Title IX Coordinators in Dual Roles: Challenges, Experiences, and Sources of Support

Author
Christine Paul, Ed.D.
Director of Residence Life and Student Conduct
California Lutheran University
clpaul@callutheran.edu

Abstract
This article explains a portion of a study that was conducted to examine the experiences and challenges that Title IX Coordinators face at small and medium-sized, private institutions. Through the use of an online questionnaire and semi-structured interviews with Title IX Coordinators, this study explored the specific challenges they face in their positions, especially if they have another full-time role at their institution. Title IX Coordinators face great challenges in their roles, such as lack of time and financial resources, difficulty setting up a solid infrastructure, and highly emotional topics and decisions. The issues created by a lack of intersectionality of their dual roles, as well as implications for Title IX administrators and recommendations, are discussed.
Introduction

Nationally, one in five college women is sexually assaulted during her college years (Clement, 2015; Edwards, 2009; Exner and Cummings, 2011; Suzuki, 2013), and over the past 20 years, the needle of sexual assault prevention and response has barely moved forward (Edwards, 2009). As of the last decade, Title IX is the basis for holding colleges and universities that receive federal funding accountable for their actions in dealing with sexual violence.

In 2011, the Office for Civil Rights (OCR) issued a “Dear Colleague Letter,” also known as a DCL (U.S. Department of Education, 2011), to all institutions that receive federal funding to provide recommendations, suggestions, and guidance for handling sexual misconduct cases. One recommendation was that each institution name a Title IX Coordinator to be responsible for compliance, prevention education, and training. The DCL’s publication in 2011 was a turning point for all institutions in terms of how they address sexual and interpersonal misconduct, and especially for the position of the Title IX Coordinator.

All federally funded institutions are obligated to comply with the DCL, and in doing so, face challenges in responding to policy and procedural recommendations. At the forefront of these obligations is the role of the Title IX Coordinator. First, colleges and universities must reform their sexual misconduct policies and conform to the regulations set out by the U.S. Department of Education in the DCL. Institutions are also required to distribute a nondiscrimination statement for all community members, and a Title IX Coordinator must be designated to oversee investigation procedures, as well as to ensure a fair and equitable process for everyone involved (Sieben, 2011). Additionally, institutions are required to inform the campus community regarding what information is considered confidential and who is required to report a case, as a Responsible Employee, to the university should that individual learn or be informed of a possible incident of sexual misconduct. Next, OCR encourages institutions to provide educational programming for students. This can include bystander intervention and campaigns to dispel rape myths, as well as other programs that assist male and female students in helping their friends avoid sexual assaults. With each new regulation comes challenges, both for the institutions as well as for the Title IX Coordinators.

Significance of Research

Given the changing regulations and challenges faced by colleges and universities regarding Title IX issues, this study was essential. Title IX Coordinators have an important role to play at their respective institutions, and this role has changed quite drastically since the DCL of 2011. Accordingly, it was crucial to study how institutions are dealing with the changes since 2011, and how Title IX Coordinators are managing the challenges of addressing sexual misconduct. Many institutions are doing their best to support students and victims (or survivors) of sexual assault, and it is important to follow through on reports and take allegations seriously while using established policies and protocols. This takes diligence and an effort to maintain awareness for all parties involved, as well as the community as a whole. This study specifically examined the roles of Title IX Coordinators at small and medium-sized, private four-year colleges, and the challenges they face in trying to maintain Title IX compliance on their campuses.

Furthermore, this study serves to validate the tough position that Title IX Coordinators are in and how their efforts affect students and the campus community as a whole. Additionally, I have documented the professional skills and competencies that Title IX Coordinators say they have and the path that led them to this position. Lastly, the findings from this research identified the specific ways in which Title IX Coordinators collaborate both on and off their campuses, and how this has been helpful to them in their roles.

Problem Statement and Research Questions

The mishandling of complaints of sexual misconduct has led to new governmental interference, legislation, and policies that mandate specific guidelines for reporting and responses related to sexual violence. Ultimately, the responsibility for carrying out such duties falls on the Title IX Coordinator, who must revise sexual misconduct policies, as well as review and re-think the way the campus community — faculty, staff, and students — are informed and taught about how to report sexual violence and prevent it from occurring. With the changing landscape of sexual violence, colleges and universities are being held to higher standards of accountability regarding their response and handling of sexual misconduct; this responsibility too falls largely in the hands of the Title IX Coordinator.
Furthermore, due to violations of governmental policies and ambiguity regarding best practices, a growing list of institutions is under review by OCR, which puts an even greater amount of pressure on the Title IX Coordinator. In *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, Daniel Carter, a national victims’ rights advocate and Director of the 32 National Campus Safety Initiative, stated, “In the current environment, being a Title IX Coordinator can be a challenging assignment ... but it’s an important challenge for higher education to take on” (June 2014, p. 13).

