The National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) has completed a compliance review of the Physics Department at the University of Arizona (UA), a recipient of NASA financial assistance. The review 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. A copy of the regulations is enclosed. This limited scope review was conducted to determine whether UA was in compliance with NASA’s Title IX regulations; specifically, to ensure that the Physics Department provides equal educational opportunity regardless of gender. Please also find enclosed a copy of NASA’s report of the compliance review.

Based on an evaluation of data provided by UA and on-site interviews and observations, we find the UA Physics Department to be in compliance with NASA’s Title IX regulations. The compliance report identifies several promising practices at UA and in its Physics Department designed to ensure equal educational opportunity regardless of gender. For example, a recent Physics Graduate Student Council survey included a detailed inquiry regarding gender equity in the Program. In addition, the University’s grievance procedures permit departments to request administrative review by the Office of Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action. Both of these practices are innovative and progressive.

However, we are concerned about allegations of inappropriate gender-related conduct in the Physics graduate program. Such conduct, if it occurred, has the potential to limit, on the basis of sex, advantages or opportunities in the Physics Department. UA and the Physics Department must take steps to evaluate the validity of the allegations. If these incidents occurred, UA should take remedial action (e.g. further training) to ensure that this does not recur in the future. We note that UA has been proactive in this regard, and has begun to take such steps.
The compliance report contains recommendations to address the concerns we identified. We also provide recommendations designed to strengthen UA’s compliance with other Title IX requirements. NASA staff will contact UA in six months to follow up on the UA’s progress in implementing these recommendations.

UA has been very helpful in facilitating the review prior to, during, and after the on-site visit. NASA wishes to thank Ms. Jeanne Kleespie, Vice President for Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action and Title IX Coordinator, Dr. Michael Shupe, Head of the Physics Department, and the staff and students of the Physics Department for their cooperation, as well as the faculty and students of the Astronomy Department who participated 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 Ms. Sharon Wagner, Assistant Director, Program Planning and Evaluation Division, Office of Diversity and Equal Opportunity/Agency Title IX Program Manager, on 202-358-0953.

Sincerely,

Brenda R. Manuel, Esq.
Assistant Administrator for
Diversity and Equal Opportunity

Enclosures

cc:
Dr. Joaquin Ruiz/Dean, College of Science
Jeanne M. Kleespie/Director, Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action Office