

STATE OF WISCONSIN
BOARD OF REGENTS OF THE UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN SYSTEM

IN THE MATTER OF RULEMAKING PROCEEDINGS BEFORE THE BOARD OF REGENTS OF THE UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN SYSTEM	ORDER OF THE BOARD OF REGENTS OF THE UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN SYSTEM AMENDING AND ADOPTING EMERGENCY RULES
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The statements of scope for this rule, SS [084-20](#), was approved by the Governor on June 11, 2020, published in Register [774A4](#) on June 19, 2020, and approved by Board of Regents of the University of Wisconsin System on July 20, 2020. This emergency rule was approved by the Governor on August 7, 2020.

ORDER

An order of the Board of Regents of the University of Wisconsin System to amend UWS 7.01, 7.02(1)(d), 7.03, and 7.05(1)(a) and (1)(b) and (3) and (5)(c) and (6) and (8); and repeal and recreate 7.015(2), relating to addressing allegations of sexual misconduct against faculty, academic staff, and students of the University of Wisconsin System.

Analysis prepared by the Board of Regents and the University of Wisconsin System.

FINDING OF EMERGENCY

The Board of Regents of the University of Wisconsin System finds that an emergency exists and that this rule is necessary for the immediate preservation of the public peace, health, safety, or welfare. A statement of facts constituting the emergency is:

The U.S. Department of Education published new regulations on May 5, 2020 which take effect August 14, 2020. These regulations update the definitions of sexual misconduct and add additional process requirements for when universities respond to allegations of sexual misconduct against students and employees under Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972. The University of Wisconsin Systems current policies for addressing allegations under Title IX reside within the Wisconsin Administrative Code and are structured on the basis of federal guidance issued prior of the new regulations, and several of these sections of the Code do not comply with the new regulations. Noncompliance with these regulations could result in loss of federal funding for the University of Wisconsin System, as well as potential litigation, which would threaten the welfare of the University of Wisconsin System.

ANALYSIS

Statutes interpreted: ss. [36.09 \(1\)\(a\)](#) and [36.11 \(1\)\(a\)](#), Stats.

Statutory authority: ss. [36.09 \(1\)\(a\)](#) and [36.11 \(1\)\(a\)](#), Stats.

Explanation of agency authority:

s. [36.09 \(1\)\(a\)](#), Stats.: “The primary responsibility for governance of the system shall be vested in the board which shall enact policies and promulgate rules for governing the system.”

s. [36.11 \(1\)\(a\)](#), Stats.: “The board may promulgate rules under ch. 227 to protect the lives, health and safety of persons on property under its jurisdiction and to protect such property and to prevent obstruction of the functions of the system.”

Related statute or rule: N/A

Plain language analysis:

Title IX Sexual Misconduct and Non-Title IX Sexual Misconduct

The current rule treats all allegations of sexual misconduct the same. The new federal regulations narrow the scope of conduct to which Title IX protections apply. However, the federal regulations specify that schools are not prohibited from addressing a broader scope of conduct under institutional codes of conduct. Under the new rule, allegations of sexual misconduct that do not fall within the scope of Title IX will continue to be addressed using student and employee conduct codes.

Definitions

The current rule defines sexual misconduct, such as sexual harassment and sexual assault, under the corresponding statutory definitions in the Wisconsin Statutes. The new federal regulations require adoption of definitions for sexual assault, dating violence, domestic violence, and stalking from the federal Clery and Violence Against Women Acts. Additionally, the new federal regulations define sexual harassment for Title IX purposes to include quid pro quo and “unwelcome conduct that a reasonable person would determine is so severe, pervasive, and objectionably offensive.”

The current rule allows University of Wisconsin System institutions to address allegations of sexual misconduct when the conduct occurs on university property, at university-sponsored events, or the conduct affects a substantial university interest. The new federal regulations narrow that definition to the following elements: (1) the school has actual knowledge of sexual harassment; (2) that occurred within the school’s education program or activity; (3) against a person in the United States. The regulations go on to define “education program or activity” to include situations over which the school exercised substantial control as well as buildings owned or controlled by student organizations officially recognized by a university, such as many fraternity and sorority

houses. The new rule specifies the procedures University of Wisconsin System institutions should use in addressing sexual misconduct that meets the new definition and scope of the new federal regulations, as well as the procedures to be used in addressing sexual misconduct that falls outside of the scope of the regulations.

The current rule contains no definition for “sexual exploitation.” The new rule adds a definition of “sexual exploitation” to the list of sexual misconduct that University of Wisconsin System institutions address.

Title IX Sexual Misconduct Procedures

Notice

The current rule mentions several instances in which students and employees involved in an investigation of sexual misconduct must receive notice. The new federal regulations require notice to parties of formal Title IX complaints in more instances and in greater detail than the current rule provides. The new rule will update notice requirements to comply with the new federal regulations.

