

**Year 2 Public Description of Work for
Action Collaborative on Preventing Sexual Harassment in Higher Education**

California Institute of Technology

**Launching of New Equity and Title IX Office Website, including
Online Anonymous Report Form**

Relevant Rubric Areas:

Response: Improved Communication and Increased Transparency

Description of Work

On September 1, 2020, the Caltech Equity and Title IX Office launched a new website, <https://equity.caltech.edu/>.

Identifying the Need and Goals for New Website

The Equity and Title IX Office holds regular strategic planning meetings, wherein we set our goals for a given year and create a plan for accomplishing those goals. As part of those meetings, we review the data that we collect when a community member engages with our office. The facts we assess include the following: (a) how the visitor came to know about our office; (b) what they know about our office and how we work, including misconceptions and inaccurate information; (c) how confident or nervous they felt about approaching us and why, including specific fears about working with us to address their concerns; and (d) the types of information they are most interested in learning about when they come to speak with us.

In reviewing this data to set goals for 2020, here are some key points we learned regarding the aforementioned (a) through (d):

- (a) *How the visitor came to know about our office:* Reporters frequently revealed that they did not know anything about our office, despite Institute policies and community email announcements. Most knew about us by word of mouth and some reported concerns late because they had not known about the office at all, were not sure what specific concerns we addressed, or did not know how to differentiate the team from myriad other Caltech support resources. Visitors did not mention knowing about or accessing the existing Caltech Title IX website.

- (b) *What visitors already knew about our office and how we work, including misconceptions:* Almost no visitors had detailed information about Equity & Title IX team members, frequently remarking with relief on how approachable and nice we were, as opposed to intimidating. Another key misconception regarding our office is that we were extremely focused on investigations and resulting discipline and reporters would not have control over how their reported concern was addressed and by whom.

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- (c) *How confident or nervous visitors felt about approaching us and why:* Many visitors, especially students, were reporting on behalf of fellow students, sometimes without their knowledge, and they wanted detailed information on reporting and options for anonymity. Reporters of all constituencies were also concerned about being seen entering or leaving our office for privacy reasons. While emailing an Equity team member was an option, some visitors mentioned feeling uncomfortable to email sensitive information to a complete stranger. And, unsurprisingly, a chief concern was retaliation if the identity of the reporter became known.
- (d) *Types of information visitors were most interested in learning about from us:* Related to the observations (a) through (c) above, visitors were keen to learn about who we were, the kinds of problems we address and specific examples of what constitutes policy violations, the general philosophy of our office, their non-investigative options, and how we could help address/prevent retaliation. In addition to this information, visitors also appreciated hearing about the panoply of campus and non-campus resources available to help, as well as how we teamed with any such resources.

Our strategic assessment of community informational needs also necessarily took account of the pandemic and the reality that campus resources, including our office, could only be accessed remotely.

All of these data points led us to identify the need to create a new website that provided a clear window into the members and workings of Caltech's Equity & Title IX Office, as well as other campus and non-campus resources for reporters of concerns and participants in resolution processes.

Building the Content to Accomplish the Need and Goals:

After identifying the need and goals for the site, we focused on building responsive content. There were two key aspects to the content we developed to make our office as accessible and transparent to the community as possible: (i) substantive information that is easy to find and organized by the very topics people needed to know about; and (ii) visual appeal and comfort that encouraged reporting to our office (e.g., easy navigability, lots of friendly pictures).

As our starting point, we created a Home Page with a zoom photo of the entire team and chose the motto "Physically Remote but Fully Present!" We also filled a banner with colorful graphics and quick links to key pages on the site. The Home Page also features a clear introductory statement concerning what can be reported to our office, including discrimination and equity concerns, as well as a quick link to the Online Report a Concern Form, which can be completed and submitted anonymously, in response to the aforementioned privacy concerns voiced by visitors.

The website Menu leads visitors to the following:

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Tab 1: Who We Are (photos and bios, including personal touches, by the team members)

This section features office personnel’s faces, biographies, and voices via video, in order to showcase the warmth and friendliness of the team and encourage reporting to us. This was especially important during the pandemic, since in-person reporting was not an option.

