

**From:** "Turner, Darron"

**Date:** Thursday, September 3, 2020 at 2:24 PM

**To:** TCU Faculty & Staff

**Subject:** Title IX Department and Office of Diversity and Inclusion

Dear Campus Community,

Today I write to share the good news of a leadership promotion and structural reorganization of the Title IX Department and the Office of Diversity and Inclusion, the result of which will be increased capacity and focus to achieve Texas Christian University's strategic priorities of diversity, equity and inclusion.

There will now be two separate, but integrated units helping to manage the university's diversity, equity and inclusion efforts – the Office of Institutional Equity and the Office of Diversity and Inclusion. The Office of Institutional Equity will manage all Title IX complaints and will also address reports of all other forms of harassment, discrimination, sexual misconduct and retaliation. The Office of Diversity and Inclusion will continue its mission to strategically plan and promote an inclusive campus and community for all stakeholders.

#### **Office of Institutional Equity:**

I am pleased to announce that Sharon Fernandes Gooding, J.D., has recently been named the director of the Office of Institutional Equity. Gooding most recently served as the coordinator of diversity and inclusion at TCU. Gooding has worked in the field of education for almost 20 years. In her early career, she practiced education law for more than a decade in the K-12 system before entering the higher education arena. While in higher education, Gooding worked as a clinical assistant professor teaching courses on law, policy and equity issues in education. Prior to joining TCU, she was employed as an equal opportunity investigator.

Gooding earned a bachelor's degree from Trinity College in Hartford, Connecticut. She also has a master's degree in education from the College of Santa Fe and earned a Juris Doctorate degree from the University of New Mexico School of Law. She is licensed to practice law in California, Washington, D.C. and Maryland. She is also a certified mediator and has successfully mediated a variety of cases over the last two decades.

Andrea Vircks has been named the Title IX coordinator, designated by the university to coordinate its efforts to comply with and carry out its responsibilities under Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 (Title IX). Vircks joined TCU in the Title IX Office in February 2018 as the deputy Title IX officer. She was promoted to senior deputy Title IX coordinator in March 2019. Prior to coming to TCU, Vircks served in various roles within public safety divisions at St. Catherine University and Hamline University. Most recently, she was the director of safety and security at Hamline University in St. Paul, Minnesota. Vircks is currently pursuing her doctorate in higher education leadership at TCU.

Also in the new OIE office is Leigh Holland, OIE investigator, and Dr. Cheryl Taylor, data analyst/OIE investigator.

The OIE will address student and employee reports of discrimination and harassment (i.e., age, race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, gender expression, national origin, ethnic origin, disability, genetic information, covered veteran status and any other basis protected by law), sexual misconduct and retaliation. This includes reports related to Title IX-specific sexual harassment issues.

Lastly, the Title IX website is in the process of being updated to reflect these changes. In the interim, you may still report a Title IX issue or other harassment and discrimination by emailing [TitleIX@tcu.edu](mailto:TitleIX@tcu.edu) or calling the OIE at 817-257-8228. The OIE is located in the new administrative building, The Harrison, Suite 1800.

#### **A Single Point of Entry and Revised Policies:**

In addition to the organizational changes in the office, we have modified our policies to make reporting possible discrimination or harassment as well as the process for resolving those reports simpler, clearer and more transparent. All changes affirm TCU's compliance with the new regulations from the U.S. Department of Education, which went into effect Aug. 14, 2020. The most significant change is establishing a single point of entry for filing claims and reports of alleged harassment, discrimination, and sexual misconduct and retaliation. The new process provides a single point of contact for tracking submissions and monitoring the process through the resolution stage.

#### **Notice of Title IX Regulations:**

The U.S. Department of Education recently issued new Title IX regulations. TCU has two new interim policies in place (TCU Policy 1.008, titled "Prohibited Discrimination, Harassment, Sexual Misconduct and Retaliation Policy, and TCU Policy 1.009, "Responding to Prohibited Discrimination, Harassment, Sexual Misconduct and Retaliation Policy") to meet the new regulations' requirements and to reflect the new OIE processes that have been approved on an interim basis by Chancellor Boschini until the Board of Trustees can consider the policies at their November meeting.

#### **Office of Diversity and Inclusion:**

The Office of Diversity and Inclusion continues to be led by Aisha Torrey-Sawyer, director of diversity and inclusion initiatives. Torrey-Sawyer leads strategic initiatives and programming that drive progression toward TCU's strategic priorities. In the near future, expect information on upcoming plans for 2020-2021 to advance inclusive excellence.

Thank you for joining me in recognizing these changes as we continue our progress toward inclusive excellence at TCU. Our team is dedicated to the mission of TCU and to the gravity of the role that our office undertakes on behalf of the TCU community. We are committed to compliance, but even beyond that, to advocating for positive culture change at TCU.

Thank you,

**Darron Turner, Ed.D**

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