

National Aeronautics and Space Administration  
**Headquarters**  
Washington, DC 20546-001



February 29, 2016

Reply to Attn of: Office of Diversity and Equal Opportunity

Dr. Robert A. Brown  
President  
Boston University  
Office of the President  
1 Silber Way, 8<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Boston, MA 02215

Dear Dr. Brown:

The National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) has completed its compliance review of Boston University (BU), a recipient of NASA financial assistance. This limited scope review focused on the Department of Astronomy, and was conducted pursuant to Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 (Title IX) and NASA's Title IX implementing regulations at 14 C.F.R. Part 1253, which prohibit discrimination on the basis of sex in educational programs receiving Federal financial assistance through NASA. The review was conducted to determine whether Boston University is in compliance with NASA's Title IX regulations; specifically, to ensure that the Astronomy Department provides equal educational opportunity regardless of gender. Please find enclosed a copy of NASA's report of the compliance review and the NASA Title IX regulations.

Based on an evaluation of the information provided by the University and from on-site interviews and observations, NASA finds Boston University to be in compliance with the Title IX procedural requirements regarding coordination, grievance procedures, and self-evaluation. Boston University is to be commended for its efforts in revising its Sexual Misconduct/Title IX Policy and conducting a climate survey on sexual misconduct and interpersonal violence. In addition, BU has taken proactive steps to address Title IX issues by appointing several Deputy Title IX Coordinators across the University and providing Title IX training. However, the University should continue to review and revamp certain aspects of its Title IX policies and procedures, as well as their dissemination, to address NASA's recommendations. In particular, many locations on the BU Web site contain outdated policies or broken links, and Title IX-related policies and information are not consistently provided on the various Web sites.

NASA also found that the Astronomy program is in compliance with Title IX in that we did not find methods of administration that were having an adverse impact or otherwise limiting program participation based on gender. However, NASA is concerned with the low numbers of women accepting offers of admission, and with gender differences on the written comprehensive exam. NASA recommends that the Astronomy Department strengthen its recruiting practices for graduate students, perhaps partnering with national organizations focusing on women in STEM fields. The Department also should further examine gender differences in outcomes for men and women in the program, particularly with regard to performance on the comprehensive exams.

NASA observed a number of promising practices of both the University and the Department. The University has demonstrated its commitment to STEM education through a variety of programs and initiatives, such as the Office of STEM Education Initiatives and the ARROWS program. In addition, specialty community residences create a supportive and interactive atmosphere for undergraduate female STEM students, and the Astronomy Department's Pre-Majors Program introduces underrepresented students to Astronomy and encourages them to pursue their studies in STEM fields.

The University was very helpful in facilitating NASA's review prior to, during, and after the on-site visit. NASA wishes to thank Ms. Kim Randall, Executive Director of Equal Opportunity, and compliance officials working with Ms. Randall, as well as the faculty, staff, and students of the Astronomy program for their participation in the review. We would also like to thank Ms. Jeanne Domenichella, Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action Consultant in the Equal Opportunity Office, for her assistance in coordinating our onsite review and the response to our information request.

The recommendations in NASA's compliance review report are designed to assist Boston University and the Department of Astronomy in furthering their efforts to ensure equal educational opportunity regardless of gender. NASA will contact the University one year after the issuance of this letter and our compliance report to learn about the progress made toward addressing our recommendations. For additional civil rights technical assistance, visit our MissionSTEM Web site, which is designed to assist NASA grant recipients in meeting their compliance obligations under NASA's equal opportunity laws and regulations (<http://missionstem.nasa.gov/>). The site provides information and resources on compliance requirements as well as promising practices of our grant recipients.

Please be advised that, in the interest of transparency, ODEO may post Title IX compliance reports on our public Web site. The report and related records also may be requested through the Freedom of Information Act. However, the reports are written, to the extent possible, without revealing personal information that could result in an unwarranted invasion of privacy.

If you have any questions regarding this correspondence, please contact Dr. Rebecca Kraus on 202-358-2303 or [rebecca.s.kraus@nasa.gov](mailto:rebecca.s.kraus@nasa.gov).

Sincerely,



Brenda R. Manuel  
Associate Administrator for  
Diversity and Equal Opportunity

Enclosures

cc:

Ms. Kim Randall, Executive Director of Equal Opportunity  
Dr. Alan Marscher, Chair, Department of Atmospheric Sciences