**Scenario #1**

**Professor Smith and John Doe, Research Assistant**

John Doe, student, claims that one morning while he and Professor Smith were both getting coffee in the department’s break room, the Professor Smith grabbed his crotch. John stated there had been no other “touchings” by the Professor Smith, even though the two had been alone on many other occasions – even in the Professor’s private office and have continued to be alone on many occasions. John stated that Professor Smith did not say anything to him before, during, or after the alleged touching.

During the investigation interview, John could not recall the specific date that that the touching occurred; but he said that he recounted the event to his roommate. He said it was such a strange thing because he and Professor Smith had been good colleagues prior to that moment. When pressed, he said the event likely took place about 6 months ago. John said he did not report the incident to anyone because it would look good on his application for graduate school—when that time came—and he is only reporting it now because Professor Smith terminated his employment for what he said was a “bullshit” reason. When asked, he said he was told by Professor Smith that he was being removed as a Research Assistant because students complained that he was “too casual” in his conversation with the students during the class lab. He became visibly upset when speaking about how Professor Smith “simply believed what students were saying about him and did not even ask for his side of the story.” He said that you could talk with two students, K.P., and C.B., and they would confirm that he was never casual with the students. In fact, he said that it was Professor Smith who was very casual in her approach with the students and he was the one who was more formal in his relationship with students. He finished the interview by saying that Professor Smith should not have the power to unilaterally remove him from his position.

In Professor Smith’s interview, she adamantly denied having grabbed John Doe’s crotch. She said she recalls many times being in the department’s break room, alone, with John and never thought there was a situation where she or he acted inappropriately. She did admit that the two of them had “hung out” a couple of times (outside of work), but it was not a dating situation and nothing romantic had taken place. When asked about terminating John Doe’s employment, she said that a few students had anonymously complained via lab comment cards that John was trying too hard to be friendly with the students. She said there was no report of inappropriate behavior on John’s part, but she felt that he should not be “attempting to foster too friendly of a relationship with the students.” She said she felt terminating his employment was the best course of action. She admitted she never asked John for his side of the story “because students are our customers, and the customer is always right.”

Professor Smith’s Department Chair was interviewed about the situation. He said that Professor Smith is a great professor who has great reviews from her students. She has never had any complaints made against her for inappropriate behavior, but was known by students to be a friendly and somewhat laid back professor. The chair said that he has never heard any complaints from John Doe about Professor Smith, until his research assistant position was terminated. He recently met with John Smith—who was angry about the situation but made no mention of the “grabbing of his crotch” by Professor Smith.

K.P. was interviewed over the phone. He admitted having spoken to John Doe after he was removed from the lab. He reached out (via text) to see why he wasn’t in lab anymore. K.P. said that he thought John was a good lab instructor and that he would make the subject matter relatable to the students. When pressed, he said that John was very friendly and had hung out with him and his classmates a few times at the local pub, after the lab. Since John was also a student, K.P. did not think it was a problem. He also reported that Professor Smith was very professional and never did anything inappropriate in the class.

C.B. was interviewed in person. He said the only thing he knew was that there was a rumor that Professor Smith and John Doe were dating. He said he thought John was removed from the lab because “they broke up.” He said he had nothing else to add to the investigation.

John Doe’s roommate was also interviewed. He said he absolutely remembers a conversation that took place about 4 months (or so) ago when John Doe told him that a professor grabbed his crotch. He said John said it happened in the break room in their department and that John said he was wearing thick jeans at the time, so she had to “grab hard” in order to “feel anything.” He also said that John never identified the professor, but said it was a woman he works with. He said that he did not believe John when he told him the story because “John is a known liar.” It wasn’t until John was fired from his job as a research assistant that he began to think John might be telling the truth, especially since he was fired by a woman he worked with—that sounded like the person John was initially talking about.

How do you evaluate the credibility of the witnesses in this case?