

U.S. Education Department, USC Reach Agreement to Confront and Prevent Sexual Harassment

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The University of Southern California announced today that it has reached a Resolution Agreement with the Department of Education’s Office for Civil Rights (OCR) to ensure that USC will improve its policies and processes for preventing and responding to sexual harassment to fully comply with Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972. This Resolution Agreement closes the directed investigation opened in May 2018 regarding the conduct of Dr. George Tyndall. University community members were invited to meet with OCR as part of their investigation in June and October [2018](#).

“We share OCR’s mission to foster a campus environment free from discrimination and harassment. There is no higher priority for me than protecting the health, safety and well-being of our students, faculty, staff and patients,” President Carol Folt said. “I will continue to work diligently to restore trust in this institution and build a strong foundation of integrity and accountability. By signing this agreement, we are confirming our commitment to work in partnership with OCR to further a culture and climate where students, faculty and staff can learn, work and thrive.”

The agreement brings to a close a 21-month investigation by OCR into USC’s response to allegations of misconduct against Dr. Tyndall, a gynecologist who worked in the Student Health Center for three decades. OCR concluded that USC violated Title IX by failing to promptly and equitably respond to notice of nine complaints by patients of potential sexual harassment during medical examinations between 2000 and 2016, and that that failure may have allowed patients to be subjected to sex discrimination. OCR also identified other systemic challenges that inhibited the University’s response. The Resolution Letter is available [here](#).

“OCR’s conclusions align with my personal resolve to strengthen USC policies, procedures and practices to promote patient well-being and prevent future misconduct,” President Folt said. “The university is confronting its past and implementing changes necessary to inform its future. We have already taken significant steps to better integrate our Title IX protections into the healthcare setting and to reinforce a culture of care, responsibility, and accountability across all University programs and activities.”

USC acknowledges that the investigation has helped to illuminate the many ways in which we can improve its internal communication and recordkeeping to better track complaints, provide heightened training to all community members, reinforce centralized reporting of all Title IX-related concerns and deepen the collaboration between its health care system and its Title IX program.

“I am committed to implementing the remedial actions to drive meaningful, targeted and effective change,” said Senior Vice President of Human Resources Felicia Washington. “These actions build on our existing efforts to expand and elevate our Title IX program, improve our personnel processes, and implement our [cultural assessment](#) so that we can better serve our students, staff, and faculty. As part of my direct oversight of the University’s Title IX program and our design of an enhanced human resources program for the future, we are committed to getting this right.”

The actions under the Resolution Agreement include:

- Reinforcing the independence and authority of the newly created Office of Equity, Equal Opportunity and Title IX, and ensuring appropriate resources and support to allow it to function effectively to serve all students, faculty and staff;
- Appointing a Deputy Title IX Coordinator within Keck Medicine and designating Health Care Title IX Investigators to ensure that its Title IX support systems are visible and accessible to patients, students and employees, and that investigations are conducted by individuals with expertise in the unique issues that can arise in the healthcare setting
- Maintaining accurate and complete data recordkeeping to more quickly address sexual and gender-based harassment and violence through University-wide improvements in personnel evaluations and documentation practices, as well as improved data management within the Title IX Office;
- Directing all supervisory employees to review current files and ensure that all known misconduct has been reported to the Title IX Office;
- Conducting a self-audit of all reported cases of sexual harassment or violence at the end of each academic semester;
- Conducting a self-assessment of the actions of current and former employees who had supervisory responsibilities over Dr. Tyndall, were reported to have received notice of complaints related to Dr. Tyndall, or were responsible for implementing Title IX in response to those complaints;
- Revising written policies to address concerns identified by OCR in the University’s response to reports about Dr. Tyndall;
- Continuing and augmenting training programs on sexual harassment for all employees and students, with a heightened focus on employees in the University’s Student Health Center and issues related to harassment in the context of receipt of health care services;
- Continuing to understand and assess culture and climate in the healthcare setting; and,
- Communications regarding individual remedies.

Many of these actions are already underway or build upon other recent University efforts. Notably, these include hiring new leadership in the President’s Office, the Provost’s Office, Human Resources, Student Affairs, Compliance, Communications and the General Counsel’s Office; exploring the development of a unified reporting system that enables anyone in the USC

community to make a report about harassment or discrimination from their phone or computer; and, fully integrating the Student Health Center into Keck Medicine, to provide direct oversight of standard of care and physician conduct, uniform policies and procedures and coordination of diverse reporting responsibilities. These are important steps in ensuring coordination and continuity of care between Keck Medicine and the University's Title IX Program.

As part of the OCR Resolution Agreement, USC will work closely with OCR during a three-year monitoring period.

Separately, USC has agreed to a comprehensive settlement in federal court that provides compensation and other resources to Dr. Tyndall's former patients as well as enhanced training programs in the Student Health Center.

OCR's Letter of Findings and the Resolution Agreement can be viewed [here](#).

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