Small and medium-sized, private institutions face challenges related to Title IX, just as large public institutions do. Like large institutions, they face a lack of financial support for sexual misconduct prevention, training, and education. Even though sexual misconduct prevention programming is mandatory, these programs are largely unfunded, regardless the type or size of the institution. Title IX Coordinators at small and medium-sized, private institutions typically have more than one role to carry out; this may result in difficulties related to lack of time and confusion regarding their roles. Of the 13 Title IX Coordinators who were interviewed for this study, 12 have another role or position on their campus within various departments.

This research addressed the issues related to these dual roles, provided insight related to campus educational efforts, and highlighted the challenges that Title IX Coordinators face on their campuses. The following three research questions guided the study.

1. What challenges do Title IX Coordinators face in their professional role, and how have these challenges changed since the issuance of the “Dear Colleague Letter” of 2011?
   a. How, if at all, have Title IX Coordinators overcome these challenges?

2. What professional experiences and competencies do Title IX Coordinators believe they need to be successful in their present work?
   a. How do other professional responsibilities they perform on campus intersect with their Title IX work? What are the benefits and challenges to that intersection?
   b. What are the professional backgrounds of Title IX Coordinators, and how did they get into their roles in Title IX?

3. In what manner do Title IX Coordinators collaborate within and across campuses in carrying out their professional obligations?
   a. What professional networks do Title IX Coordinators use to support their work, and why do they consider this to be helpful?

**Overview of the Research Design and Population**

A multi-pronged approach was used to investigate the research questions. The sample for this study was generated through Carnegie Classification, by identifying small and medium-sized, private four-year colleges in the Western United States (Carnegie Classification, n.d.). Schools meeting the criteria were used for both the questionnaire portion and the semi-structured interviews. Studying this population allowed me to answer the research questions from the perspective of those who actually put Title IX compliance principles into practice on their campuses. Furthermore, this study allowed me to identify how Title IX Coordinators in their dual roles are supported and how they manage their tasks in collaboration with others.

As a theoretical framework, I drew upon feminist epistemology, which “requires the fusion of knowledge and practice” (Hesse-Biber and Leavy, 2007, p. 5). Combining what is currently known about sexual misconduct and the effects of this violence against women with how students view institutional responses gives rise to a framework for this research. By definition, feminist standpoint epistemology is a unique philosophy of knowledge-building that challenges us to: 1) see and understand the world through the eyes and experiences of oppressed women; and 2) apply the vision and knowledge of oppressed women to social activism and social change (Hesse-Biber and Leavy, 2007, pp. 4–5).

Based on this methodology, this study sought to understand the experiences and challenges that Title IX Coordinators face by providing data to more closely align this position to the needs of victims of sexual and interpersonal misconduct. Although women by far face the greatest threats of sexual misconduct, Title IX is not about women only; it is about gender and the hostile, unsupportive campus climates that Title IX Coordinators may be tasked with addressing.

Feminist standpoint theory first started because the needs of women were not being addressed. However, in the broader context, this theoretical framework oriented my research to the lives and work of Title IX Coordinators that seek to address the marginalized population of those victimized by sexual misconduct on their campuses.
Data Collection Strategies

The first part of the study was a questionnaire developed using Qualtrics, an online survey tool. It aimed to answer each of the research questions stated earlier. The survey was sent out via email and piloted with two colleagues who are involved in Title IX work, but were not a part of the sample population. Given the sensitive nature of Title IX issues, an anonymous online questionnaire was more likely to elicit responses than solely conducting face-to-face interviews, even though anonymity and privacy were promised.

The second part of this study consisted of the semi-structured interviews. Most of the data that contributed to the findings resulted from these interviews. The interview participants were able to speak candidly about the challenges they face in their role. By using a semi-structured model, I was able to ask clarifying questions as well as probe further into their answers. The semi-structured interviews were conducted both in person and over the phone, and were recorded using the voice memo application on an iPhone. The transcripts were then generated using Rev.com transcription service.

Data Analysis

Merriam (2009) discussed the importance of analyzing data simultaneously with data collection. Therefore, the questionnaire and interview transcripts were analyzed as the interviews were taking place. To analyze the data collected through the questionnaire and the semi-structured interviews, I relied on a step-by-step process, as described by Merriam. First, I constructed broad categories by identifying phrases, ideas, and notions by reading through the questionnaire results and the interview transcripts. These broad categories were then made more specific using deductive analysis based on the theoretical framework, feminist standpoint theory. I also used an open coding technique described by Merriam, and remained open to any possible themes or categories that emerged and fit my research questions.

