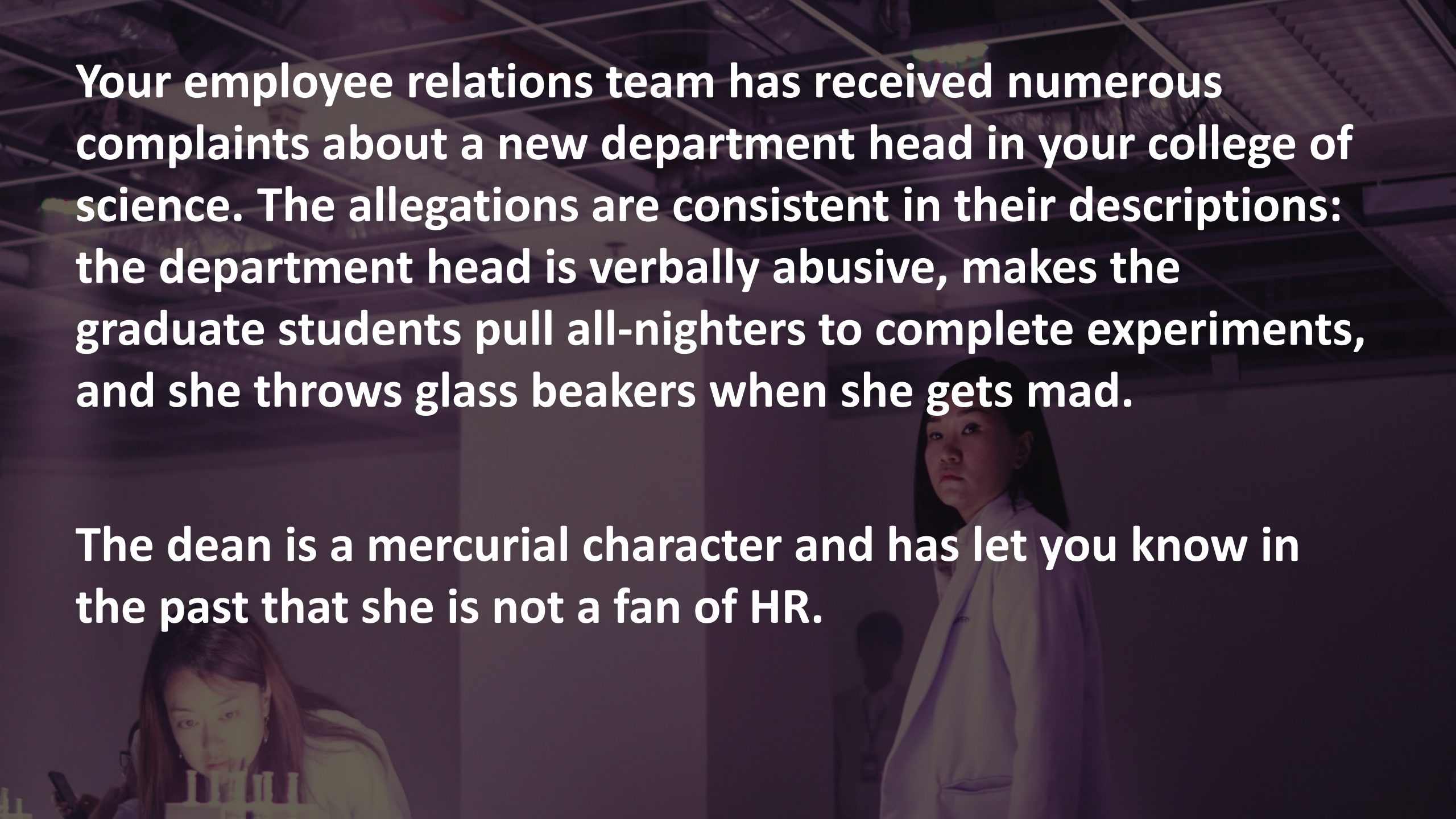


# SCENARIO 3



**Your employee relations team has received numerous complaints about a new department head in your college of science. The allegations are consistent in their descriptions: the department head is verbally abusive, makes the graduate students pull all-nighters to complete experiments, and she throws glass beakers when she gets mad.**

