University of Pittsburgh Title IX Program Review

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GENERAL INFORMATION

Before diving into the substance, wanted to share a quick note that this research was completed on behalf of University of Pittsburgh’s main campus (Pittsburgh) and doesn’t specifically incorporate details on the other satellite campuses, unless specifically noted if necessary or prudent to include for any reason. Throughout the following sections, the majority of information comes from the university’s Office for Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion. When available, additional or specific information from graduate studies and medical student programs.

How accessible is the information on Title IX?

The University folds its Title IX programming and staff primarily under its Office for Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (OEDI). A quick Google search brings up a variety of helpful and clearly marked resources with easy access to Title IX training, reporting, policies, and news related to the university.

Additional information is available under the School of Medicine’s Office of Learning Environment (OLE). Interestingly, this page directs folks to submit incident reports through the Pitt Med Professionalism Accolade and Incident Reporting System (PAIR), including incidents of mistreatment or unprofessional behavior. This area also provides information about ways to report, incident types and subtypes, confidentiality vs. anonymity, Title IX and mandated reporting, and what happens next.

But even if reported through OLE/PAIR, if the report involves sexual harassment, sexual misconduct or gender discrimination, OLE is required to forward it OEDI to handle offering supportive services, no contact orders, and the options for participation in the investigation phases.

Are you able to find the Office of Title IX Coordinator?

Yes, the Title IX coordinator position and contact information is clearly listed online. Vanessa Love recently stepped into the role of Director of the Office of Civil Rights and Title IX as of April 23, 2023. Ms. Love graduated from the University three times (undergrad, master’s, and juris doctor). Professionally speaking, Ms. Love has spent time working in private practice, specializing in family law, and has served as a Title IX investigator at Howard University and a civil rights investigator at Community College of Allegheny County. Directly prior

1 https://www.ole.pitt.edu/incidents/title-ix-and-mandated-reporting
2 https://www.diversity.pitt.edu/civil-rights-title-ix-compliance
3 https://www.pitt.edu/pittwire/accolades-honors/vanessa-love-director-civil-rights-title-ix
to taking this role at Pitt, she spent nearly four years at Point Park University where she began as a unit of one and built up a team and program to encompass a broad range of services under the equity, inclusion, and accessibility umbrella as a part of the school's Office of Compliance and Integrity. It is clear that Pitt did its research in seeking out and selecting a highly qualified person to serve the university in this capacity.

In this role, Ms. Love will report to the associate vice chancellor for strategic operations and planning in the Office for Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion. She will oversee a Gender Discrimination and Title IX Response Manager (who coincidentally served as an interim director until Ms. Love was hired). These are the only two roles with Title IX specifically in their title, the but OEDI staff has a few other folks that I presume may be tangentially involved in Title IX efforts (namely the Director of Sexual Violence Prevention and Education, outreach and response specialists, prevention educators, and a senior civil rights manager).

![University of Pittsburgh Office for Equity, Diversity, & Inclusion](image)

Meet the Team

**Vanessa Love**

Director, Civil Rights & Title IX

A native of Pittsburgh’s South Hills, Vanessa Love is a three-time alumna of the University with a bachelor’s degree in political science from the Kenneth P. Dietrich School of Arts and Sciences, a master’s degree in international affairs from the Graduate School of Public and International Affairs and a Juris Doctor from the Pitt School of Law. A member of the Pennsylvania Bar Association since 2013, Love also has worked as an attorney in private practice, specializing in family law.

Are you able to find general information on the Title IX program and policies?

Yes, the University has a variety of information on their OEDI website regarding Civil Rights and Title IX compliance, procedures, programs, and policies. This is
the first resource that pops up when searching for “University of Pittsburgh Title IX” and provides resources and support services for those interested in making a report, looking for information about trainings, seeking contact information for staff or service teams, etc. They also provide a variety of formats of information, including printable brochures and Title IX educational videos on services provided and reporting.4

→ Is it organized in a way that is helpful to students and employees?

Yes, the information is presented in an organized way and seems to address both the student and employee audience. It is easy to immediately identify contact information and reporting, which is likely one of the priority reasons why someone might be searching for this information (perhaps even in a time of crisis), so making that information accessible right away is key. The second reason one could presume that a person would be looking for this information is for training and information about policies and programming, which is also easily identifiable.

When someone does land on the OEDI website, it’s interesting because the top menu includes a specific tab for Civil Rights & Title IX. But if you were to hover over Education, the drop down menu there also includes a link to the Civil Rights and Title IX training. I personally like that there are multiple ways to navigate to the Title IX information because I think there are different reasons that might drive someone to land on the OEDI website, and this allows for different user interface experience options that capture a variety of use cases for the person who might be clicking around.

