

Dear Colleagues,

We write today to ask for your support in creating a safer, more caring campus culture in which sexual harassment and sexual and related misconduct are not tolerated. In particular, we are asking you to consider serving on the hearing panels that are tasked with reviewing and resolving reports of prohibited conduct pursuant to University Policy 6.4 and the ['Procedures for Resolution of Reports Against Students Under Cornell Policy 6.4.'](#) Cornell's policies call for these three member panels to include at least one faculty member and there are only 5 faculty who have volunteered for this role (20 administrative staff serve). These faculty are overburdened and need your help.

The proper resolution of these reports is critical to a fair, equitable, and effective response to sexual and related misconduct that cultivates trust in the University's processes and procedures. This trust is essential to the creation of a culture that encourages folks to report their experiences and to participate fully in investigations. High quality adjudication of these cases is also vital to identifying educational opportunities that may serve to reduce the incidence of future acts of violence or misconduct.

We are seeking faculty who are looking for an opportunity to serve the Cornell community in a capacity that will be significant to individual members of the community and that will also impact the overall culture of respect and safety on this campus. Applicants for this role must be able to approach the adjudication of these reports with thoughtfulness, empathy, neutrality, and integrity and without bias or agenda.

All members of the campus community share the amazing responsibility for creating a campus culture of respect and safety. We hope that you will consider this invitation as an opportunity to serve the Cornell community in a significantly meaningful way.

Faculty willing to be considered for this role should complete a brief application, [here](#). These applications will be evaluated by the "Hearing Panel Selection Committee."

We thank you for considering this important request. If you have any questions or concerns, you can contact either of us. Chantelle Cleary (chantelle.cleary@cornell.edu, 607 255 2076) serves as the University Title IX Coordinator and Chris Schaffer (cs385@cornell.edu, 607 342 7737) is the Associate Dean of the Faculty and has served as a panel member on Title IX hearings for the last two years.

Sincerely,

Chantelle and Chris

Frequently Asked Question

What is Policy 6.4?

Cornell University Policy 6.4 provides a means to address bias, discrimination, harassment, and sexual and related misconduct, including gender-based harassment, sexual harassment, sexual assault, domestic and dating violence, stalking, and sexual exploitation.

All members of the Cornell community have the right to file a complaint of sexual or related misconduct when they believe that a member of the Cornell community has engaged in prohibited conduct.

What are the 'Procedures for Resolution of Reports Against Students Under Cornell Policy 6.4'?

When the accused party in a Policy 6.4 complaint is a student, the matter is resolved in accordance with the ['Procedures for Resolution of Reports Against Students Under Cornell Policy 6.4.'](#) After receipt of a complaint and following a thorough and neutral investigation by the skilled investigators in the Office of the Title IX Coordinator, all complaints are reviewed by a three member hearing panel comprised of faculty and staff.

What is the “Hearing Panel Selection Committee?”

The Hearing Panel Selection Committee is comprised of four members. The members are the Dean of the University Faculty, the Vice President and Chief Human Resource Officer, the Vice President of Student and Campus Life, and the Chair of the University Assembly Codes and Judicial Committee. Each of the members listed above may appoint a designee to serve on this committee. The committee is charged with selecting a diverse pool of hearing panel members, split as evenly as possible between faculty and staff.

How many hearings were conducted during the 2017-2018 academic year?

During the 2017-2018 academic year the Office of the Title IX Coordinator convened eight hearing panels. As a result of an increase in reports resulting in formal complaints, it is expected that there will be a significantly higher need for hearing panel review during the 2018-2019 academic year.

What does serving on as a hearing panel entail?

Panel members receive a summary of facts that were uncovered during the investigation as well as all investigatory materials (e.g. interview transcripts, copies of texts and other communications). With the assistance of a non-voting Hearing Chair who is well-versed in Cornell's processes, the panel uses these investigative materials to identify key witnesses to hear from and craft questions for the witnesses. The panel then conducts a hearing, makes a finding, and imposes sanctions if the respondent is found responsible.

Do I need expertise?

Hearing panel members needn't have any pre-existing expertise. The Office of the Title IX Coordinator will provide initial and ongoing training for hearing panel members and the Hearing Chair provides continuous support and guidance during each case.

How much time should I expect to spend on a case?

For any given case, panel members may be required to spend up to 20 or so hours preparing for the hearing by reading written materials, such as investigative reports and records. These records often contain transcripts of interviews of the parties and witnesses and other documents relevant to the investigation. Additional preparation includes a couple of 1-2 hour meetings with the other hearing panel members and the hearing chair to determine witnesses for the hearing and to draft examination questions for those witnesses and the parties. The hearings themselves typically take four to six hours, but sometimes extend to ten hours, and the deliberations might take several hours. Some hearings will be conducted during business hours and some in early evening hours or over the weekend, dependent on the availability of panel members and witnesses.

Is there a commitment?

In an effort to promote experience and continuity, panel members are asked to serve four-year terms with

a possibility of renewal; there is no term limit. Additionally, panel members will not be required to fulfill the full term if academic or personal circumstances affect a panelist's availability to continue to serve. Understanding that hearings involve a substantial commitment of time and often involve difficult content and, thus, panel members may limit their involvement to just one case per semester (although with the current number of faculty participants, this is not currently possible). Panel members may also decline panel requests on a case-by-case basis based upon their schedule or the facts of a given case, with the expectation that panel members will seek to accept panel assignments where feasible and within the number of assignments to which they have committed.

This sounds like an enormous commitment of time and energy. Why do it?

This is unquestionably a significant commitment, but this is an absolutely critical issue for the university to get right. Fair and equitable adjudication of these cases is essential to maximizing the educational opportunities for the students involved. In addition, having a robust and broadly trusted process is essential to creating an educational environment where students know that sexual misconduct will be not be tolerated. Serving on these panels directly contributes to these key goals and is one highly impactful way faculty members can help decrease the incidence of sexual misconduct and maximize educational opportunities for all Cornell students.