Mandatory Dismissal and Discretionary Dismissal

The current rule states that University of Wisconsin System institutions may or must dismiss complaints of sexual misconduct under certain circumstances. The new federal regulations define certain instances in which universities must or may dismiss complaints of sexual misconduct. For example, universities must dismiss allegations that do not meet the definitions of sexual misconduct under Title IX and may dismiss allegations of a complainant wishes to withdraw the complaint. A university may still address these dismissed complaints under other code of conduct provisions or state law. The new regulations also grant the parties the right to appeal the university’s dismissal of allegations. The new rule incorporates changes to comply with these requirements under the federal regulations.

Investigation

Under the current rule, University of Wisconsin System institutions investigate allegations of sexual misconduct through formal investigations, the investigator provides the opportunity for both parties to meet with the investigator to discuss the allegations, the investigator recommends sanctions against the respondent, and a governing body within the university confirms or amends these sanctions, which it may do without a hearing under certain circumstances. Under the federal regulations, universities must conduct investigation of formal Title IX complaints via an assigned investigator and must allow the parties an opportunity to present witnesses and evidence as well as review the evidence provided. Investigators must not make official findings of responsibility but may make recommended findings. The new rules incorporate changes to comply with these requirements under the federal regulations.

Hearing

The current rule allows University of Wisconsin System institutions to hold hearings related to allegations of sexual misconduct, but the rule does not always require them. The federal regulations require universities conduct live hearings with cross-examination conducted directly, orally, and in real time for all Title IX cases. At a live hearing, the institution must provide, without fee or charge, an advisor of the school's choice, who may be, but is not required to be, an attorney, to conduct cross-examination on behalf of that party. The parties' advisors must perform cross-examination. A hearing officer must preside over the hearing and determine the relevance of each question and explain any decision to exclude a question. The new rule incorporates changes to comply with these requirements under the federal regulations.

Summary of, and comparison with, existing or proposed federal regulation:

Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 provides that "[N]o person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance." The U.S. Department of Education has issued guidance through Dear Colleague Letters over the years which established the federal agency's expectations for institutions of higher education that receive federal funding. The new federal regulations are the first to interpret this law with respect to addressing allegations of sexual misconduct and override any guidance provided in the previous Dear Colleague Letters. Please see the Plain Language Analysis for further information related to the specific provisions under the new federal regulations.

Comparison with rules in adjacent states:

The new federal regulations require all universities that receive federal funding to comply with the regulations or risk losing the federal funding. All universities that receive federal funding are required to revise policies and procedures to comply with federal regulations.

Summary of factual data and analytical methodologies:

N/A

Analysis and supporting documents used to determine effect on small business:

N/A

Fiscal Estimate:

The new rule requires University of Wisconsin System institutions to hold live hearings in response to formal Title IX complaints and to provide parties with advisors, free of charge or fee, for the purposes of cross-examination during these hearings. We anticipate potential costs associated with the requirement to hold hearings and provide advisors.

Effect on small business:

The new rule will not have an economic impact on small businesses. The new rules apply specifically to University of Wisconsin System institutions only.

Agency contact person:

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Public Comments:

The Board of Regents held a public hearing on July 16, 2020 preceded by a public comment period related to the scope statement. The Board of Regents also held a public comment period on the drafts of the proposed rule, which concluded on July 31, 2020. During the comment periods, comments could be submitted to the agency in any of the following ways: (1) on the web at <https://www.wisconsin.edu/regents/public-comment-form/> or adminrules.wisconsin.gov; (2) by email to board@uwsa.edu; (3) at the public hearing; or (4) by mail to Jess Lathrop, Executive Director, Office of the Board of Regents, 1860 Van Hise Hall, 1220 Linden Drive, Madison, Wisconsin.

The Board of Regents intends to hold a public hearing on the concurrent emergency and permanent rules at a future date and time to be determined.

TEXT OF RULE

Section 1. UWS 7.01 is amended to read:

UWS 7.01 Declaration of policy. University faculty members are responsible for advancing the university's missions of teaching, research, and public service. The fulfillment of these missions requires public trust in the integrity of the institution and in all members of the university community. The university's effectiveness, credibility, and ability to maintain public trust are undermined by criminal activity that poses a substantial risk to the safety of others, that seriously impairs the university's ability to fulfill its missions, or that seriously impairs the faculty member's fitness or ability to fulfill the faculty member's ~~his or her~~ duties. Situations involving such serious criminal misconduct by faculty members shall be addressed and resolved promptly to ensure that public trust is maintained, and that the university is able to advance its missions. The Board of Regents therefore adopts the procedures in this chapter for identifying and responding to those instances in which a faculty member has engaged in serious criminal misconduct.