→ Are you able to locate information on Title IX training provided?

Yes, the University appears committed to providing various Title IX and related training programs and has this information on a specified landing page of the OEDI website.5 This webpage emphasizes that Title IX trainings are available and conducted for both students and faculty/staff, which is important because there are a variety of angles and issues that may arise for both populations.

They also work with students directly on these issues through their Sexual Assault Facilitation and Education (SAFE) Peer Educator workshops which are presented to student organizations, Greek life, residence halls, etc.6 SAFE is a group of trained individuals who work to cultivate productive and informed conversations

4 https://www.diversity.pitt.edu/education/title-ix-training/title-ix-educational-videos
5 https://www.diversity.pitt.edu/education/civil-rights-title-ix-training/trainings-title-ix-office
6 https://www.diversity.pitt.edu/engagement/sexual-misconduct-prevention/educational-opportunities/sexual-assault-facilitation-and
with students on topics such as relationship and sexual violence, supporting survivors, consent, interpersonal communication, and bystander intervention.

→ **Is the institution currently under investigation for any complaints?**

There is one Title IX – Sexual Violence complaint opened on August 10, 2023.\(^7\) However, the End Rape On Campus website says the school is not currently under investigation for the violation of Title IX.\(^8\)

\(^7\) [https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/investigations/open-investigations/tix.html](https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/investigations/open-investigations/tix.html)

\(^8\) [https://endrapeoncampus.org/school-locator/?schoolsearch=university%20of%20pittsburgh](https://endrapeoncampus.org/school-locator/?schoolsearch=university%20of%20pittsburgh)
ATHLETICS

Are you able to find the Title IX coordinator for Athletics (if there is a separate one)?

The University of Pittsburgh does not have a separate Title IX coordinator for Athletics. However, interesting to note that Pitt Athletics does currently operate under its first female Athletic Director. AD Heather Lyke was quoted in Pitt’s 50 Years of Title IX celebration materials entitled “Hail to Her” by acknowledging the importance of the law in creating opportunities for women in sports.9

Lyke and her family (her mom, a field hockey and basketball player at Otterbein College and her daughter, a volleyball player at Clemson) were also one of seven families profiled by ESPN in their 50 year Title IX anniversary content about multigenerational stories of women in sports.10 While this doesn’t ultimately have anything to do per se with the policies, procedures, reporting structure, investigative functionality, etc. of the school’s athletics programs as it pertains to Title IX compliance, it seems relevant as it emphasizes the awareness of the value and significance of the law which hopefully translates to a positive prioritization of those efforts in practice.

Are you able to find information for filing a complaint or lodging a concern?

This is not specific to the athletics program but rather the University of Pittsburgh overall uses “The Pitt Concern Connection” (PCC) as a reporting system that “makes it comfortable and convenient for University members to report concerns via telephone, text message, or by using [the] online system so that issues can be investigated and resolved.”11 This resource is available to any student, staff, faculty, or community member (including regional campuses and off-campus work locations) and does not require a school ID for reporting. The PCC system can also be used for asking questions. The PCC webpage has a lot

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9 https://pittsburghpanthers.com/sports/2022/5/2/hail-to-her.aspx
11 https://www.compliance.pitt.edu/make-report
of detailed information available about the process of reporting, FAQs, quick reference guides with flow chart visuals, contact information, and more. Most importantly, the tone seems empowering, informative, and approachable, which presumably helps given the potential context behind why someone might have landed on this page.

→ Analysis of EADA information regarding proportionality and disparities of participants, teams, money spent, salaries, etc.?

According to the EADA data, the University of Pittsburgh has 19,233 undergraduate students, with 8,129 identifying as men and 11,104 identifying as women. The most recent data shows 292 participants on the men’s teams and 235 participants on the women’s teams. There is a caveat on the participation data that states that the women’s basketball team includes 15 male practice players in its participant count. Right off the bat it appears that there is a proportionality issue with just the number of men and women participants as compared to the number of men and women students.

The sports that have both men’s and women’s teams are basketball, track, soccer, swimming, and there’s a balance between baseball/softball. The men’s only sports are football and wrestling, with the women’s only teams being gymnastics, lacrosse, and volleyball. The university has 24 head coach positions assigned to males and only 13 for females (across both the men’s and women’s teams). There are 87 assistant coach positions held by males (across the men’s and women’s teams) compared to 30 held by women (across men’s and women’s teams).

In terms of financials, the men’s team offers $10,361,260 in student aid compared to the $7,264,962 for the women’s teams. This breaks down to a 59% (men) to 41% (women) ratio percentage. Men’s teams spend more than $1.6M on recruiting expenses compared to the women’s $580K. Men’s teams spend more than $13.8M on their total game day operating expenses compared to the $4.4M spent by the women’s teams. Grand total expenses for the men’s teams is nearly $67M versus the women’s teams which is just under $20M. The men’s teams bring in almost $80M in revenue compared to the women’s teams which bring in almost $20M.