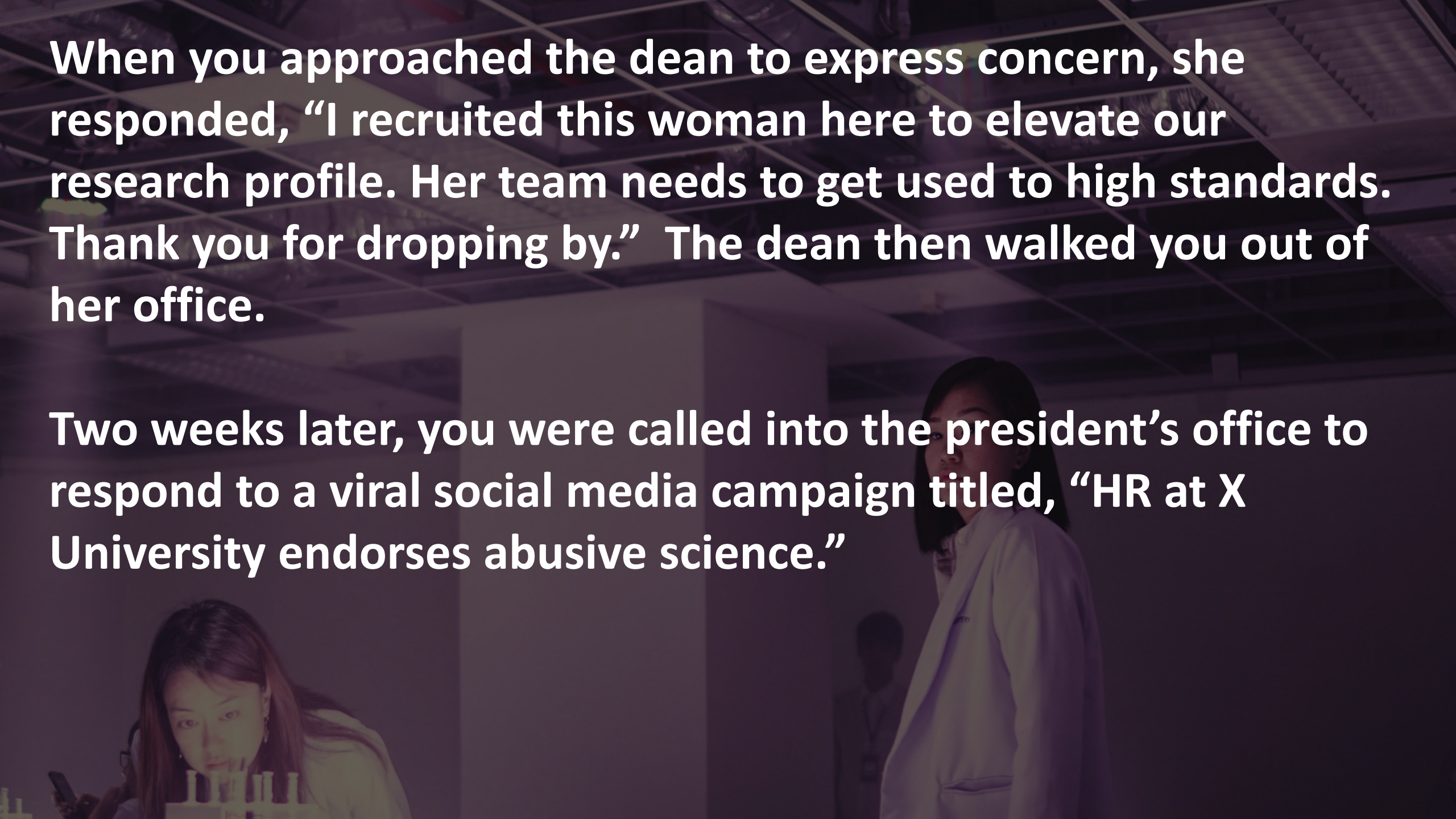
**The dean is a mercurial character and has let you know in the past that she is not a fan of HR.**





**When you approached the dean to express concern, she responded, “I recruited this woman here to elevate our research profile. Her team needs to get used to high standards. Thank you for dropping by.” The dean then walked you out of her office.**

**Two weeks later, you were called into the president’s office to respond to a viral social media campaign titled, “HR at X University endorses abusive science.”**



# Poll Question (choose one)

How could you have avoided being accused of wrong doing?

