



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
OFFICE FOR CIVIL RIGHTS

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January 18, 2023

Sent via email only to: pillich@southeast.edu

Dr. Paul Illich, President
Southeast Community College
301 South 68th Street Place
Lincoln, Nebraska, 68510

Re: *Southeast Community College
OCR Compliance Review 07116001*

Dear Dr. Illich:

This letter is to confirm the resolution of the above-referenced compliance review of Southeast Community College initiated by the U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights (OCR). This compliance review assessed whether the College treated female students enrolled in science, technology, engineering, mathematics, or technical programs differently than male students. OCR examined whether the College's treatment of female students in these programs resulted in lower graduation rates and poorer performance as a result of sex-based discrimination, in violation of Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 (Title IX), 20 U.S.C. §§ 1681-1688, and its implementing regulation at 34 C.F.R. Part 106.

OCR reviewed information and data regarding student recruitment, admission, enrollment, and participation in STEM courses and programs. Additionally, OCR reviewed documentation of the College's investigation of and response to reports of sexual harassment. During an onsite visit, OCR conducted interviews of the Vice President for Access, Equity and Diversity who served as the Title IX coordinator, deans, campus directors, program directors, program chairs, instructors, recruiters, career and academic advisors, and student retention specialists. In addition, OCR conducted a survey of the College's students.

The evidence obtained through the College's documents and data, interviews of College staff, and the results of a student survey raised several concerns about the College's compliance with Title IX. These concerns included that online and printed recruiting materials for some STEM programs showed little participation by female students. Student survey respondents, including male and female students, indicated that STEM programs were not welcoming for female students and that some female students in STEM programs felt isolated and that they were treated differently than male students. Several student survey respondents also reported that they had experienced sexual harassment in STEM programs and indicated a lack of understanding about how to file sexual harassment complaints.

The Department of Education's mission is to promote student achievement and preparation for global competitiveness by fostering educational excellence and ensuring equal access.

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Prior to OCR's completion of its investigation, the College expressed an interest in resolving this compliance review under Section 302 of OCR's *Case Processing Manual*; OCR determined that such resolution would be appropriate. On July 9, 2019, the College voluntarily entered into a Resolution Agreement with OCR to resolve the compliance concerns identified in this review. Specifically, the Resolution Agreement requires the College to:

- Enhance and/or modify its recruitment, retention, and student success strategies to promote equitable student enrollment in and completion of STEM programs;
- Publicize the identity and contact information for the Title IX coordinator and other individuals to whom students are directed to report sex discrimination, including sexual harassment;
- Provide information during new student orientation notifying students that the College does not discriminate on the basis of sex and of the identity and contact information for the Title IX coordinator; and
- Conduct an annual review of the College's response to reports and complaints of sexual harassment to determine whether any incidents of alleged sex discrimination or sexual harassment contributed to inequitable student attrition in STEM courses or programs.

OCR is reviewing data that the College submits under the provisions of the Resolution Agreement as part of its ongoing monitoring of the College's compliance with Title IX.

This letter sets forth OCR's determination in a compliance review and should not be interpreted to address the College's compliance with any other regulatory provision or to address any issues other than those addressed in this letter. This letter is not a formal statement of OCR policy and should not be relied upon, cited, or construed as such. OCR's formal policy statements are approved by a duly authorized OCR official and made available to the public.

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 personally identifiable information that could reasonably be expected to constitute an unwarranted invasion of personal privacy if released, to the extent provided by law.

Thank you for cooperation during this compliance review. If you have any questions, please contact Linda White, Attorney, at (816) 268-0581 (voice) or (877) 521-2172 (telecommunications device for the deaf), or by email at linda.white@ed.gov.

Sincerely,

Keith D. Smith
Supervisory Attorney, Region VII

Enclosure

cc: Jose J. Soto,
Vice President for Access/Equity/Diversity