Tab 2: What We Do (with subsections Reported Concerns We Address, Specific Examples of Concerns We Address, How We Respond to Reports, and How We Manage Confidentiality)

This section summarizes the types of concerns we address, including climate concerns, not just major incidents, to encourage a healthy campus work and social environment and prevent major problems; provides specific examples of conduct which are encouraged to be reported and addressed; lists summary definitions of key terms in the school sex- and gender-based misconduct and other equity/non-discrimination policies; summarizes non-investigatory options and formal resolution processes; and provides information on how we address privacy concerns.

Tab 3: Reporting (with subsections Reporting Options, Deciding to Report, Online Report Form)

This section describes the key options for reporting and what happens with respect to each one: coming and speaking with Equity and Title IX Office team members, speaking with a Caltech confidential resource, reporting anonymously, and reporting outside Caltech. This section also provides visitors with information to inform their decision about whether to report a concern to our office, including assessing whether Caltech policy mandates them to report and considering their personal barriers to reporting. Finally, this section provides an additional access point to the Online Report a Concern Form, which can be completed and submitted anonymously.

Tab 4: Resources (with subsections Policies, Support Resources, Request a Workshop, Be Inspired, and Healthy Interactions—this last tab features educational materials, including a worksheet on Healthy Relationships which our students have found useful)

This section provides access to the pertinent campus policies and procedures (including versions translated into Mandarin and Spanish), the annual Clery Report, the most recent AAU Survey results concerning campus sexual misconduct, the NASEM sexual harassment report, and other key documents. This section makes easily accessible campus and off-campus support resources, encourages participation in educational workshops by providing descriptions of available workshops and an online workshop request form, and creates a learning center to provide fun and helpful preventative educational materials on consent, healthy romantic relationships, consent, unconscious bias, boundaries, and bystander intervention.

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Tab 5: Campus Advocate (with subsections introducing our Campus Sexual Violence Advocate team member, Support Options for Survivors, Confidentiality and Survivor Rights, and Resources for Peace Over Violence, our local rape crisis center).

Caltech added a Campus Sexual Violence Advocate to its Equity and Title IX Office team in Spring 2020 in order to provide faculty, staff, and campus survivors with a fully confidential specialized counseling space, referrals to medical and legal resources, and accompaniment services. This section of the website provides a friendly introduction to the Advocate, an easy link to set up an appointment with her, information on survivors' rights and what to expect when meeting with her, and details on the confidentiality, support, and services she provides.

Tab 6: Get Involved (describes student volunteer opportunities)

This section informs the student community about opportunities to get involved as peer educators and advocates.

Tab 7: JPL (provides welcoming photos and bios of Title IX resources at the Jet Propulsion Laboratory, a space sciences lab run by Caltech for NASA)

This section provides JPL Title IX team members' photos and biographies and pertinent information for students and postdocs participating in educational programs and activities at JPL which are covered by the Caltech sex- and gender-based misconduct policy.

Easy Accessibility of the Website

Caltech takes every opportunity to publicize the link to the website, including in email communications from the President relating to topics concerning anti-harassment, safety, equity, and inclusion. An icon leading to the website is also available on the Caltech Student Resources smartphone app. We also cite the link in paper pamphlets, cards, and fliers provided to the community concerning office activities.

Results of the Website Launch During Pandemic

The website has been very well-received by the Caltech community. The office remained very busy during the pandemic, visitors cited information they learned on the website, and the Online Report a Concern form and the Request a Workshop form have been used regularly since the website's launch. The team will identify continuing and new community informational needs over the next few months and strategize responsive website improvements.

Tips for Other Schools to Rework their Websites

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We would advise a similar process to identify campus community information needs and build corresponding website content. While Caltech does publicize the Equity and Title IX Office through multiple avenues, community members, especially students, typically tend to seek information through online resources, which affords them efficiency, convenience, and privacy. This makes the campus Title IX website a key sexual harassment response and prevention tool.

Website for Further Information: <https://equity.caltech.edu>

Point of Contact: Paula Knop

Email Address for Point of Contact: pknop@caltech.edu