Office of Diversity and Equal Opportunity

Dr. Mark S. Wrighton
Chancellor
Washington University in St. Louis
Campus Box 1192
One Brookings Drive
St. Louis, MO 63130

Dear Dr. Wrighton:

The National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) has completed its compliance review of the Washington University in St. Louis (WUSTL), a recipient of NASA financial assistance. This limited scope review, focused on the Department of Physics, 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 WUSTL was in compliance with NASA's Title IX regulations; specifically, to ensure that the Physics 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 data provided by WUSTL and from on-site interviews and observations, NASA finds WUSTL to be in compliance with the Title IX procedural requirements regarding Title IX coordination, policy dissemination, and self-evaluation efforts. However, WUSTL should immediately make revisions to its Discriminatory Harassment Policy and Grievance Policy and Procedures to bring them into compliance with relevant requirements, and take steps to better publicize its policies on parental leave, as recommended in the enclosed report. We note that WUSTL has informed NASA it has already begun to take steps to address these concerns, and we have so noted in our report. We commend WUSTL for taking prompt action to ensure Title IX compliance.

NASA also finds that, while WUSTL and the Physics Department are in compliance with requirements to provide for methods of administration that do not differently impact or otherwise limit program participation of beneficiaries based on gender, some challenges remain. This is the case specifically with regard to creating and maintaining a welcoming and inclusive program environment for all Physics students, regardless of gender. The recommendations in our report are designed to assist WUSTL and the Physics Department
in this and other matters relating to their Title IX efforts. NASA will follow-up with WUSTL six months from the date of this letter to learn more about the University’s progress in addressing our compliance recommendations.

Despite their challenges, NASA observed a number of promising practices of both the University and the Physics program, particularly around policy, education and awareness efforts regarding sexual harassment and sexual assault prevention. NASA has noted these in its report and plans to incorporate them into future civil rights technical assistance for grantees as promising practices for ensuring equal opportunities in STEM programs.

We have also included a summary literature review on gender equity and STEM programs as an appendix to our compliance report to further assist WUSTL in its ongoing equal opportunity efforts in this area. For additional civil rights technical assistance, you may also wish to visit our MissionSTEM website at http://missionstem.nasa.gov/. The MissionSTEM Web site is designed to assist NASA grant recipients in meeting their compliance obligations under NASA’s equal opportunity laws and regulations. To this end, the site provides a host of information and resources on compliance requirements as well as promising practices of our grant recipients.

WUSTL was very helpful in facilitating NASA’s review prior to, during, and after the on-site visit. NASA wishes to thank the Vice Chancellor for Human Resources, Ann B. Prenatt, as well as the faculty, staff, and students of the Physics program for their participation in the review.

Under the Freedom of Information Act, it may be necessary to release the report and related records upon 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, on 202-358-0953 or swagner@nasa.gov.

Sincerely,

Brenda R. Manuel
Associate Administrator for
Diversity and Equal Opportunity

Enclosures

cc:
Dr. Ken F. Kelton, Chair, Department of Physics
Ms. Ann B. Prenatt, Vice Chancellor for Human Resources