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Mission Statement

The Ethics and Compliance Office (ECO) promotes NIU’s mission through the creation of a campus environment that promotes the highest standards of ethics, integrity and responsibility to enhance the service and programs that NIU provides within the university and to public at-large.

To achieve this objective, ECO oversees and manages the policies and procedures that govern the university to ensure compliance with federal and state law, investigates non-compliance in an effective and expedient manner, and collaborates with campus partners through shared governance to provide for a system in which NIU’s values are incorporated into the decision- and policy-making of the university.

Our Staff

Sarah K. Garner, J.D., MPA
Ethics and Compliance Officer,
Title IX Coordinator

Lindsay Hatzis, J.D.
Director of Investigations

Michelle Johnson
Title IX Investigator

D. Lance Lockett
Title IX Investigator
(through September 2018)

Kristin Good, J.D.
Ethics Investigator

Rebecca Hunt, M.L.I.S.,
Ph.D.
University Policy Librarian

Manuel Valdez, J.D.
Civil Rights Investigator
(From August 2019)

Katherine Whitelaw
Information Technology Accessibility Officer
Achievements/Accomplishments:
Sarah Garner earned her Master’s in Public Administration from NIU and received a Certificate of Recognition from the Supportive Professional Staff Council.

Katharine Whitelaw received the Presidential Commission on the Status of Disabilities Accessibility Advocate Award.

Katharine Whitelaw participated in an invite-only forum regarding using the “smart city” model for campuses - smart cities have accessible transportation, online information and services, emergency alert systems, health care and employment opportunities. Other invitees included Harvard, Princeton, Texas A&M, and California State University System.

Staff Professional Development, Events, Conferences, and Activities:

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Staff Professional Development, Events, Conferences, and Activities:

- Civil Rights Investigator Training and Certification Levels 1 and 2.
- Title IX Coordinator Training.
- Aligning Campus Title IX Process to Address Report of Intimate Partner Violence.
- Title IX Update: Practical Guidance for Administrators.
- Inclusive Approaches to Survivor-Centered Responses: A Day with Howard Brown Health Clinic.
- An Interactive Analysis of Common Scenarios Under the FMLA and ADA.
- Service and Emotional Support Animals: Managing the Menagerie.
- Higher Education Seminar.
- Spotlight on Admissions: Legal Considerations, and Dos and Don’ts.
- New Proposed Title IX Regulations and Their Effect on Your Campus.
- Academic Freedom on Trial: Recent Developments in the Relationship between Academic Freedom and Free Speech.
- Research Compliance: Hot Topics in Education and Healthcare Settings.
- 2019 Ethics Officer Conference, Springfield, IL.
- Forming A Campus Behavioral Threat Assessment Team.
- Diversity and Inclusion in the Practice of Law.
- The Top FMLA Mistakes: And How to Avoid Them.
- Clery and Title IX Updates.
- Legislative Update.
- Violence Against Women Act.
- The Department of Education’s Notice of Proposed Rulemaking on Title IX.
- Statement on the Release of the Notice of Proposed Rulemaking on Title IX.
- Ally Training.
- Title IX Adjudicator and Hearing Officer Training Series.
- FERPA Training.
- Employer Obligations under ADA and Beyond.
- When Terminations Go Wrong.
- Labor and Employment Quarterly Program.
- ADA and the Internet — Legal Update.
- Getting to “Yes” — Building Internal Support for Accessibility Initiatives.
- Digital Accessibility Support — A Guide to Trustworthy Free Online Resources.
- Quick Tips for Writing Meaningful Alt Text (Even If You’re Not a Writer).
- WCAG 2.1: What You Need to Know to Ensure Compliance.
- 2018 Digital Accessibility Trends: Fall Update.
- Blackboard Ally Adoption — Virtual panel featuring Illinois Institutions that have Adopted Blackboard Ally.
- A Guide to Accessibility Maturity.
- Web Accessibility Overview.
- Making Texts Accessible: EPUBs for All Students.
- Creating Accessible Documents in Word and PowerPoint.
- M-Enabling Summit.

