

Title IX and Fostering an Inclusive Working and Learning Environment

Shardha Jogee (University Faculty Gender Equity Council),
Norma Fowler (Faculty Women's Organization),
Krista Anderson (Associate Vice President and Title IX Coordinator)

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Context

One of UT's tenets is to foster an inclusive working and learning environment. Important efforts have recently been taken to provide enhanced training and awareness of Title IX and other related climate issues. However, the UT community (faculty, staff, students) report many challenges and concerns.

Our group, with input from many others (e.g., Department Chairs, CNS Women Faculty groups, the Title IX office, the Faculty Ombuds, the Faculty Women's Organization, the Faculty Welfare Committee, and faculty academic advisors) has ***started to gather these concerns and work with relevant units to help address them over the last two months***. This work is still very much in progress, but we provide some preliminary findings and recommendations.

Special thanks to those who attended the planning meeting: members of the University Faculty Gender Equity Council (Tasha Beretvas, Shardha Jogee), Associate Vice President and Title IX Coordinator (Krista Anderson), Title IX Deputy and Education Coordinator (Brelynn Thomas), members of the Faculty Women's Organization (Angela Beasley, Norma Fowler), the University Faculty Ombuds (Mary A. Steinhardt), and the Chair of the Faculty Welfare committee (Liz Gershoff).

Title IX and Fostering an Inclusive Working and Learning Environment

A) Resources

Concerns are frequently raised by faculty, staff, and students about the long time to resolve cases and the lack of adequate communication between different offices and complainants.

These problems are partly tied to the limited resources of relevant offices:

- Office of the Dean of Students: 347 Title IX investigation cases in 2017-18 were led by 6 investigators, which averages to ~ 50 Title IX cases per investigator annually.
- Office for Inclusion & Equity (OIE): 131 Title IX investigation cases in 2017-18 were led by 3 investigators at the time, which averages to ~ 47 Title IX cases per investigator annually.

We recommend that UT provides more resources to the above offices (and other Title IX related units) to reduce the case load per staff member, and explore ways to better coordinate efforts of different “landing pads” (see part B).

Title IX and Fostering an Inclusive Working and Learning Environment

B) A One-Stop Shop

UT has a large number of "landing pads" to report concerns and find resources for Title IX, bias, and climate issues, including the Title IX Office, the Office for Institutional Equity (OIE), the Office of the Dean of Students (DOS), the Campus Climate Response Team (CCRT), the Behavior and Concern Line (BCAL), the Graduate School, and the various Ombuds.

This situation leads to numerous problems, including:

- Students, faculty, and staff do not know where exactly to file a report and find resources.
- The lack of coordination between different landing pads can cause (and has caused) large delays in advancing cases (e.g., a 5-months delay in a recent case).
- Resources are inefficiently spent maintaining redundant information on different sites.

We recommend developing a one-stop shop (with website, office, app, phone number) where

- a) all reports on title IX, bias incidents, discrimination, climate concerns can be filed;
- b) all resources are listed on its website (e.g., Faculty/Staff/Student Ombuds, Employee Assistance Program, Student Emergency Services, Counseling and Mental Health Center, BCAL, Legal services); and
- c) **well-trained coordinators will identify all units relevant for a given case, connect the complainant to these units, and keep a centralized record of progress on the case.**
(For example, if a student reports on racial and gender bias by the faculty instructor in her class, the coordinator would connect her to Title IX, Title VII, OIE, DOS, etc)

Title IX and Fostering an Inclusive Working and Learning Environment

C) User-Centered Title IX Training Sessions

An increasing number of UT members are benefiting from in-person Title IX training sessions (e.g., 1900 (including ~500 faculty/staff) in AY 2016-17; 4500 (including ~2300 faculty/staff) in AY 2018-19 to date).

We have provided the Title IX office with several recommendations to improve the training sessions, including:

- 1) Walk participants through a title IX investigation **from the perspective of complainants, witnesses, and respondents**: discuss the likely steps, timescales, potential consequences, and confidentiality issues for each group, and stress the no-retaliation rule.
- 2) Provide the option for participants to **send questions (authored or anonymous) ahead of time** to Title IX staff (via email, a dropbox or an app) so that training sessions
 - can be tailored to the audience (Department Chairs vs. students, vs general faculty), and
 - can include standard modules, as well as specific answers and scenarios.
- 3) Give the one-stop-shop (if it is adopted) as the one place for reporting and finding resources.
- 4) Improve awareness of additional **prevention** measures, such as preventative training session, strategies, and tools for creating an inclusive environment (in collaboration with BeVocal - Bystander Intervention, the Campus Climate Response Team, etc)

Title IX and Fostering an Inclusive Working and Learning Environment

D) Improving Communication

- 1) Encourage faculty, staff, and students who do not know who to call, are not getting a response, etc, to contact the **relevant ombuds** who can help 'direct traffic', connect them to resources, and follow-up. The information for the faculty ombuds (Mary Steinhardt) can also be provided to Department Chairs at Chairs council to transmit to their faculty.
- 2) Hold more **discussions and focus groups** for faculty, staff, students, and chairs to discuss Title IX related issues with representatives from OIE, Legal, HR, and the Provost's Office present.
- 3) Reports filed by students -- the most vulnerable members -- often fall through the cracks. Department chairs or faculty advisors, who could have helped, are often not informed at all. **If students give their permission, can the department chair or faculty advisors be informed?**
- 4) **Can department chairs share the summary outcome of a Title IX investigation of a faculty/staff respondent to department members who are in a need-to-know position** (e.g., the graduate/UG advisor, and associate chair)? The ability of department chairs to share such information can *facilitate the early identification and prevention of future problems*. How do we balance these benefits with concerns about the privacy of the complainant and respondent?
- 5) We recognize the limits placed by FERPA, HIPAA, and the confidential nature of employee issues, and also the attraction of defining need-to-know conservatively. Nevertheless, the net effect of not communicating with complainants has produced, in at least one department, pervasive mistrust and the perception that Title IX issues are ignored. **Can need-to-know be relaxed to let complainants and other affected parties know that complaints are being addressed?**