

Baylor reports progress on improving response to sexual violence

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WACO—This summer, Baylor University completed or made significant progress on more than three-fourths of the 105 recommendations that grew out of an investigation into the university's response to sexual violence.

Among other actions, Baylor doubled the size of its counseling center staff, expanded its Title IX office, created a 24-hour crisis hotline, implemented a centralized reporting system and developed a [webpage](#) to make reporting easier, according to an Aug. 23 progress report from Interim President David Garland.

To help track progress, Baylor also launched a new webpage that notes improvements to processes, policies, infrastructure, communication, training, partnerships and response to reports of sexual violence. To view the tracking webpage, click [here](#).

“Through the diligent work of our task forces and the dedication of the faculty, staff and students who are serving on our 12 implementation teams, the university has continued to make rapid progress in a wide range of areas,” Garland said. “We are committed to cultivating a community of care and respect and recognize our responsibility to show leadership in the prevention, response and care for those impacted by sexual violence.”

Implementing Pepper Hamilton recommendations

After some Baylor Bears football players were convicted of sexual assault, the school's regents hired the [Pepper Hamilton](#) law firm to investigate how

Baylor handled reports of sexual violence.

In May, the Baylor regents released a 13-page "[Findings of Fact](#)" document and a 10-page set of [recommendations](#) from Pepper Hamilton.

In response, Baylor created two task forces led by high-level administrators. Reagan Ramsower, senior vice president for operations and chief financial officer, heads a sexual assault task force, and Provost Greg Jones leads an initiative focused on spiritual life, Christian character formation and creating a caring culture.

Changes in Title IX

Baylor put into place implementation teams to address Title IX protocols and policies, athletics, engagement and education, centralized reporting and resolution, public safety, counseling, advocacy and other issues.

Title IX is the law that states, "No 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."

After expansion, Baylor now has one of the largest Title IX offices in the Big 12 Conference, and its staff is working to provide continuing training for students, faculty and staff, the university reported.

Baylor also revised its Title IX policies and protocols to include provisions that grant students immunity from disciplinary action for campus policy violations when they report sexual violence. For example, a student who violates prohibitions on premarital sex, recreational drug use or underage drinking and subsequently is sexually assaulted can report the abuse without fear of losing a scholarship or being expelled.

Improved access to counseling

With regard to counseling, Baylor not only doubled the size of the counseling center's staff, but also is working on a physical expansion for the center. The university also eliminated session limits and co-payments for students using the counseling center.

The center will add two victim advocates to provide confidential support to Baylor students who experience interpersonal violence. Baylor also is working with the Advocacy Center for Crime Victims and Children in Waco to provide additional resources and support to victims.

The Baylor University Police Department established new mandatory in-service training for all its personnel in areas such as Title IX obligations, victim-centered and trauma-informed interpersonal violence investigations, victim-centered interviewing and forensic interviewing for adults and juvenile victims, trauma-informed sexual assault investigation and adjudication.

Athletic department improvements

In terms of changes in athletics, Garland announced Mack Rhoades' appointment as vice president and director of athletics, effective Aug. 13. Rhoades served previously in the same position at the University of Missouri.

Baylor has developed mandatory training for all coaches, student-athletes and athletics administrative personnel in regard to Title IX policies, sexual assault prevention and bystander intervention.

The university has completed or is finalizing new policies and protocols for student-athlete conduct, incident reporting, drug testing and incoming student-athlete screening and documentation in accordance with the newly adopted Big 12 Conference serious misconduct policy.

Baylor also is developing a sexual assault survey to evaluate the

effectiveness of campus procedures and identify challenges in the campus climate that create barriers to reporting.