

National Aeronautics and Space Administration

Headquarters

Washington, DC 20546-0001



November 30, 2011

Reply to Attn of:

Office of Diversity and Equal Opportunity Cert. Mail No.: 7007 2680 0001 2215 7626

President Donna E. Shalala
Office of the President
230 Ashe Building
Coral Gables, Florida 33146

Dear President Shalala:

The National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) has completed a compliance review of the University of Miami (UM or the University), a recipient of NASA financial assistance. This limited scope review, focused on the Rosenstiel School of Marine and Atmospheric Science (RSMAS), was conducted pursuant to the Age Discrimination Act of 1975 (Age Act or the Act), as amended, 42 U.S.C. §§ 6101, et seq. and NASA's implementing regulations at 14 C.F.R. Part 1252, which prohibit discrimination on the basis of age in programs and activities receiving Federal financial assistance through NASA. The review was conducted to determine whether UM was in compliance with NASA's Age Act regulations; specifically, to ensure that the RSMAS program provides equal educational opportunity regardless of age. Please find enclosed a copy of NASA's report of the compliance review and the NASA Age Act regulations.

Based on an evaluation of the data provided by UM and from on-site interviews and observations, we find UM and the RSMAS program to be in compliance with NASA Age Act regulations. More specifically, we find that UM and the RSMAS program are meeting Age Act legal obligations and are implementing policies and procedures appropriate to achieving equality of access for all students, regardless of age. In fact, there are many strengths in UM's and RSMAS's programs regarding Age Act compliance. For example, both UM and RSMAS take steps to show diversity of the student population through visual imagery on its Web site depicting the presence and participation of adult learners in both undergraduate and graduate studies.

Importantly, the University undertakes a number of efforts to help students succeed, regardless of age or other demographic category, by offering remediation, coping programs, and programs to support recruitment and retention of students and prospective students. The University does not require transfer students, or students who have been out of school for more than one year, to submit SAT/ACT scores. UM has a variety of programs that serve to address the needs of non-traditionally aged students, such as its Saturday Bachelor of General Studies Program, RSMAS's Master of Professional Science program, and the institutional partnership with the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute.

As to opportunities for improvement, NASA recommends that the University clarify the application of the Age Act in its information and training materials for faculty, staff and stakeholders. NASA also recommends that the University clarify and disseminate information about its internal discrimination complaints policy and procedures. Further, orientation topics addressing issues for non-traditionally aged learners and students transferring from community colleges could help to provide realistic expectations for those incoming students. In addition, NASA recommends that UM and RSMAS regularly examine student statistics and information obtained from surveys and exit interviews to ensure there is not a disparity based on age for degree seeking students. NASA also recommends that UM and RSMAS undertake efforts to survey students, again with reference to age, to better understand and respond to the needs of both traditionally and non-traditionally aged students specifically regarding University programs and services.

NASA has provided specific recommendations regarding these and other equal opportunity matters. We are pleased to note that UM reports it has already begun implementation of some of our key recommendations. We will contact UM in one year to follow up on its progress in implementing these recommendations.

UM has been very helpful in facilitating the review prior to, during, and after the on-site visit. NASA wishes to thank UM's Executive Director, Office of Equality Administration, Ms. Wilhelmina Black, and Dr. Otis Brown, Dean, RSMAS, as well as the faculty, staff and students of the RSMAS programs for their participation in the review.

Under the Freedom of Information Act, it may be necessary to release the report and related records on request. If NASA receives such a request, it will seek to protect, to the extent provided by law, personal information which, if released, could reasonably be expected to constitute an unwarranted invasion of privacy.

If you have any questions regarding this correspondence, please contact Mr. David R. Chambers, Age Discrimination Act Compliance Program Manager, on 202-358-2128 at david.r.chambers@nasa.gov.

Sincerely,



Brenda R. Manuel
Associate Administrator for
Diversity and Equal Opportunity

Enclosures

cc:

Dr. Otis Brown

Ms. Wilhelmina Black