



Northland Pioneer College
Office of the President

EXPANDING MINDS • TRANSFORMING LIVES

Dear Members of the College Community,

While you may not see it as you go to work each day, NPC – like all colleges and universities – is constantly working to create a safe and equitable learning and working environment for you. One key piece of that process is the set of federal Title IX regulations, which prohibit sex-based discrimination in educational environments. The College’s Title IX Coordinator, Dr. Jessica Clark, is responsible for the overall Title IX compliance program for the College. Her office addresses issues of sex/gender equity (access to programs, scholarships, etc.), sexual harassment (including sexual assault, stalking, domestic violence and dating violence), protecting the rights of pregnant/parenting students, and the rights of LGBTQIA2SP+ students and employees to be free from discrimination. She is supported by our dedicated Title IX team.

I am writing to you today to share with you significant recent changes to the federal Title IX requirements, and how NPC is adjusting its processes to meet those requirements.

First, Dr. Clark’s office has been conducting interviews and investigations for allegations of sexual misconduct remotely since last March. We have become proficient at doing so through technology platforms, though no platform is perfect. Going forward, we will always be able to offer the remote option for investigations and hearings for parties who prefer it, regardless of whether classes are in normal session. We have options to ensure participants have a private place to participate remotely in the process, and can provide device access, so that there is no socio-economic reason why someone cannot participate in the process.

Second, effective August 14th, the College has revised its Title IX policies and procedures to meet new federal standards. These revisions provide for live hearings to decide allegations of sexual misconduct, and those live hearings can also be conducted virtually using technology. This new procedure is the result of new Title IX regulations that were issued by the U.S. Department of Education in May. These regulations are very lengthy and detailed (2083 pages!).

The new regulations seek to provide strong due process protections to those who are accused of sexual misconduct while also balancing the rights of those who experience sexual harassment, assault, dating violence, domestic violence, retaliation, and/or sex/gender discrimination. We comply with all requirements in the revised regulations, but there is some latitude in both how colleges interpret the new rules and how they are implemented. Importantly, the College provides a number of procedural protections that are important to all members of this community, including:

- Providing clear notice to anyone accused of misconduct along with a presumption of innocence;
- Protections and accountability for students and employees (including faculty and staff);
- Conducting a process that is very transparent to the participants, where all evidence is known and shared prior to any final decision;
- Providing a strong set of supportive measures to all parties that are designed to effectively bring an end to any hostile environment;
- Delivering resolutions to complaints as promptly as possible;



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- Strong sanctions for violations of policy;
- A clear brochure offering guidance on all resolution options;
- Flowcharts of policy to make options clearer and more user-friendly;
- Vetting process administrators carefully to ensure they are impartial and unbiased; and
- Appropriate informal resolution opportunities.

While the new regulations mean many changes for the College's policies and procedures, what hasn't changed is our dedication to a process that respects the dignity of all members of the College community. We respect the right of someone who experiences sexual misconduct to process it in the way that is best for them and their healing process. We respect their right to choose to bring a report forward for a College formal resolution, or to seek a response from the College that is primarily centered on supportive measures and resources available from the College and/or the larger community. Fair process is a priority, as is repairing harm and facilitating healing and safety for all members of the community irrespective of race, sex, gender identity/expression, age, ability, religion, socio-economic status, or the other qualities/identities that we value within a diverse community.

To learn more about the revised College policies and procedures, please review <https://www.npc.edu/college-operations-policies> and <https://www.npc.edu/procedure-2110>. If you have questions about the process, or wish to talk to someone about your options to report or seek support, please contact Dr. Jessica Clark at 928.532.6141 or jessica.clark@npc.edu. There is no time limit on the reporting of offenses to the College. If you have been accused of an offense, please find resources to support you at <https://www.npc.edu/title-ix>. To contact a member of our Title IX Team visit: <https://www.npc.edu/title-ix/title-ix-team>.

Finally, I want to inform you all that all College employees are mandatory reporters. Thus, if you are made aware of a Title IX violation you are responsible for reporting it to the Title IX Office at 928.532.6141 or jessica.clark@npc.edu. In addition, we are in the process of developing an employee training web page to assist you in staying current and compliant: <https://www.npc.edu/title-ix/title-ix-employee-training>. Later this semester, we will be launching an online reporting option, so stay tuned for more information from Dr. Clark and the Title IX Team.

We wish you a healthy and safe 2020-2021 school year, and remind you that the Title IX office is here for you if needed.

Sincerely,

Mark H. Vest
President
Northland Pioneer College