

2025 Public Description of Work for Action Collaborative on Preventing Sexual Harassment in Higher Education

University of Washington

Title IX and Civil Rights External Review to Inform Change to Policy and Organizational Structure

Relevant Rubric Area(s): Evaluation

1. Evaluating policies and procedures
2. Publicly sharing the results/data from evaluation work
3. Using evaluation to inform action

Description of Work:

The Title IX Office and Civil Rights Investigations Office at the University of Washington (UW) were created as independent entities with minimal interconnectivity. In addition, both offices had evolved and changed since their original inception, and there had been no substantive assessment of their efficacy or impact across the University. In consideration of these facts, and in response to observations and input from University stakeholders and individuals who engaged with various Title IX and investigation services and programs, the UW Compliance and Risk Services decided to conduct a full review of both programs. An external firm was hired to conduct the review so as to provide a comprehensive assessment without the influence of UW-focused bias.

The UW centered this initiative in a commitment to evaluate and improve the efficiency and impact of the Title IX and investigations offices. To accomplish this, the UW prioritized identifying a firm that could be an objective, highly knowledgeable expert on Title IX and other civil rights protections, with familiarity of best practices and work of comparable institutions. After considering several firms, the UW contracted with [Grand River Solutions](#) (GRS) to assess the responsiveness, timeliness, and efficacy of the University's Title IX reporting, intake, complaint, investigation, and hearing processes. In addition, GRS was asked to assess the design and efficacy of the investigation process and timeline.

Process Overview

To start the process of the review, reviewers from GRS visited the UW campus in the spring of 2024 over 5 business days to interview process partners of the Title IX Office and Civil Rights Investigation Office, such as student conduct and campus safety staff. GRS also conducted Zoom interviews with approximately 40 additional individuals. During the interviews, GRS inquired about the experiences, impressions, and needs of the process partners. Additionally, the reviewers assessed multiple websites, case files, training materials and plans, resource guides and brochures, and employee manuals relating to Title IX and investigations work. Reviewers also assessed the University's anti-discrimination and harassment policies,

2025 Public Description of Work for Action Collaborative on Preventing Sexual Harassment in Higher Education

Student Governance Policies, UW Medicine policies, Faculty Codes, and the Student Code of Conduct.

GRS compiled their findings into a draft report outlining over 100 recommendations spanning topics of how to improve staffing, policy, procedure, timelines, and resolution option offerings. Compliance and Risk Services appointed a project manager to lead a working group of representatives from the Title IX Office, Hearing Office, and Civil Rights Investigation Office to collect feedback, questions, and other thoughts on the draft report. Feedback was consolidated into questions and input to GRS to assist in finalizing their report. GRS provided their final recommendations to the UW in January 2025.

Outcomes

To ensure transparency, the UW informed the University's Title IX Steering Committee (consisting of UW leadership) and the Title IX Community Partners (which includes over 90 faculty, staff, and students across all UW campuses) of the purpose and process for the external review. After the report was finalized, an executive summary of the recommendations was created and provided to leadership and process partners. Sharing the executive summary also serves as accountability for, and a preview to, continued improvements for the Title IX and civil rights compliance work at the UW.

As shared in the executive summary, the review called for expanded Title IX and civil rights education to the UW community, streamlining of policy structure, streamlining of where Title IX and other civil rights reports should be submitted, shortening timelines, and more. The recommendations informed significant changes at UW, including the development of [one singular discrimination, harassment, and sexual misconduct policy](#) that was finalized and published in July 2025 and the launch of a new, restructured [Civil Rights Compliance Office](#) to more effectively coordinate Title IX and all civil rights compliance priorities. Additional training and education is rolling out to the UW community over the 2025-26 academic year.

Evaluation and Participant Involvement

Conducting an external review is an extensive time commitment. However, the time invested helped align the Title IX and investigation offices and prepare for the implementation of recommendations. Moreover, early and ongoing involvement of staff ensured that the final recommendations were actionable and impactful.

It is integral to evaluation work to be accountable to feedback that has been provided via evaluation processes. Evaluation efforts are ineffective without the review and buy-in from those responsible for implementing the changes. The GRS external reviewers provided an extensive list of recommendations regarding the University's policies and processes related to Title IX work and investigations. Led by a project manager who organized reviewing sessions and implementation tracking system, the Title IX and investigations offices invested substantive time and effort to review the recommendations, ask questions, and ideate on implementation actions.

2025 Public Description of Work for Action Collaborative on Preventing Sexual Harassment in Higher Education

Sharing the executive summary of the final GRS recommendations with the University community holds the teams involved accountable in implementing the recommendations and supports trust-building with process partners through transparency. The project manager also created a recommendations implementation tracking system to ensure that UW continues to revisit and implement the GRS recommendations.

Website for further information (if applicable):

Point of Contact Name: Dominique Overman

Email Address for Point of Contact: overman1@uw.edu