



Association of
Title IX Administrators

July 23, 2026

Help! I am an Office of One (or Two): Building a Title IX Program and Culture at Small Institutions

Time with IX

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Today's Presenters



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The content and discussion in this course will necessarily engage with sexual harassment, sex discrimination, violence, and associated sensitive topics that can evoke strong emotional responses.

ATIXA faculty members may offer examples that emulate the language and vocabulary that Title IX practitioners may encounter in their roles, including slang, profanity, and other graphic or offensive language. It is not used gratuitously, and no offense is intended.

Introduction



Attendees will assess strengths and vulnerabilities in their institution's Title IX infrastructure



Attendees will explore elements necessary for building a sustainable prevention and response team



Attendees will identify the next step to strategically strengthen their approach as an Office of One

The Need for a Different Conversation

Small institutions are not merely scaled-down versions of large institutions. They face distinct operational and cultural challenges, including:

- One-person or very small Title IX offices
- Employees serving in multiple roles across campus
- “Short Bench” of trained personnel to serve within the grievance process
- Close personal and professional relationships within community
- Heightened concerns about confidentiality, retaliation, and social consequences
- Limited budgets for training and outside support
- Challenges maintaining neutrality when everyone knows everyone

What is the Biggest Operational Barrier You Face in Your Title IX Work?

Examples:

- Reporting
- Staffing
- Training
- Participation
- Neutrality
- Resources
- Institutional culture
- Reporting/Supervision lines

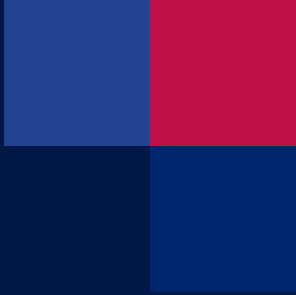
The Small-Institution Reality: What Makes This Work So Difficult?

Common Structural Challenges

- The Title IX Coordinator (TIXC) is also responsible for several other institutional functions
- There is no dedicated Investigator or Deputy Coordinator
- Human resources, student conduct, athletics, residential life, and academic affairs all touch Title IX work but may not understand their roles
- The institution relies heavily on the same few people for every process
- Increased conflict or perceived bias of potential Decision-makers (DMs) and Appeal Officers
- Training is irregular, reactive, or too dependent on one person
- Institutional memory may be weak when key personnel leave

Common Cultural Challenges

- Cultural barriers may also affect reporting and participation:
 - Students or employees may be reluctant to report because they believe the matter will become public knowledge
 - Witnesses may fear social, athletic, academic, or professional consequences
 - Employees may be unsure whether they are confidential, mandatory reporters, or supportive resources
- Campus partners may want to “help” but may unintentionally compromise neutrality or process integrity
- There may be informal pressure to resolve matters quietly



Living the Dream

The goal is to build a program that is compliant, credible, sustainable, and proportionate to the institution's size and resources.

You Do Not Necessarily Need More People

You need:

- More:
 - Clarity
 - Scaffolding
- Better:
 - Training
 - Allocation
 - Documentation

Building the Core Title IX Infrastructure: What Every Program Needs

Clear Reporting Pathways

- Where do reports go?
- Who receives them?
- How are reports documented?
- How are reports converted to complaints?
- Do employees understand their reporting obligations?

Reliable Intake Structure

- Distinguishing reports, complaints, supportive measures, informal resolution, and formal grievance processes
- Prompt outreach
- Initial assessment
- Supportive measures
- Emergency and safety considerations
- Documentation of reports and responses

Building the Core Title IX Infrastructure: Staffing the Program

Building a Team: Considerations

- Create a cross-campus Title IX response team
- Identify Deputy Coordinators by function, rather than title
- Train a small pool of hearing panelists in advance
- Develop a standing list of external Investigators, Decision-makers, and Advisors
- Cross-train human resources and student conduct without collapsing their roles
- Use tabletop exercises to test readiness
- Build a succession plan
- Establish buy-in and non-monetary incentives for faculty and staff partnership

Trained Response Team

- TIXC
- Deputy or designee
- Investigator pool
- Decision-maker or hearing panel pool
- Appeal Officer pool
- Advisors and advisor resources
- Informal Resolution Facilitators
- Campus partners from human resources, student affairs, public safety, athletics, academic affairs, and counseling

Exercise

The Mindset Shift

- Old thinking:
 - I have to do everything. If I don't, who will?
- New thinking:
 - My job is to build a system that doesn't require me to do everything.

Stress Test Your Program

- You receive a Title IX report Monday morning. At the same time, you're unexpectedly out of the office for two weeks.
- **Ask yourself**
 - Who keeps the process moving?
 - What work continues without you?
 - What stops entirely?

Single Point of Failure

If one person left your institution tomorrow which function would immediately become difficult?

