



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
OFFICE FOR CIVIL RIGHTS
REGION I
JOHN W. McCORMACK POST OFFICE AND COURTHOUSE, ROOM 701
POST OFFICE SQUARE
BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02109-4557

JAN 28 2002

Reverend Philip A. Smith, O.P.
President
Providence College
549 River Avenue
Providence, RI 02918-0001

Compliance Review No. 01-01-6002

Dear Reverend Smith:

We are writing to inform you that the U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights (OCR) has completed its compliance review of Providence College (College) conducted pursuant to Title IX of the Educational Amendments of 1972 (Title IX). On January 22, 2001, OCR advised you that we would be initiating this review focusing on the following three issues: (1) the College's response to sexual harassment complaints, (2) what actions the College takes to prevent sexual harassment on campus and (3) whether a campus environment exists that is hostile to students based on their sex. On January 11, 2002, we received your signed commitment letter outlining the actions the College will take and has already taken to address the few concerns OCR raised during its review of these issues. Hence we are closing the investigative stage of the review. This letter briefly summarizes the process that led to this commitment and outlines future monitoring actions.

OCR initiated this activity as part of our enforcement responsibility. Postsecondary institutions are selected for sexual harassment compliance reviews based on a variety of factors, such as the size of the college's female population, data from Federal, state, and local sources, geographic location, and related information such as a review of the college's sexual harassment policies and procedures.

On May 9, 2001, OCR staff met with you and other College representatives, including Attorney MariFrancis McGinn, and discussed, in detail, the review process. As we explained, compliance reviews can range from traditional comprehensive investigations with formal findings to a collaborative approach in which OCR works with the College to achieve voluntary resolution. Demonstrating your willingness to proactively address this issue and in keeping with the collaborative approach, you appointed Attorney McGinn as the liaison to work with OCR. On August 8, September 18 and 19, as well as on October 30, 2001, OCR representatives conducted on-site activities at the College.

Our Mission is to Ensure Equal Access to Education and to Promote Educational Excellence throughout the Nation.

During the course of the on-site visits, OCR representatives met with a cross section of administrators, faculty, staff, and students. The College campus community was invited to participate in scheduled focus groups. Due to the September 11, 2001 tragedy in New York City, the focus groups of September 18 and 19 were not widely attended. OCR worked with Attorney McGinn to secure OCR's attendance at the Student Congress monthly meeting on October 30, 2001, that included approximately fifty representatives from a variety of student groups.

OCR also reviewed grievance files from the offices of the Dean of Discipline as well as sexual harassment files kept by the Sexual Harassment Officer. Throughout the process, OCR representatives and Attorney McGinn had numerous calls and meetings to review, among others, the concerns that arose from the interviews, file reviews and OCR's review of the College's policies and procedures for addressing sexual harassment.

OCR's concerns fell into two of the three issue areas we investigated: policies and procedures and environment. After discussion with the College, and in conjunction with OCR, the College developed a Resolution Letter (Agreement). A copy of the signed Agreement is enclosed. The Agreement addresses OCR's concerns by initiating corrective actions including, but not limited to:

- revising the College's sexual harassment grievance procedures,
- disseminating the name and contact information for the Title IX coordinator;
- centralizing the responsibilities of the Title IX coordinator;
- revising the appropriate discrimination section of the student handbook, and
- broadening the sexual harassment training at orientation.

The College will be responsible for implementing the Agreement. As discussed earlier, OCR will monitor the College's progress in implementing the Agreement and we will continue meeting with Attorney McGinn, the person responsible for overseeing implementation of the Agreement. Consistent with the collaborative review process, OCR will meet with Attorney McGinn within the next 60 days to discuss the monitoring of the Agreement. Since Selena Sann will be on a detail to our agency's Washington, D.C. office, Anthony Cruthird will contact Attorney McGinn regarding the monitoring of the Agreement.

In addition, with the assistance of Attorney McGinn, OCR will continue to talk with College stakeholders to informally assess the impact and progress of the Agreement over the next two years. Any information received will be shared with the College. This does not preclude the College from conducting its own self-assessments and submitting these reports to OCR. We hope to learn from the College's efforts and to provide assistance, if and when needed.

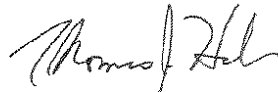
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OCR will contact the College's liaison to initiate this process and for periodic informal updates. We look forward to the continued collaborative working relationship between OCR and the College.

Finally, let me mention that under the Freedom of Information Act, it may be necessary to release this document and related correspondence and records upon request. If OCR receives such a request, we will seek to protect, to the extent provided by law, personal information that, if released, could constitute an unwarranted invasion of privacy.

We want to thank you and your staff, especially MariFrancis McGinn for the commitment she brought to the collaborative review. We wish the College every success in implementing the Agreement and continued success in providing creative prevention strategies. Should you have any questions or comments, please contact me at (617) 223-9667 or Anthony Cruthird, Esq. at (617) 223-9705.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Thomas J. Hibino". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name being the most prominent.

Thomas J. Hibino
Director

Enclosure

cc: MariFrancis McGinn