External Organization Memberships:
- National Association of College and University Attorneys.
- Association of Title IX Administrators.
- Chicagoland Title IX Consortium.
- DeKalb County Sexual Assault Response Team.
- Illinois State Bar Association.
- American Library Association.

Campus Organization Memberships:
- Sexual Misconduct and Assault Response Team (SMART)
- Department of Justice Office of Violence Against Women Grant
- Student Grievance Committee
- Accessibility Action Team
- Presidential Commission on Persons with Disabilities
- Presidential Council on the Status of Women
- Conversations on Diversity and Equity (CODE) Facilitator
- Library Advisory Committee
- Collection Development Advisory Committee
- Museum Studies Advisory Committee
- Center for Black Studies Faculty Advisory Committee
- Women Gender Sexuality Governance Council
- Clery Compliance Committee
Complaint Resolution

The complaint resolution process is designed to address and resolve issues in a manner that maintains and promotes positive academic and working environments consistent with the values of NIU. The university is committed to maintaining a culture that is free from all forms of discrimination, harassment, unfair treatment and retaliation.

All employees and students are strongly encouraged to utilize the internal complaint procedures set forth within the Nondiscrimination, Harassment and Retaliation Policies and Procedures for Students, Faculty and Staff to address possible violations. All reports and complaints of discrimination, harassment and retaliation will be reviewed and investigated by ECO in an objective, equitable, private, and expedient manner and in accordance with applicable federal and state law and university policy.

The information below indicates the 51 bases of complaints that comprised the 40 total complaints received. As indicated, one complaint may contain more than more basis of complaint.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Basis</th>
<th>Amount received</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Citizenship status</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retaliation</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual Orientation</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual harassment</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bullying/harassment</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Origin</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veteran</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disability</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religion</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Color</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VESSA</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital Status</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arrest Record</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In addition to the formal investigatory work that ECO provides, staff frequently advise departments and provide on-call trainings on how to respond to concerns of policy violations and how to be supportive of individuals who have filed a complaint or are involved in the investigation process.
Title IX compliance continues to be a success due to the collaboration with multiple departments across campus, including Academic, Diversity and Inclusion, Student Affairs, and Police and Public Safety. ECO is responsible for maintaining the university’s Title IX/Sexual Misconduct Policy and Procedures for Students, Faculty and Staff. Annual and specialized campus training and education also occurs in partnership with ECO.

Title IX compliance includes responding to reports of sexual misconduct, which include sexual harassment, sexual assault and violence, stalking and intimate partner violence (dating and domestic violence). Any student or employee who experiences or witnesses a form of sexual misconduct is encouraged to seek support through confidential resources, including the NIU Coordinator for Advocacy Services/Confidential Advisor, Employee Assistance Program, Counseling and Consultation Services and Safe Passage. A student or employee also has a right to file a police report and/or a Title IX complaint with the university.

The information below indicates the number of reports of sexual misconduct received. These reports are either filed by an individual who has experienced or witnessed sexual misconduct or a “responsible employee” who has learned of an incident and is required to report the information to the Title IX Coordinator according to law and university policy. As illustrated, one report may contact more than one type of alleged conduct.

### Title IX: 168 total reports, 216 allegations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reported Conduct</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dating Violence</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Domestic Violence</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex/Gender Discrimination</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retaliation</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other acts</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual Assault</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual Violence</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual Exploitation</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual Harassment</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voyeurism</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stalking</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pregnancy Discrimination</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Title IX Coordinator also serves as an internal and external point of contact for Title IX-related matters and we are a member of various campus and community groups related to sexual misconduct and harassment. Most notably, ECO is a member of the core team for the grant that was awarded by the Department of Justice Office on Violence Against Women. This grant involves working with campus and community partners, including law enforcement and advocates, to do a comprehensive review of all of the work that NIU engages in related to sexual misconduct, including trauma-informed response, bystander intervention, and increased advocacy for students. ECO also chairs the NIU Sexual Misconduct and Assault Response Team and is a member of the DeKalb County Sexual Assault Response Team.
Ethics

ECO regularly answers ethics-related inquiries and questions regarding a variety of topics, including the gift ban, political activity, conflicts of interest, and revolving door prohibition. ECO is available by phone and email to respond to ethics inquiries and we encourage members of the campus community to reach out with questions and concerns.