Section 2. UWS 7.02(1)(d) is amended to read:

(d) The faculty member's fitness or ability to fulfill the duties of the faculty member's ~~his or her~~ position is seriously impaired.

Section 3. UWS 7.03(1) is amended to read:

(1) Any faculty member having tenure may be dismissed only by the board and only for just cause and only after due notice and hearing. Any faculty member having a probationary appointment may be dismissed prior to the end of the ~~his or her~~ term of appointment only by the board and only for just cause and only after due notice and hearing.

Section 4. UWS 7.05(1)(a), (1)(b), (3), (5)(c), (6), and (7) is amended to read:

(a) Within 3 working days of receipt of the report or information, inform the faculty member of its receipt and, after consulting with appropriate institutional governance representatives, appoint an investigator to investigate the report or information and to advise the chancellor as to whether to proceed under this section or ch. UWS 4. If the university knows the identity of an affected party, the university shall make a reasonable attempt to notify the affected party of the report or information at the same time as the faculty member. ~~In cases involving sexual assault, dating violence, domestic violence, or stalking, the affected party complainant shall be notified by the chancellor of the receipt report or information at the same time as the faculty member.~~

(b) Upon appointing an investigator and notifying the faculty member, afford the faculty member 3 working days in which to request that the investigator be disqualified on grounds of lack of impartiality or other cause. In the event that the chancellor determines that a request for disqualification should be granted, the chancellor shall, within 2 working days of the determination, appoint a different investigator. The faculty member shall have the opportunity to request that any second or subsequent investigators be disqualified on grounds of lack of impartiality or other cause. ~~In cases involving sexual assault, dating violence, domestic violence, or stalking, the complainant shall have the disqualification rights that are afforded to the faculty member in this subsection.~~

(3) Within 3 working days of receipt of the investigator's report, the chancellor shall consult with appropriate institutional governance representatives and decide whether to seek dismissal of the faculty member pursuant to this chapter, to seek dismissal of the faculty member pursuant to ch. UWS 4, to seek an alternative disciplinary sanction, or to discontinue the proceedings. ~~The charges shall be served on the faculty member in the manner specified in UWS 4.02(3).~~

(a) If the chancellor decides to seek dismissal of the faculty member pursuant to this chapter, the chancellor shall file charges within 2 working days of reaching the decision.

(b) If the chancellor decides to seek dismissal of the faculty member pursuant to ch. UWS 4, the chancellor shall file charges and proceed in accordance with the provisions of that chapter and implementing institutional policies. If, during the course of such proceedings under ch. UWS 4, the chancellor receives a report under s. UWS 7.04 or other credible information that the faculty member has pleaded guilty or no contest to or has been convicted of a felony of a type listed in s. UWS 7.02 (1) (a), and one or more of the conditions listed in s. UWS 7.02 (1) (b) through (e) are present, the chancellor may, at that point, elect to follow the procedures for dismissal pursuant to this chapter.

(c) If the chancellor decides to seek an alternative disciplinary sanction, the procedures under chs. UWS 4 and 6, and implementing institutional policies, shall be followed.

(5)

(c) Disciplinary action other than dismissal may be taken by the chancellor, whose decision shall be final, unless the board at its option grants a review on the record at the request of the faculty member. The faculty member shall receive a copy of the chancellor's final decision. ~~In cases involving sexual assault, dating violence, domestic violence, or stalking, the complainant shall have the same right to a review of the record as the faculty member.~~ If the university knows the identity of an affected party, the university shall make a reasonable attempt to shall receive provide the affected party a copy of the chancellor's final decision at the same time as the faculty member and shall have the same right to a review of the record as the faculty member.

(6) Upon receipt of the chancellor's recommendation, the full board shall review the record before the institutional hearing committee and shall offer an opportunity for filing exceptions to the recommendation, as well as for oral argument. ~~In cases involving sexual assault, dating violence, domestic violence, or stalking, the complainant shall have all the rights provided to the faculty member in this paragraph.~~ The full board shall issue its decision on the matter within 15 working days of receipt of the chancellor's recommendation. If the university knows the identity of an affected party, the board shall make a reasonable attempt to notify the affected party of its decision at the same time as the faculty member.

(8) The administration or its representatives shall have the burden of proof to show that just cause exists for dismissal under this chapter. The administration shall demonstrate by clear and convincing evidence that the faculty member engaged in serious criminal misconduct, as defined in s. UWS 7.02., ~~except in cases involving sexual assault, dating violence, domestic violence, or stalking, in which the evidentiary standard shall be by a preponderance of the evidence.~~

Section 5. Effective Date. This emergency rule shall take effect upon publication in the official state newspaper.

(END OF TEXT OF RULE)