- Intake
- Investigations
- Hearings
- Appeals
- Supportive Measures
- Records
- Training

Reporting

Reporting Barriers

- Fear of being identified
- Concern that “everyone will know”
- Worry about retaliation or social consequences
- Confusion about confidentiality
- Lack of trust in institutional neutrality
- Prior negative experiences with institutional processes
- Uncertainty about what happens after a report is made

Improving Reporting Culture

- Clear, repeated communication about reporting options
- Simple website language that explains how to report and what happens next
- Distinguish confidential resources from private but non-confidential employees
- Train employees on how to receive disclosures without overpromising confidentiality
- Normalize supportive measures as available regardless of whether a formal complaint is filed
- Provide plain-language process guides
- Build relationships with student leaders, athletics, residence life, faculty, and staff
- Use orientation and annual trainings to reinforce reporting pathways

Witnesses

Witness Participation Challenges

- Fear of social consequences
- Desire not to “take sides”
- Concern about retaliation
- Misunderstanding the difference between participating as a witness and making a complaint
- Anxiety about confidentiality
- Concern that participation will affect employment, athletics, or academics

Strategies to Improve Participation

- Clear witness outreach language
- Explain the role of a witness in neutral terms
- Avoid language that suggests the institution has already reached conclusions
- Offer reasonable scheduling flexibility
- Explain privacy and anti-retaliation protections
- Document refusals and non-responses
- Consider whether alternative evidence can corroborate or refute disputed facts
- Train campus partners not to discourage participation

Responding to Witness Hesitation

- “I don’t want to get involved.”
- Before responding, remember the witness may:
 - Be concerned about retaliation
 - Fear social, academic, athletic, or professional consequences
 - Not understand their role in the process
 - Simply be anxious about participating

Neutral Response Framework

1. **Acknowledge:** “I understand your concerns.”
2. **Explain:** “My role is to gather relevant information fairly and neutrally.”
3. **Inform:** “Here’s what participating would involve and the privacy and anti-retaliation protections available.”
4. **Empower:** “You can make an informed decision about your participation.”

Sample Language

“I understand that you may not want to be involved. I appreciate you sharing your concerns. My role is to gather relevant information fairly and neutrally, not to ask anyone to take sides.

I’d like to explain what participating would involve, answer any questions you may have about the process, and discuss the available privacy and anti-retaliation protections. After that, you can make an informed decision about your participation.”

Resource Allocation: Doing More with Less

Prioritize Limited Resources

- Intake and initial assessment
- Supportive measures
- Investigator training
- Decision-maker and hearing panel training
- Advisor resources
- Informal resolution capacity
- Website clarity
- Recordkeeping
- Emergency removal and safety assessment protocols
- Prevention and education

When to Consider External Support

- Conflicts of interest or bias concerns
- High-profile matters
- Employee-respondent matters
- Matters involving senior leaders, athletics, or board attention
- Complex credibility assessments
- Multiple complainants or pattern allegations
- Limited internal capacity
- Appeals where internal reviewers are conflicted
- Hearings requiring trained Decision-makers

Before Outsourcing

- **Ask yourself:**
 - Is this a capacity issue?
 - A conflict issue?
 - A neutrality issue?
 - A complexity issue?
 - Or all four?

Building a Sustainable Training Calendar

- Employee reporting obligation
- Title IX Team training
- Student-facing reporting and resources education
 - Athletics-specific training
- Resident assistant or student leader training
 - Who in my community falls through the cracks?
- Faculty-focused training on disclosures and boundaries

Key Takeaway

- Do not need a large bureaucracy, but you DO need a clear system
- The system should be:
 - Simple enough to use
 - Strong enough to withstand scrutiny
 - Sustainable enough not to depend entirely on one person

Climate Survey and Self-Assessment

- Consider state law requirements for climate surveys
- Consider how you want to involve your community in creating your survey and sharing your analysis
- End-of-year debrief and re-allocation of resources

Building a Sustainable Program

Building a Sustainable Title IX Program

People	Processes	Culture
Cross-train personnel	Document consistently	Build trust
Reduce single points of failure	Standardize workflows	Encourage reporting
Develop future leaders	Plan for conflicts	Communicate often

Your Challenge

Before your next academic term, choose **one** improvement that will make your Title IX program:

- **More Visible**

- Improve reporting pathways
- Clarify website resources
- Increase outreach

Your Challenge (Part 2)

Before your next academic term, choose **one** improvement that will make your Title IX program:

- **More Sustainable**
 - Cross-train personnel
 - Build succession plans
 - Expand your response team

Your Challenge (Part 3)

Before your next academic term, choose **one** improvement that will make your Title IX program:

- **More Credible**

- Strengthen neutrality
- Improve documentation
- Increase consistency
- Self-assess and adjust

An Office of One (or Two)

- An office of one does not mean:
 - Only one person:
 - Receives every report
 - Conducts every intake
 - Investigates every case
 - Makes every decision
 - Carries every responsibility

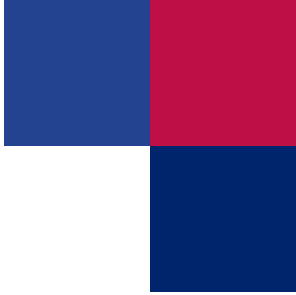
The Goal is NOT to be Indispensable

- An office of one means you develop:
 - A network of trained campus partners
 - Clear and consistent processes
 - Shared institutional responsibility
 - Planned succession and redundancy
 - A sustainable Title IX program
- The goal is not to become better at doing everything yourself
- The goal is to build a Title IX program that does not depend on you doing everything yourself

Questions

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