I’m not able to find any information regarding when Pitt added or removed teams, and I also don’t see any information through online searching regarding reports or investigations into the school’s athletics programming. Either a good sign of minimal issues in this regard or a really good SEO strategy (spoken like a true ex-Public Relations cynic!). ;)

12 https://ope.ed.gov/athletics/#/institution/details
→ Does the institution have a policy/made any statements concerning transgender athletes?

Nothing directly related to the school’s policy on transgender athletes comes up when searching widely on the internet. On the university’s athletics page, if you type in “transgender” to the search bar, one link pops up that’s dated August 14, 2020 with a list of resources and a general statement about the school’s commitment to fostering diversity and celebrating differences. The list of resource links includes a number of pages from the OEDI website, the University Counseling Center, the Student Affairs LGBTQIA+ Resources page, an NCAA statement on inclusion of transgender student-athletes, as well as a number of book, podcast, show, and movie recommendations for diversity, equity, and inclusion topics.

Interestingly, I found an article on the university’s website from June 2021 that highlights the University of Pittsburgh earning a score of 95 out of 100 in the 2019 Athletic Equality Index, which was an increase from 48 in the report’s first edition from 2017. The large jump in their more recent score was attributed to improvements in school “policies that support LGBTQ+ student-athletes, coaches, administrators, staff, and fans.” All of the other mention of LGBTQIA+ resources and guidelines direct folks back to the LGBTQIA+ specific website, where there is lack of specific information regarding transgender athletes.

A year ago in April 2023, there were protests at the University of Pittsburgh regarding an event where guest speakers debated transgender ideology. This followed an event the month prior where athlete Riley Gaines visited the campus to share similar views.

→ Can you find the institution’s NIL policy? Does this institution address Title IX issues with NIL?

In terms of NIL at Pitt, the University does have an official policy available online, which notably applies to student-athletes, coaches, and staff at the Pittsburgh campus. The 13-page policy walks through a statement of purpose, a policy specific to international athletes, a list of do’s and don’ts, trademark and copyright information, disclosure requirements, NCAA guidance on the school’s

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13 [https://pittsburghpanthers.com/sports/2020/8/14/panthers-united-educational-resources.aspx](https://pittsburghpanthers.com/sports/2020/8/14/panthers-united-educational-resources.aspx)
14 [https://www.pitt.edu/pittwire/accolades-honors/pitt-jumps-athletic-equality-index](https://www.pitt.edu/pittwire/accolades-honors/pitt-jumps-athletic-equality-index)
15 [https://www.lgbtq.pitt.edu/](https://www.lgbtq.pitt.edu/)
17 [https://pittsburghpanthers.com/documents/2023/1/2/NIL_Policy_Update_1_2_22.pdf](https://pittsburghpanthers.com/documents/2023/1/2/NIL_Policy_Update_1_2_22.pdf)
Looking back to when Pennsylvania first adopted Senate Bill 381, which allows student-athletes to earn money through various marketing deals, the school immediately launched into efforts to support the process by providing resources to help navigate these new opportunities. While universities are not allowed to be directly involved in managing student-athlete deals, Pitt has found a way to enhance their personal development services with the goal of helping prepare these athletes for success both during and after their time at the school.

The Assistant Athletic Director for Student Life, Lisa Auld, was quoted in saying that the school has already prioritized helping individual athletes “build their personal brands” and that NIL falls easily within that remit. Additionally, she referenced that the NIL efforts have been “inclusive to all sports and both men’s and women’s teams” and that “it’s not just exclusive to revenue sports.”

One of the ways the school does this is with its new program called Forged Here which was launched as a partnership between the University’s Center for Branding within the Graduate School of Business, the Athletics Department, and the school’s Office for Innovation and Entrepreneurship. This program helps Pitt student-athletes throughout the process of developing and managing their brands while emphasizing business skills at the local and national level. Additionally, the Pitt NIL Exchange provides a student-athlete NIL business registry where businesses, donors, alumni, and others interested in making an investment are able to identify and connect with student-athletes.

As of January 29, 2024, the school currently has 300+ student-athletes with NIL transactions for a total of 1,250 NIL transactions, stemming across all 19 teams, with an average transaction value of $3,000.

Most recently Mark Cuban (Pittsburgh native) partnered with the school and Campus Ink to establish an NIL store for student-athletes of all men’s and women’s sports.

