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Hauser Maintains Control of Harvard Lab Under Supervision

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Harvard Psychology Professor Marc D. Hauser will remain in charge of his laboratory in William James Hall under “supervision established by the Dean of the [Faculty of Arts and Sciences],” a University official said yesterday.

Hauser confirmed yesterday that he will run his lab while on leave after an internal University investigation found him “solely responsible” for eight instances of scientific misconduct.

The lab is running experiments on the psychology of dogs, moral judgments in adults, and economic decision making in children, Hauser wrote in an e-mail.

Hauser has been in “constant contact with” his graduate students, said Gordon T. Kraft-Todd '07, one of his research assistants, adding that Hauser visited his lab this summer from Cape Cod, where he has been working on an upcoming book.

FAS spokesman Jeff Neal declined to elaborate on the nature of the supervision, stating only that FAS Dean Michael D. Smith had imposed the additional oversight.

Neal added that graduate and post-doctoral students were given the option of switching advisers or continuing their research under Hauser “in order to avoid potential disruption to their careers.”

After a three-year investigation found evidence of scientific misconduct in Hauser’s lab, Smith wrote in a letter to the Faculty Aug. 20 that the “appropriate sanctions” Hauser faces could include “involuntary leave, the imposition of additional oversight on a faculty member’s research lab, and appropriately severe restrictions on a faculty member’s ability to apply for research grants, to admit graduate students, and to supervise undergraduate research.”

Hauser is currently facing federal inquiries, as some of his research was supported by federal funds.

Some psychology professors were sympathetic to Harvard's decision to allow Hauser to continue to work in the lab.

“It’s a tricky balance between taking preemptive actions that aren’t justified later and letting something go too long,” said Robert A. Bjork, a psychology professor at the University of California, Los Angeles. “Harvard has a long history, so I imagine they’re trying to find what precedents exist, if there are any.”

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Meanwhile, University of Washington Psychology Professor Michael D. Beecher said “people should be patient and let this thing play out and not rush to judgment on Marc.”

“I’m not sure to what extent the problem is Marc was fast and sloppy—and I don’t think he will be anymore,” he said.

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