



The Importance of Title IX

50 years later, Title IX violations are still impacting women and other underrepresented groups. Below, AWIS members share their discrimination and harassment experiences.

While pregnant, I was expected to do procedures in the lab that are not permitted during pregnancy. Accommodations were not provided despite reasonable requests. Postpartum access to a clean pumping space was not provided. It's been a miserable experience, but what made me the saddest has been the graduate students who commented that (after watching my experience) they are waiting to have children until they leave the lab or academia.

A senior professor asked me and other graduate students to go on dates. He said inappropriate and suggestive things. He also made unwanted sexual advances including physically touching a postdoc in his lab. It hurt her relationship with her partner and contributed to her leaving science. We filed a complaint in 2019. It was a very frustrating experience. We had hours of meetings and emails with the Title IX office but were told they couldn't do anything. There have been no consequences to his actions.

I was demoted after speaking up against sexual harassment of an employee in my team. The case was hushed up, the girl left the company, the perpetrator was promoted.

I was sexually harassed for a few years in grad school. The instructor was a dean at the time. Initially it seemed like his intent was to provide scientific support. It started with lunches or casual conversations on the campus. But as you can imagine, it escalated. Being so young, naive, and focused on my work I didn't recognize what was happening. I had to put in that much more work to rebuild my reputation as a serious scientist in a field where women are already at a disadvantage.

I had an antisemitic physics professor who scheduled our exams on Rosh Hashanah, then when we complained, he moved it to 10 days later (Yom Kippur). He'd been a professor for ~30 years and there are a lot of Jewish students at my school, so he definitely knew what he was doing.

A pregnant post-doc was harassed and bullied to the point where she nearly lost the baby and her life. I brought it up to my boss and nothing happened. I have since been promoted and am doing my best to make changes, but it isn't fast enough for my liking. I still don't feel safe to get pregnant in my current work environment. I would like to create a formal complaint, but I risk losing my job and my future career by doing that.

I have been repeatedly misgendered, asked for training to occur. No training has happened, to my knowledge, but the misgendering has decreased somewhat.

I was part of a group of graduate students and postdocs who filed a title IX complaint against a professor in 2019. It was empowering to come together, but it was a long, protracted pursuit that wore down all of us, endangered our careers, and did not end in any meaningful outcome in terms of restrictions or discipline of the professor.

For many years my university paid women 80% of the faculty salary means. Women were also far less likely to have been given the distinction of "Distinguished Professor," with the substantial salary enhancement that comes with it. After I brought those numbers to the President and Provost, a few more women have received that distinction. I was involved in a lawsuit regarding faculty salaries and received a substantial increase. However, it was not retroactive, and being underpaid for the first half of my professional career has impacted my pension.

A male colleague screamed at me in the hallway in front of students. I complained to my department chair and HR. No disciplinary action was taken. It's absurd that such things are still happening. I've been in physics for over 40 years, and I'm frankly getting worn out from constantly advocating for myself and others! I'll certainly retire sooner than I would otherwise after dealing with microaggressions and overt harassment like this example.

As a mother, I need flexible work hours and was not able to work overtime. I was passed over for important experiments. When COVID hit, I was given remote secretarial work instead of work in my field. I had nightmares and was depressed. I did speak to the lab manager who just brushed it over and nothing was done to rectify the situation. I finally left to preserve my mental and emotional wellbeing. Now I am starting over.

In summary, Title IX violations come in various forms, not just sexual harassment. Many victims do not bother filing complaints due to fear of retaliation, assumptions that no action will be taken, or they just don't have the energy to fight. When victims do report, their complaints are frequently ignored - allowing the harassers to continue abusing them or others. Victims report dealing with emotional trauma years later.

AWIS believes that organizations have a responsibility to provide safe, equitable, and harassment-free settings so that women and underrepresented groups can learn, contribute to science, and reach their full potential.

Here's how you can help:

- [Share this document](#) with policymakers and your organization leaders and ask them support and enforce Title IX protections and safe, inclusive workplaces.
- [Donate](#) to support AWIS' Title IX advocacy and education efforts.
- [Become an AWIS member](#) to share your story and strengthen our community.
- [Share your organization's best practices](#) in preventing harassment, enforcing consequences, and supporting victims.