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19 https://business.pitt.edu/pitt-athletics-introduces-personal-brand-program-for-student-athletes-with-center-for-brandings-expertise/
20 https://pittsburghpanthers.com/feature/nil
21 https://pittsburghpanthers.com/feature/nil
22 https://nil.store/pages/pitt-sports
SEXUAL MISCONDUCT

Are you able to find the Title IX coordinator for sexual misconduct (if separate)?

University of Pittsburgh has a Director of Sexual Violence Prevention and Education in addition to their Director of Civil Rights & Title IX. The Director of Sexual Violence Prevention and Education’s bio says that this person is responsible for ensuring that faculty, staff, and students are engaged in conversations around identifying, preventing, and responding to sexual misconduct.

Are you able to find information for filing a complaint or lodging a concern?

On the Office for Equity, Diversity, & Inclusion’s “Civil Rights & Title IX Compliance” website there are a lot of links with information about the reporting and investigative process, including a reporting form, what to expect when reporting, information about anonymity and confidentiality, and context specifically for employees.\(^{23}\)

The "Make a Report" link is clearly highlighted and visible in different coloring so it stands out. It links out to a form through "Pitt Concern Connection" which allows people to ask a question, report a concern, or check the status of a previously submitted question or concern.\(^{24}\)

Are you able to find the information on the investigation process?

Under “What to Expect When Reporting,” the university provides a printable brochure, video, flowchart (included here above on the right), and additional details about each step of the investigation process.\(^{25}\)

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What is the investigative process? Who are the factfinders? Who determines the resolution?

The Office of Civil Rights & Title IX reviews all reports and will follow up if they reporting individual provided contact information. In some cases, this follow up includes sharing referrals to additional support resources and services. In addition to investigating the allegations made, the follow up process also involves discussing available interim measures, accommodations, processes for resolution, and options with how to proceed with the complaint/investigation process.

Also, interesting to note that “formal investigations” that may result in disciplinary action being taken against the reported individual will involve the Office of Compliance, Investigation, and Ethics (if the incident was committed by faculty or staff) or the Office of Student Conduct (if the incident was committed by student).

What standard of review does the institution use?

After digging a little deeper to find this information, it looks like a policy statement that came out in August 2020 (in response to the May 19, 2020 United States Department of Education’s revised Title IX regulations) states that allegations of sexual harassment will be reviewed under the preponderance of the evidence standard. Additionally, this policy states that there is no burden on the complainant to prove the allegations, but that the burden is on the university to evaluate and adjudicate the allegations.

What comments or concerns do you have concerning the investigatory/adjudicatory process?

It’s interesting that they have mandatory reporting for disclosures of sexual misconduct that affects any member of the University community called the “Responsible Employee Program.” This program has its own additional webpage with a video, information on who is a responsible employee (all Pitt employees unless their job requires professional confidentiality), what their obligation is, how this impacts confidentiality in the reporting, and what to expect after disclosing to a responsible employee in terms of the process. This page also provides draft language professors can include in their syllabus, which notes an exception when there is a disclosure about sexual misconduct shared.

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26 https://www.policy.pitt.edu/sites/default/files/Policies/Community-Standards/Policy_CS_27.pdf
“as a relevant part of an academic project, classroom discussion, or course assignment” which are then not required to be disclosed to the Title IX office. The responsible employee program reminds me of mandatory reporters that exist in the context of youth/minor scenarios who similarly are required to share disclosures with the appropriate resources for further investigation.

In this context, it’s helpful that there is guidance included on what the responsible employee should do prior to disclosure to make sure the person understands the reporting employee’s obligations and options for the person to take if they would rather maintain confidentiality (in that they would then be directed to Confidential Resources instead). I find this last part interesting because I can imagine there are scenarios where a survivor feels comfortable having a vulnerable conversation with a person they trust (professor) and might assume that’s a safe place to have a confidential conversation, but this makes it seem like those conversations might not be confidential and that the person could then end up being directed to a resource where they don’t know the people and might not otherwise feel as comfortable disclosing the details of their issue.

I wonder if there are ways to measure deterrence in reporting because of this structure or if it in fact makes survivors feel more empowered and supported by having options in general.

→ Does the institution have procedures in place to deal with retaliation?

Under their “Make a Report” section, the university shares that difference between contexts for anonymous reporting and confidentiality. This is also where they note that retaliation is strictly prohibited and if a person experiences retaliation, they are instructed to report it through the same Title IX reporting channels (a form or via email). They broadly consider retaliation as actual or perceived, and that it might be experienced for having made a bias incident report to the Title IX office, for participating in services or processes provided by the office, and/or for supporting a party utilizing services or processes provided by the office. Also, under the reporting form area, the university reiterates that retaliation for filing a bias incident report is strictly prohibited.

→ What are the Clery Act statistics for the institution?

