IOP Approach to Sexual Misconduct

The Institute of Politics (IOP) works with nearly 3,000 students each year as it pursues its mission of inspiring the next generation of leaders for politics and public service. As we do so, we seek to create a welcoming, positive, and supportive environment for all students to participate at the IOP. Part of this is ensuring that all members of our community understand the Institute’s firm commitment to supporting students who may be affected by sexual misconduct.

Sexual misconduct is a broad term that encompasses sexual assault, sexual harassment, domestic violence, dating violence, and stalking. Sexual misconduct may violate the law, does violate the standards of our community, and is unacceptable at the University of Chicago. It can be devastating to the person who experiences it directly and can adversely impact family, friends, and the larger community. We want to provide information here for any students who have experienced sexual misconduct that they may want to discuss with IOP staff or other University administrators.

First, some broader context. Federal law – Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 – prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex in education programs and activities operated by recipients of federal financial assistance, including the University of Chicago. This includes all forms of discrimination against program participants, including sexual misconduct. The University is committed to taking necessary action to stop, prevent, and remedy instances of sexual misconduct. It has a dedicated Office for Sexual Misconduct Prevention & Support (headed by the University’s Title IX Coordinator), which provides resources and support to students who may have been affected by sexual misconduct; it also has a separate Office of Disciplinary Affairs, which oversees the University-wide Student Disciplinary process for investigating formal complaints that a student engaged in sexual misconduct. The Office for Access and Equity coordinates the procedures for investigating formal complaints made against faculty, other academic appointees or postdoctoral researchers, and works in collaboration with the Employee Labor and Relations team when investigating formal complaints against a University staff member. As a part of the University, the IOP operates within the University’s policies and processes for delivering on this commitment to addressing sexual misconduct.

What does this look like in practice for students? Individuals who have experienced or witnessed any form of sexual misconduct are encouraged to report the incidents to the University’s Title IX Coordinator(s) or a Confidential Resource. Students may alternatively report incidents to any University staff member they feel comfortable doing so, including IOP staff. IOP staff are considered individuals with Title IX reporting responsibilities. As such, IOP staff must alert the Title IX office to concerns involving sexual misconduct that are brought to their attention. Staff at the IOP do this immediately upon learning of them. Once an incident has been reported to the Title IX office, Title IX staff will then promptly follow up with the reporting student to discuss the incident and to offer supports, resources and information on the University’s processes (including possible referral of the matter to the Office of Disciplinary Affairs or the Office for Access and Equity should the student wish to go that route). Title IX staff can then work with the student to make accommodations or put interim protective measures in place; as examples, these might include referrals for counseling; changes to academic, living, dining, working, or transportation situations; or no-contact directives.

A few important points:

- Reporting an incident to an IOP staff member is private and disclosure of any information related to the incident, including names and/or description, to anyone other than the Title IX Coordinator is not allowed. (Please note: this does not mean confidential; IOP staff will need to share some
information with IOP leadership and Title IX staff. Confidential resources can be found at the end of this document).

- Reporting an incident to a Title IX Coordinator is private and does not mean the person who experienced the incident loses control of the process. Students are not obligated to respond to outreach or engage with the Title IX Coordinator(s). Individuals can choose not to move forward with the University’s separate disciplinary process, but still receive support services. In rare circumstances, the Title IX Coordinator(s) may need to move forward with an investigation based on information already received. If this happens, the students will be notified.

- IOP staff cannot conduct their own investigations into Title IX incidents reported to them. We can listen, support, and refer students to the Title IX office whose explicit responsibility is to support students in exploring their options, including investigation and disciplinary action.

- The IOP will fully support and put into practice any accommodations or remedies that the Title IX Coordinator or disciplinary affairs office recommends for affected parties.

- Absent directives from the Title IX Coordinator or the disciplinary affairs office, the IOP legally cannot restrict engagement of involved students in IOP programming. The University cannot prohibit someone’s extracurricular or employment activities without there being a formal complaint by individuals directly affected by the misconduct and a process for the accused person to respond to those allegations.

- Retaliation of any kind is strictly prohibited for either party involved with the reporting and adjudication of incidents.

If you or a person you know has experienced any form of sexual misconduct (sex discrimination, sexual assault, sexual abuse, sexual harassment, dating violence, domestic violence, or stalking) and you need information or help, there are several options:

- Title IX: For information about the University’s Title IX policy and process, please visit: [https://equalopportunityprograms.uchicago.edu/title-ix-and-university-policy/](https://equalopportunityprograms.uchicago.edu/title-ix-and-university-policy/) and [https://equalopportunityprograms.uchicago.edu/title-ix/faqs/](https://equalopportunityprograms.uchicago.edu/title-ix/faqs/)

  For information on how to get help, please visit: [https://equalopportunityprograms.uchicago.edu/title-ix/get-help/](https://equalopportunityprograms.uchicago.edu/title-ix/get-help/)

  To file a Title IX Incident Report, please visit: [https://cm.maxient.com/reportingform.php?UnivofChicago&layout_id=6](https://cm.maxient.com/reportingform.php?UnivofChicago&layout_id=6)

  The University’s Title IX Coordinator is Bridget Collier, Associate Provost for Equal Opportunity Programs, and can be reached at [bcollier@uchicago.edu](mailto:bcollier@uchicago.edu) or by calling 773-834-6367 or by writing to her at the Office of the Provost, 5525 S. Ellis Ave., Room 171, Chicago, IL, 60637.

- Additional Confidential Resources include:
  ✓ Sexual Assault Dean-On-Call (773.834.HELP)
  ✓ Student Counseling Service (773.702.9800)
  ✓ Student Health Services (773.702.4156)
  ✓ Ordained Religious Advisors in Spiritual Life (773.702.2100)

- Students may share concerns with any IOP staff member with whom they feel comfortable doing so; all IOP staff have been trained in how to provide initial support for students affected by sexual misconduct. If unsure who to speak with, please reach out to Katrina Mertens, Director of Operations, at [kmertens@uchicago.edu](mailto:kmertens@uchicago.edu) or 773-702-2392.