Statements of economic interest, administered by the Illinois Secretary of State and Executive Ethics Commission, are reviewed by the Ethics Officer prior to submission. During fiscal year 2019, 381 statements were submitted by designated employees and reviewed by ECO. During the next fiscal year, all forms will be submitted electronically, which will aid in completing and reviewing the forms efficiently.

ECO conducted 16 investigations into ethics complaints received during fiscal year 2019. Thirteen of those complaints were reported directly to ECO, and three of those complaints were referred by the Office of the Executive Inspector General (OEIG) for investigation by ECO.

The new employee and board member training is annually updated to ensure up-to-date content. ECO, in conjunction with Human Resource Services, administers the annual ethics training for all employees. Nearly 100% of all employees complete the annual training. Employees who fail to complete the training are required to be reported to OEIG for noncompliance.

Information Technology Accessibility

NIU is required to have accessible electronic and information technology (EIT) for students, faculty and staff. Technology is accessible when people with and without disabilities are able to use it independently to get the same information, engage in the same interactions and receive the same services in the same time frame as those without disabilities.

The Information Technology Accessibility Officer (ITAO) provides an accessibility check for NIU’s website and web applications. During fiscal year 2019, 41 new or revised websites, individual pages, templates and/or applications were reviewed for accessibility.

The ITAO serves on the selection committee for major technology purchases and is part of the approval process for technology purchase requisitions through the new P2PO system. As part of this process, 266 purchase requisitions were reviewed by the ITAO to determine whether the equipment or software is accessible to its users, regardless of disability.

Students, faculty and staff report accessibility issues with NIU technology to this office and, in response, the ITAO works with units, departments and divisions across campus to find accessible solutions. In addition to responding to concerns, the ITAO provides proactive education and outreach to employees regarding how to make coursework and learning environments accessible.
Policy Library

The Policy Library initiative commenced in 2016 by the University Council-Faculty Senate’s Rules, Governance and Election Committee. Development of the Policy Library proceeded, and presentations were made to Faculty Senate and University Council. The initiative outlined how a policy library would provide a centralized place for all university-wide policies to enhance consistency and transparency. A letter from shared governance and the Rules, Governance and Election Committee was sent to the President in 2017 requesting funding for the policy library and the policy librarian. The request was granted and the Policy Librarian was hired in the fall of 2018. University-wide policies were collected in the fall of 2018 through the spring of 2019. The Policy Library was launched April 9, 2019.

As a part of the development, the Policy on Managing University Policies document was drafted in collaboration with shared governance and university stakeholders. The policy is intended to provide structure, consistency, and transparency to the policy-making process. The Policy Librarian maintains, publishes and notifies the university community of all approved and revised university policies. The Policy Library Committee is comprised of university representatives who meet monthly to review and recommend university policy proposals and revisions to current policies. The policy library has approximately 291 policies. Currently, all policies are on a three-year review cycle to keep the policy library current.

Compliance

A university-wide compliance office is fairly new to the university and it has been an exciting time to create a compliance department that fits NIU. An inventory of state and federal laws and regulations impacting higher education and an associated compliance calendar is in the process of being developed. To assist with information-sharing, ECO works closely with General Counsel and the State Legislative Liaison in reviewing state laws and disseminating the information to senior leaders. Lastly, ECO assists departments in answering compliance questions and pointing them to available resources.