“The Clery Act requires colleges and universities to report campus crime data, support victims of violence, and publicly outline the policies and procedures

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they have put into place to improve campus safety.” According to data available from the U.S. Department of Education, the University of Pittsburgh reports a total enrollment of 33,767 students (for 2022). For the years 2020, 2021, and 2022, the University shows no reports of murder/non-negligent manslaughter, negligent manslaughter, incest, or statutory rape in its on-campus data. In those same years there were no reports of murder/non-negligent manslaughter, negligent manslaughter, incest, statutory rape, robbery, and motor vehicle theft in its on-campus student housing facilities. There were no reports of murder/non-negligent manslaughter, negligent manslaughter, rape, incest, statutory rape, or robbery in its non-campus data. Lastly, there were no reports of murder/non-negligent manslaughter, negligent manslaughter, rape, incest, statutory rape, or burglary in its public property data.

In those same years, there were primarily five or fewer reports of criminal offenses such as arson, motor vehicle theft, burglary, aggravated assault, robbery, fondling in the public property and non-campus categories. However, in looking at the data for the on-campus student housing facilities and on-campus data, there are notable increases in fondling, rape, aggravated assault, and burglary.

It’s worth noting that there may be some undefined impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic on this data, given that the reporting years are 2020, 2021, and 2022. From this vantage point it is not clear what, if any, changes may have been in place in residence hall policies (i.e. in 2020 and/or 2021, were students doing Zoom school from home and not staying in their normal dorm settings as regularly? Were there fewer parties or school events happening?). It would be interesting to compare the data from these three years to that of perhaps the prior three (2017, 2018, 2019) to see if there were any big dips one way or another in the data. For example, in 2020 both the on-campus and on-campus student housing facilities reports 1 instance of rape versus in 2021 the on-campus and on-campus student housing facilities reported 16 instances of rape each, and in 2022 there were 19 reports for on-campus and 17 reports for on-campus student housing. That in and of itself suggests there were perhaps some differences in student lifestyle between 2020 and 2021/2022.

Based on searching with End Rape On Campus, the school receives check marks across most categories on policy overview and does not claim a religious exemption. Under its approach evaluation, the University notably lacks the use of a panel for finding responsibility and for deciding sanctions, the campus police are not determined to be trauma-informed, and this overview notes that the school does not have a sexual assault survivor support/advocacy center.

29 https://www.clerycenter.org/the-clery-act
30 https://ope.ed.gov/campussafety/#/institution/details
However, the school is found to have positive marks in other categories of its approach, including partnering with a Rape Crisis Center, referring survivors to local hospital centers for forensic exams, using a separate investigation/fact-finding process from the adjudication process, designating a single investigator for finding responsibility and deciding sanctions (in lieu of the panel approach), and the school uses an amnesty policy as well as an appeals process which is overseen by a separate person than the other investigators.\footnote{https://endrapeoncampus.org/school-locator/?schoolsearch=university%20of%20pittsburgh}
PREGNANCY

Are you able to find the resources for pregnant students?

Resources for pregnant students are available under a variety of buckets, including: Title IX resources, the office of graduate studies, and HR policies.

Under HR, the university states its priority of helping employees throughout all stages of life, and shares information on how it achieves this mission from pregnancy (i.e. fertility assistance to caring for an aging parent). Expecting and new parents are able to clearly view necessary and helpful information regarding what it means to go through the entire pregnancy journey, including adding a newborn to the employee’s medical insurance, resources for postpartum depression, returning to work, and childcare services. They also share information for breast-feeding parents, and include a link to a map of lactation rooms around campus (of which there are 18!).

Lastly, the School of Medicine has its own policy on pregnancy and parental accommodations for med students. In this particular policy, it makes specific note of med students being able to take up to six weeks of time off, requested for in advance, in at least one week increments, no later than six months following a birth or adoption. It also mentions that the student will continue to be enrolled as a full-time student during that time and that accommodation periods for parental leave do not alter expected milestones for graduation or promotion (which made me think of the conversation we had about ensuring someone is reinstated at the same status they were upon leaving).

One thing to note here is that there is some discussion about how the Dobbs decision is impacting college athletics, namely pregnant student athletes. I only know this because I reviewed my 2L mentee’s Sports Law Journal comment last year on the topic (Allyson Margolis; A Gap in Coverage: How NCAA and College Athletics Policies are Lacking in the Wake of Dobbs; Volume XXXI Issue 2 Villanova Law Sports Law Journal) but wanted to include that this might be an additional area where Title IX may become involved.
→ **Does the institution appear to meet its obligations for pregnant students?**

There are certainly positives in how the school seems to externally convey its support for pregnant students, including the school’s University Child Development Center, which provides "near-side child care/early childhood education for young children belonging to faculty, staff, and students."