- a) Sent a memo to those who came forward saying that you met with the dean to share their concerns and that she was considering the issues they brought forward
- b) Engaged a senior faculty member who is close to the dean to stress to her that she is facing a dangerous situation
- c) Scheduled another meeting with the dean to say you have been thinking about the situation and that you continue to feel she is personally at risk if she fails to take action and that you will have to elevate this issue if it is not addressed promptly
- d) Met with the provost and general counsel to express concerns about the dean's apparent lack of concern





# TAKEAWAYS & STRATEGIES



## The Problem With HR

For 30 years, we've trusted human-resources departments to prevent and address workplace sexual harassment. How's that working out?



How can  
you build  
yourself a  
shield of  
armor...?





**Be more than the “HR Person”**



A low-angle, slightly blurred photograph of five people walking on a cobblestone path. From left to right: a person in a red shirt and white shorts with red sneakers; a person in a colorful patterned skirt and white sneakers; a person in a light blue shirt and dark jeans with black sneakers; a person in a green skirt and white sandals; and a person in tan trousers and black dress shoes. The text "Ensure your team is diverse" is overlaid in white at the bottom.

**Ensure your team is diverse**



A man and a woman are standing in front of a large whiteboard. The whiteboard is covered with numerous colorful sticky notes (pink, blue, orange) and three smiley face stickers (two sad, one happy). The man, on the right, is pointing at a sticky note with a pen. The woman, on the left, is looking at the board. The sticky notes contain various handwritten notes, some of which are legible: "flexibility", "broken dashboard", "LACK OF TOOLS", "Global actions", "Variety work to do", "Helps to connect", "Names and RFPs", "Not", "Global actions", "Variety work to do", "Helps to connect", "Names and RFPs", "Not", "Global actions", "Variety work to do", "Helps to connect", "Names and RFPs", "Not".

# Serve on project teams

*Be the dependable one*

**Build a diverse internal network to  
help you connect organizational dots**





A person is sitting at a wooden table, writing in a spiral-bound notebook. They are wearing a denim shirt and several bracelets on their left wrist. The notebook has handwritten text that is upside down. A crumpled piece of paper is on the table to the right.

# Author articles and blog posts

*Let people know where you stand*



A close-up, vertical shot of a silver, mesh-covered microphone on a stand. The microphone is the central focus, with its head pointing upwards. The background is heavily blurred, showing indistinct shapes and colors of people in a dimly lit room, suggesting a conference or panel discussion setting. The lighting is soft, highlighting the texture of the microphone's grille.

**Speak on panels and at conferences**

# Use social media

*Publicly Address Injustice*





Forward articles



Exhibit 1 Apple, Amazon, Facebook, and Google

Company	Year Founded	Market Capitalization \$bn	Gross Margin
Amazon	1994	\$110.7	25.3%
Apple	1976	\$548.2	40.3%
Facebook	2004	\$222.8	37.5%
Google	1998	\$884.4	41.7%

Source: Compiled from Bloomberg, company 10-K and 10-Q filings, FY 2014

As of 12/31/14



A modern conference room with a long, dark wooden table and black mesh office chairs. The room has large windows on the right side, offering a view of a city skyline with several tall buildings. The ceiling is white with recessed lighting. The floor is a light-colored carpet. The overall atmosphere is professional and contemporary.

**Professional organizations**  
*Strive for local and national connections*



A vibrant, abstract mural covers the side of a brick building. The mural features a complex, colorful pattern of geometric shapes, organic forms, and stylized faces. The colors include red, blue, yellow, green, and purple. The words "MAKE GOOD" are written in large, bold, white capital letters across the middle of the mural. In the foreground, a street with a traffic light and a pedestrian is visible. The sky is clear and blue.

MAKE  
GOOD

Community organizations  
*Be known as a vital volunteer*





# THE INNER CIRCLE OF TRUST





Be proactive  
Be clear about next steps  
Assume nothing  
Expand your circle of trust





## Questions?

Thank You!

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