

Office of Equal Opportunity Information Advisors – Fact Sheet 2017

What is an Office of Equal Opportunity Information Advisor?

Office of Equal Opportunity (OEO) Information Advisors are members of the University community who have received extensive discrimination and harassment training, conducted by the Director of the Office of Equal Opportunity (OEO) or designee, to act as information advisors on topics pertaining to discrimination and harassment, have general knowledge about applicable laws, university policies and procedures, options available for resolution of complaints, confidentiality requirements, act as educators and trainers, and assist students, faculty, and staff with concerns about discrimination and harassment. OEO Information Advisors are designated by the president, provost, senior vice presidents, deans, and/or other University administrators to serve as OEO Information Advisors representing the Advisors' respective areas.

OEO Information Advisors serve a critical function within each area for the University. OEO Information Advisors serve as a unit-level contact for students, staff or faculty who would like to talk with someone about a situation. OEO Information Advisors help ensure that the University responds appropriately and effectively to situations that potentially violate federal and state laws requiring a non-discriminatory and harassment-free work and educational environment by serving as a liaison between the Advisors' areas and the Office of Equal Opportunity. OEO Information Advisors can also provide students, faculty, and staff information on available University resources and provide assistance when needed.

Are OEO Information Advisors Confidential resources?

No. Many Civil Rights laws require institutions that receive federal funding to address discrimination and harassment once placed on notice. The University may have an obligation to investigate reports of discrimination and harassment or sexual violence, and take appropriate action. Furthermore, Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 (Title IX) prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex in any federally funded education program or activity. Under Title IX, the University has a duty to provide all members of the University community with an environment that is free from all forms of sex discrimination. Recent guidance from the U.S. Department of Education has clarified that as a part of the University's duties under Title IX, the University has a legal obligation to promptly respond to reports of sexual harassment and sexual violence in a way that limits the effects and prevents recurrence. As such, OEO Information Advisors cannot guarantee complete confidentiality.

OEO Information Advisors must report instances of discrimination and harassment, sexual harassment or sexual violence of which the Advisors become aware to the Office of Equal Opportunity and in some cases to the Title IX Coordinator directly. This report and other information may be shared with other University officials, on a need to know basis, depending on the nature of the report. Considering the limits on confidentiality, the OEO Information Advisor should advise individuals that hypothetical scenarios without referencing names, dates, places, or other specific details are free for discussion, but once more specific information is

provided to the OEO Information Advisor, the Advisors are required to pass the information to the appropriate University office and/or official.

Does an OEO Information Advisor conduct investigations?

No. The Advisor's role is to hear concerns, explain the procedures and processes available to investigate and/or resolve discrimination and harassment situations, assure complainants and victims of the University's commitment to a harassment-free environment that is inclusive to all, and assist the individual in contacting the Office of Equal Opportunity.

Does an OEO Information Advisor Act as an advocate for complainants and victims?

No. The Advisor's role is to hear concerns, explain the procedures and processes available to investigate and/or resolve discrimination and harassment situations, assure complainants and victims of the University's commitment to a harassment-free environment that is inclusive to all, and assist the individual in contacting the Office of Equal Opportunity.

What is the required time commitment for OEO Information Advisors?

Advisors are required to complete the University's online Unlawful Harassment Prevention and Title IX and Violence Prevention courses, which are approximately 40 minutes each. Additionally, they meet with the OEO Director and staff, and other Advisors for more extensive training and information annually. Advisors may receive periodic communications and updates about changes in the law and/or policy, additional requirements or trends and specialized training sessions. In the event that an individual in the Advisor's unit has a question or concern about potential discrimination or harassment, the Advisor would meet with that person and interface with Office of Equal Opportunity.

What educational background or expertise should an OEO Information Advisor have?

An OEO Information Advisor needs to be able to identify situations that could potentially be discrimination and/or harassment, and/or covered under Title IX, as well as understand the University's Discrimination and Harassment policy and the Sexual Misconduct, Sexual Assault, and Sexual Harassment Involving Students policy. However, OEO Information Advisors do not need specific legal expertise. Moreover, an OEO Information Advisor should be someone with good judgment who is respected and trusted by colleagues.

For more information, contact the Office of Equal Opportunity at 515-294-7612 or eooffice@iastate.edu