What’s interesting here is that there is a lot of information regarding how the university supports its pregnant and parenting graduate students and employees, but the OEDI content regarding this population seems surprisingly brief and limited. I speak further to this down in my recommendations, but it seems like there could be more cross-connection of information so that no matter what other label that person falls under (student, grad student, employee), they are getting the same, full swath of information regarding services and policies rather than just bits and pieces. For example, the OEDI content seems like more of a boilerplate statement regarding the prohibition of discrimination against a student based on pregnancy, childbirth, false pregnancy, termination of pregnancy, or recovery from any of those conditions. It also has a very brief list of “helpful tips” for those who are within this category. But there is no mention here of accommodation policies, resources, services, etc. Instead, it simply seems to suggest that you ask the school for help, meet with the Title IX Coordinator to discuss your situation, keep notes about your absences, and report any instances of discrimination. So it’s less about there being concern that the school isn’t supporting pregnant students and more so an issue of making sure all of the information about what they are doing is available and accessible.

→ **Have there been any cases against the institution dealing with pregnant students?**

No cases against the university for issues related to pregnant students, however I did find a news article from 2018 about how a 39-year-old graduate student tried to add her young son to her university health-care plan but the high cost created too much of a barrier, so she ultimately relied on Medicaid and Children’s Health Insurance Program.\(^39\) The article went on to discuss how graduate students at the University of Pittsburgh were joining with others across the country to highlight that graduate student workers felt as though they did not have a “seat at the table” with the administration and that the school had no obligation to bargain with this group of folks. Further, there was concern about the pervasiveness of sexual misconduct and retaliation, as well as the

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\(^{39}\) [https://www.thenation.com/article/archive/university-pittsburgh-graduate-students-organizing-survive/](https://www.thenation.com/article/archive/university-pittsburgh-graduate-students-organizing-survive/)
above mentioned six-week parental leave policy, which the group thought creating a union could help resolve. What’s interesting is that the “Graduate Students and Parental Leave” landing page speaks specifically to an identified challenge that there was no university-wide policy or guidelines for accommodating graduate students who had become parents, and that the school administration worked with the University Council on Graduate Study to address these concerns.\(^{40}\) This then links out to the “Graduate and Professional Student Parental Accommodation Academic Regulations” which is dated June 1, 2022.\(^{41}\) One could make the connection that the news article and its surrounding advocacy efforts perhaps spurred this into action, and in a way that’s promising because it shows the school was amenable to either a) internal efforts to voice concerns and seek solutions and/or b) external pressures of media attention, legal threats, etc. Either way, at least something productive came out on the other end!

In class we discussed recent developments regarding student athletes as employees, and reading this article made me wonder if there is more to know about the context of students as employees. On one hand I would think there wouldn’t be any difference in how Title IX treats or protects student employees (grad student or otherwise), but maybe there is more to know.

\(^{40}\) [https://www.gradstudies.pitt.edu/student-life/resources-pregnant-and-parenting-students/graduate-students-and-parental-leave](https://www.gradstudies.pitt.edu/student-life/resources-pregnant-and-parenting-students/graduate-students-and-parental-leave)

\(^{41}\) [https://www.gradstudies.pitt.edu/sites/default/files/assets/GradParentalAccommGuidelines6-1-22.pdf](https://www.gradstudies.pitt.edu/sites/default/files/assets/GradParentalAccommGuidelines6-1-22.pdf)
LGBTQIA+

→ Does the institution have a statement concerning the protections for LGBTQIA+ students?

The school has an entire landing page titled “Pride at Pitt” with information regarding LGBTQIA+ policies. Their primary statement is: “The University of Pittsburgh is committed to supporting and sustaining an inclusive and equitable campus environment—one that welcomes, values and embraces the diverse perspectives of community members of all sexual orientation, gender identities, and gender expressions.” This same statement can be found on the student affairs website under “Inclusion & Belonging.”

The Student Affairs page promotes the school’s efforts “to create safe spaces and support the success of queer/trans students as valued members of the Pitt community.” This occurs through a list of student groups, events, and programs hosted by the school.

Lastly, the university does have another landing page with its trans and non-binary policies. This includes supporting a student, faculty, or staff member’s chosen name throughout its systems and information on how to register a chosen name. Along with chosen name, the university instructs individuals to ask about and use a person’s preferred pronouns. They also share a guidelines document for creating a welcoming and supporting environment for individuals going through gender transition.

→ Where is this information available? (within Title IX resources? General anti-discrimination resources?)

As noted above, most of this information actually isn’t specifically found with the rest of the Title IX materials, but the Title IX content does say that Title IX reporting involves “gender discrimination.”

