

Dear Colleagues,

I 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, I am asking you to consider serving on the pool of faculty and staff who are called as either a co-investigator or as a member of 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](#)' and the '[Procedures for the Resolution or Reports Against Employees](#).' The aforementioned procedures call for members of the faculty and staff to serve in these critical roles.

The proper resolution of these reports is paramount 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 investigation and 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 staff and 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 need not have prior experience. However, they must be able to approach the investigation and 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 of creating a campus culture founded in respect and safety. I hope that you will consider this invitation as an opportunity to serve the Cornell community in a significantly meaningful way.

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

I thank you for considering this important request. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me at chantelle.cleary@cornell.edu or by phone at 607 255 2242.

Sincerely,

Chantelle Cleary

University Title IX Coordinator and Director of Institutional Equity

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 prohibited conduct, including protected status harassment, prohibited discrimination, and sexual or related misconduct when they believe that a member of the Cornell community has engaged in such 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 compliant 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 Institutional Equity and Title IX, all complaints are reviewed by a three member hearing panel comprised of faculty and staff.

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

When the accused party in a Policy 6.4 complaint of protected status harassment or sexual or related misconduct is a member of the faculty or staff, the matter is resolved in accordance with the '[Procedures for Resolution of Reports Against Employees 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 Institutional Equity and Title IX, in partnership with an appropriately trained faculty or staff co-investigator, all complaints are reviewed by a three member hearing panel comprised of faculty and staff.

How many hearings were conducted during the 2018-2019 academic year?

During the 2018-2019 academic year¹ the Office of Institutional Equity and Title IX convened 10 hearing panels. As a result of an increase in reports resulting in formal complaints and the new requirement that complaints against employees be adjudicated by a hearing panel, it is expected that there will be a significantly higher need for hearing panel review during the 2019-2020 academic year.

What does serving as a co-investigator entail?

Faculty and staff co-investigators work in partnership with one of the highly skilled investigators in the Office of Institutional Equity and Title IX to conduct thorough, fair, and neutral investigations of allegations set forth in a formal complaint. The investigations often consist of interviewing the parties to the complaint, interviewing witnesses, collecting and evaluating evidence, and writing a report for review by the hearing panel.

What does serving 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?

Folks serving as co-investigators or members of a hearing panel needn't have any pre-existing expertise. The Office of Institutional Equity and the Title IX Coordinator will provide initial and ongoing training for co-investigators and the hearing panel members. Additionally, the office and the Hearing Chair provide continuous support and guidance during each case.

¹ July 1, 2018-June 30, 2019

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

For any given case, co-investigators may be asked to spend up to 30 hours interviewing folks, collecting evidence, and assisting in the preparation of a report. Co-investigators may also be asked to participate in the hearing as a witness. Hearing panel members may be required to spend up to 20 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 terms² with a possibility of renewal; there is no term limit. Understanding that hearings involve a substantial commitment of time and often involve difficult content, folks who agree to serve, either as a panel member or a co-investigator, may limit their involvement to just one case per semester. Folks may also decline requests to serve on a case-by-case basis based upon their schedule or the facts of a given case, with the expectation that folks 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 investigation and 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, faculty, and staff know that prohibited conduct will not be tolerated. Serving in this capacity directly contributes to these key goals and is one highly impactful way faculty and staff members can help decrease the incidence of prohibited conduct and maximize educational opportunities for all members of the Cornell community.

² Panel members will not be required to fulfill the full term if academic or personal circumstances affect a panelist's availability continue to serve.