

Report on Title IX Liaison Activities 2019-2020

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A) Title IX Liaison job description

As a reminder, according to the Climate Change Committee Report the job description for the Title IX Liaison includes the following main points:

The Liaison is:

- “tasked with working to promote a safe and inclusive community for all students, staff, and faculty”
- “a neutral point of contact for students, staff, and faculty within the department, supporting individuals in response to concerns regarding misconduct, discrimination, and general incivility.”

The Liaison should:

- “attend annual comprehensive training provided by the Title IX Office”
- “be encouraged to participate in monthly training provided by the University’s Title IX Office”
- “serve as the Government Department’s liaison to local Title IX officials coordinators....[develop] a close working relationship with Title IX personnel”
- “disseminate information about Title IX procedures, as well as the various campus resources”
- “serve as an accessible point of contact to whom students, staff, and faculty may turn for information and advice regarding behavior or practices that affect their ability to pursue excellence in teaching and learning regardless of background....In areas beyond sexual and gender-based harassment, the appointee will assist students, staff, and faculty in identifying and accessing support services and/or

available departmental and university-wide mechanisms to address concerns raised.”

There is an understanding as well that the Liaison has an ombuds role (as the last bullet suggests), though not a formal one with confidentiality.

B) Activities

This past academic year involved six clusters of activities

1. Introduced the Department to the position and to me (Sept-Oct 2019).
 - (1) Spoke to all Gov 3000 workshops, to the Approaches class, to the first GSA meeting, at a staff meeting, and at a faculty meeting
2. Training.
 - (1) face-to-face training with University Title IX Office officer;
 - (2) attended monthly Title IX Coordinator training meetings;
 - (3) maintained regular contact with University and GSAS Title IX officers
3. Dissemination of information.
 - (1) wrote content for the Title IX webpage linked to the Department webpage <https://gov.harvard.edu/title-ix-liaison>;
 - (2) provided hardcopy pamphlets/information packets on responsibilities to members of the Department;
 - (3) sent email to faculty clarifying Title IX policies and procedures;
 - (4) summarized and distributed the 2019 Harvard University survey on sexual assault and harassment to provide members of the department an easier-to-read summary of the seriousness of sexual assault and harassment at Harvard.
4. Coordinated with PhD students concerning pregnancy and parenting issues having to do with, among other things, delays in progress and the question of tuition clock. This is Title IX issue that falls under rules concerning discrimination based on pregnancy. Activities included:
 - (1) organizing a meeting between GSAS officers and PhD students interested in, or already starting families to get clarity on funding implications;
 - (2) interacting with a lawyer at the Center for WorkLife Law in Berkeley to help analyze the legal basis under Title IX for greater flexibility in the

- tuition clock. A number of our PhD students were in contact with the lawyer to help provide information about their own situations;
- (3) sending a memo to faculty about how to best respond to advisees who are pregnant or starting a family.
5. Worked to bring more attention to mental health issues (mainly under the Ombuds role rather than under Title IX).
- (1) helped organize a work-life panel in the spring 2020 semester attended by a mix of senior and junior faculty and grad students.
6. Helped the Graduate Student Association to develop methods for sending anonymous comments to the sexual assault/harassment External Review Committee, and to the Department in tenure cases.

C) Next Steps

After using this past academic year to get a better sense of the parameters of the job, I would like to focus next year on more structural issues (not to the exclusion of the issues that came up this past year). These include:

1) getting a better handle on the details of the sexual assault/harassment problem at Harvard as it may affect our department. The data from the 2018 university-wide survey are not granular down to the Departmental level. I had a lengthy meeting with the Title IX office on the data at the GSAS level. I would like to use similar questions from the university-wide survey to survey the Department sometime before or during the 2020 fall semester.

2) On the basis of more detailed analysis of concerns about sexual assault/harassment issues in the Department, focus on two additional questions:

- Implicit bias. There are debates in the literature about its effects on behavior, so how should we best translate this literature into into processes, sensitization, and development of norms etc., in the department for preventive
- Bystander training to empower people to respond immediately to harassment. There is some literature that suggests bystander training is more useful than compulsory training. What is the best way of communicating standard and effective bystander interventions? There is a large literature on this that will have to be tailored to the needs of a Department.

D) Reflections

One preliminary reflection: I think the CCC was right to identify a need for a Title IX presence and an ombuds-like position at the Department level. But there may be a tension between these two roles. Title IX stresses the neutrality of coordinators and officers. They should be empathetic, but they should also be neutral sources of information for those who want to report potential violations of Title IX policy and for those who have been reported, or worry about reporting. The ombuds role, however, is more of an advocacy role, not necessarily a neutral provider of information. To this point, I have personally not felt this tension. But I I could imagine a situation where people get use to the Liaison being an advocate on non-Title IX issues only to be surprised/taken aback when the Liaison takes on a position of neutrality on a Title IX issue. I am not sure whether this will be a problem. If it does, then in the future we might want to consider whether Title IX and ombuds should be two separate positions.

Its been a real privilege having the opportunity to work on Title IX issues in the Department. But the activities in the past academic year are only a start, and only a part, of an effort by the Department to repair the damage from our failure to deal with incidences of sexual assault and harassment in the past.