Additionally, on the OEDI webpage under “diverse populations” there is more information about “Allies Network Training,” LGBTQIA student groups, the

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42 https://www.lgbtq.pitt.edu/
43 https://www.studentaffairs.pitt.edu/inclusion-and-belonging/lgbtqia-inclusion#:~:text=The%20University%20of%20Pittsburgh%20is,gender%20identities%20and%20gender%20expressions.
44 https://www.lgbtq.pitt.edu/trans-and-non-binary-information
45 https://www.lgbtq.pitt.edu/trans-and-non-binary-information/chosen-name
46 https://www.lgbtq.pitt.edu/trans-and-non-binary-information/guidelines-inclusion-related-gender-transition
school’s Gender, Sexuality and Women’s Studies Program, and a Transgender Working Group.47

→ Is there any information on non-discrimination in housing or facilities?

Great question and yes! The school has a restroom policy online which states that “faculty, staff, and students are welcome to use restrooms that correspond to their gender identities.”48 The school also has single-occupancy/unisex facilities throughout the campus, including a link to a campus map where those locations can be easily found.

Additionally, the same website states that gender inclusive housing is available for students wanting to live together regardless of sex, gender, gender identity, or gender expression.

47 https://www.diversity.pitt.edu/diverse-populations/lgbtqia-resources/training-education-and-advocacy-groups
48 https://www.lgbtq.pitt.edu/trans-and-non-binary-information/restroom-and-housing-guides
RECOMMENDATIONS

What recommendations do you have for this institution for its Title IX program and accessibility of information?

Overall, I found the university’s investment in Title IX programming to be not only fairly robust, but also very accessible through easy online navigation and consistently positioned with an empowering tone. Of note, they also seem to do a good job balancing providing resources for both reactive and proactive purposes, including prevention initiatives with guides for talking about relationships, consent, and sexual violence as well as events that bring these topics to life, such as a Believe Survivors March.\(^49\)

Areas of Opportunity

1. Athletics (re: Male/Female Disproportionality, LGBTQIA+ Inclusivity, Pregnant Student Athletes) – I’m sure most schools have a lot of room to grow regarding their Title IX compliance efforts in the realm of athletics. The two big pieces here are unsurprisingly the proportionality discrepancies between the men’s and women’s teams regarding number of participant slots, dollars invested through aid and other supports, and even the coaching staff differences. Additionally, it seems as though despite broader university efforts to be clearly communicative regarding LGBTQIA+ inclusivity and welcomeness, the school is almost silent on how they are addressing these issues within their sports community. Lastly, I know that the topic of pregnant student athletes is a bit nuanced, but it is another area that I think the school could be doing more to speak on their policies in a clear manner. Perhaps some of this information is shared or more readily available to folks within the network or to people who ask for it, so they might not necessarily be “noncompliant.” But in terms of being a leader in the higher education academic and athletic spaces, there seems to be an opportunity to be more forthright with their policies and guidelines on these particular issues.

2. Retaliation Reporting – While the university states that retaliation for reporting a bias incident is strictly prohibited, it is not clear from the materials available online what the procedures are after someone reports incidents of retaliation. This may be shared with the individual after they make a report and are informed of their options at that point, but it could potentially be more helpful and encouraging to individuals thinking about reporting retaliation if they had more information about what that process looked like, specifically. Additionally, they could make it more clear and use stronger, inclusive language to denote that retaliation is prohibited for


\(^49\)
any kind of negative reaction toward someone’s engagement with the Title IX office and services, so that it doesn’t somehow end up being narrowed to just those in the funnel for bias incidents only.

3. **Support Outside of Business Hours & Expectation of Follow-Up Timing** – One thing that struck me as potentially concerning (or even perhaps raising to potentially creating some kind of liability) is that under the reporting process, the information states that reports are reviewed during business hours (8:30am-5:00pm) and reports received after business hours are “generally” reviewed during the next business day. First, this immediately made me wonder if it’s beyond the scope of the Title IX team to have someone serving in more of an on-call capacity (i.e. if there’s a true emergency situation, it would be geared more toward emergency response, police, EMS, etc.). However, I can imagine context where waiting for Title IX staff to be looped into certain circumstances until the next business day, or whenever they have capacity to review the report, may create some problems with the investigation process. For example, perhaps someone becomes less likely to move forward with the process if they aren’t met with right in the moment that they want to speak with someone about an incident? Either because they become less trusting of the process due to the delay, or perhaps because feelings of being threatened increase if there’s more time between an incident and when Title IX staff get involved to share correct information. Or it may even be the case that a perpetrator gets to the reporter first and shares misinformation about the process that deters the person from moving forward. Second, the comment about “generally” reviewing something the next business day feels half-hearted in terms of expectation-setting. A suggestion on this point could be that the reporting form capture whether the person reporting needs a quicker follow-up, and then prioritize incidents accordingly. If follow-up isn’t necessary in a more immediate fashion, then the office could set a more concrete expectation for follow-up within 1-2 business days. Understandably things get busy and resources may be stretched across a variety of priority areas, but I think once someone enters the reporting funnel, it’s important to be transparent and clear in communicating what happens next, when, etc. so that trust begins to build and is upheld throughout the process.

4. **Continuing Empowering and Uplifting Tone** – I was impressed with the way the university’s materials promote the variety of Title IX issue areas in a way that takes the topics seriously, but also is able to inform people in an empowering and uplifting way. This seems to create a broader community of support that likely would help make an individual seeking out more information about Title IX – either for training or reporting purposes – feel more encouraged throughout their process. On the training and compliance front, it seems as though they are really making Title IX programming a universal effort that applies to everyone at the
school, meaning that it isn’t just an annoying box to check with a single individual working in a silo as an afterthought. All of the above has created a very solid Title IX foundation at the university, and should continue to remain true as they build on these efforts moving forward.

5. **Ongoing Education** – This is more of a “nice to have” rather than a “need to have” but I think it would be a good additional resource to have an additional section under the Office of Civil Rights & Title IX that highlights current events and updates beyond the university regarding Title IX (i.e. most recent regulations and requirements from the federal government). With that, the section could also include official statements and releases from the university regarding what it is doing to be in compliance with federal regulations. This could also involve more proactive commentary from Director Love regarding her priorities and focus areas for her team, perhaps at the beginning of each academic year. That way it feels like Title IX programming is more than simply complying with bare minimums but rather a proactive, purposeful, and engaging part of life at the university that really encompasses all of the work that goes into Title IX, rather than making it too focused on just the reactive elements of reporting and investigating. I think they do a good job with highlighting the proactive components by their robust training offerings, but again – putting a little bit of effort into showcasing that Title IX means all of the things we learned about this semester: athletics, employment, students, organizations, in the classroom, facilities, etc.

6. **Integration Across Departments** – Is it enough that there’s at least a Title IX department and a handful of staff dedicated to it? No. But it could be worse. While it makes sense to a degree to have the staff and online presence fall within the Office for Equity, Diversity, & Inclusion, it also does a little bit of a disservice to not have this work operate as its own independent unit. Furthermore, as is the case probably with every school, organization, or entity falling under the umbrella of Title IX compliance, the university has a little bit of work to do to fully integrate across all departments. Namely, rather than assuming that someone who might
require or be seeking out information provided through the Title IX team is going to be able to navigate specifically to the Title IX area of the OEDI website. Instead, it doesn’t seem like it would be too big of a lift to include a quick link to the Title IX website on the menus of other departments to help elevate the profile of that office and make it easier for people to get there from where they are. For example, the Office of the Provost Graduate Studies webpage could easily include a link over to the OEDI Title IX webpage on its menu (pictured to the left). Instead, they include a Title IX link buried under “Student Policies and Regulations” where it falls about 1/3 of the way down the page under the header “Conduct.” Once you click, it doesn’t even take you to the OEDI website, but rather it links to a one-off Title IX Policy page that is housed under “Office of Policy Development and Management.” And that page doesn’t even link back to the primary OEDI Title IX area. Needless to say, because Title IX is more than just “conduct” and a single policy, it seems like the Title IX department’s work should be identified as its own, main category right on the menu itself, rather than after clicking through to additional information. Small lift, big win. Further, all other mentions of Title IX should be sure to again, link back to the primary Title IX department’s webpage under OEDI. Lastly on this note, in an ideal world, the Title IX staff would include specifically titled employees who are the head liaisons/connecting points to the various university programs and departments, so that it isn’t just one director and a generic department email address, but rather a specific human that people in other areas of the university can directly connect and build relationships with. This would also allow more in-the-room integration into the other, non-OEDI departments, in the sense that the more “around” the Title IX staff are able to be on a regular basis, the more top of mind those policies and priorities will be for these other units. For example, if the Graduate Studies staff has a monthly or quarterly meeting, and the Title IX Liaison for the Graduate Studies program is able to be in those meetings on a regular basis, there’s naturally going to be more cross-team collaboration than if it’s just a more abstract entity that exists elsewhere in the university network. This may also lead to more proactive Title IX programming and efforts, which could hopefully ultimately lead to less and less reactiveness.

50 https://www.policy.pitt.edu/cs-27-title-ix-policy
down the road. Meaning that by being more integrated, proactive, and collaborate on all things Title IX, the university can hopefully tip the scale away from having the bulk of the work be on the side of the spectrum that gets involved only after an incident, harm, or issue has occurred. Why not be able to both solve the problems when they arise while also simultaneously try to mitigate and minimize the volume of those problems?