Second, I refined the categories and the data that go with them by sorting through the evidence. Through this process, the categories became more precise. Third, I named the categories to reflect the data and findings within them. Merriam (2009) has suggested that categories should be “responsive to the purpose of the research,” “exhaustive,” “mutually exclusive,” “sensitizing,” and “conceptually congruent” (pp. 185–186). I used these criteria to define and name each category. The last step for data analysis was determining how many categories to have. Merriam discussed the need for a manageable amount, and to derive this, I used reliability methods of peer reviewers and assessed the categories given the data collected.

Findings

Backgrounds Differ, But Skills Intersect

One of the goals of this study was to determine if there was a clear path from which Title IX Coordinators come. Both the questionnaire and interview data revealed that, in fact, Title IX Coordinators come from many different backgrounds and have varied experiences. Moreover, not all Title IX Coordinators come from a higher education background, but more often from a legal one instead. A majority of the Title IX Coordinators in my sample had another role at their institutions in addition to Title IX. Their backgrounds and other roles ranged from human resources to student affairs, and included a faculty member and even a Director of Finance and Administration.

Though their backgrounds were different, there were certain skills and characteristics I observed that appeared to help them be successful in their Title IX roles. Relationship-building was an apparent skill, and one that they discussed over the course of the interviews. The ability to work with others on campus and build relationships to engage students in a dialogue about sexual misconduct was highly valuable.

Another skill that the Title IX Coordinators in the study valued was the ability to understand law and policy, as well as how investigations work. The experiences of the Title IX Coordinators varied greatly in this way, but nearly all of them had some legal experience from their previous roles. For example, one had been in litigation prior to working in Title IX. Several others who came out of student affairs had experience with student conduct systems and understood how to write, interpret, and follow policy guidelines. The Title IX Coordinators perceived these experiences and skills to be an asset to them in their Coordinator roles.

My study was mainly focused on Title IX Coordinators who had other roles at their institutions. Because small and medium-sized, private schools largely do not have the funding or the caseload for a full-time Title IX Coordinator, I anticipated that some issues and challenges would arise out of having a dual role. In
fact, 12 out of 13 Title IX Coordinators in my sample did have dual roles at their institutions and reported facing great challenges.

**Financial, Time Challenges Are Common**
One challenge that nearly all of the Title IX Coordinators faced was financial, which included either a lack of budget or a very small one; a lack of staff or Investigators; and a lack of funding for prevention and educational programs. It is not surprising that there are financial challenges associated with administering Title IX work; however, it was surprising to hear how many of the Title IX Coordinators did not have a budget. It was also surprising how many of them did not actually get paid for the Title IX work they do; rather, they are paid for their other roles, but because most of them inherited the Title IX role, they were not given extra compensation for this work.

Another major challenge was that of time. Title IX Coordinators in dual roles don’t have sufficient time for both positions. Finding time for managing both roles and the tasks that are associated with them was a common challenge, as was finding the time to read policies and legislative updates and attend the necessary trainings. The lack of time was also a challenge when trying to get together with other Title IX Coordinators. Most of them felt like they barely had enough time to do their jobs and were not able to develop relationships with other Title IX Coordinators or get together with them to discuss best practices.

**Infrastructure, Shared Responsibility Desired**
Lastly, Title IX Coordinators with dual roles found it difficult to establish a solid infrastructure for Title IX work. Since the DCL of 2011, the role of Title IX Coordinators has shifted. The DCL explicitly stated that institutions must take “immediate and effective steps to respond to sexual violence in accordance with requirements of Title IX” (U.S. Department of Education, 2011, para. 5), and Title IX Coordinators are responsible for implementing those immediate actions. Many institutions had to change the way they investigated sexual and interpersonal misconduct. The Title IX Coordinators reported that setting up the infrastructure in terms of policies and investigations, as well as the process to be followed when a report is made, was challenging. Who plays what role was another area of concern for them. In addition, they discussed the challenges of not having a solid infrastructure in place so that regardless of whether they have one investigation or 20 investigations occurring at the same time, the same process is followed in every case.

The Title IX Coordinators reported that the collaborations they have on their campuses are extremely helpful to them in their roles. Because Title IX Coordinators face challenges related to lack of time, relying on others on their campuses has helped them be successful. For example, having a Title IX committee or stakeholders group was helpful for discussing new ideas, sharing Title IX updates, increasing communication, and discussing best practices. All of the Title IX Coordinators had varying practices related to how often they met with their stakeholders, but the topics they discussed were very similar. Some of them held meetings twice a year, some monthly, and others weekly. The meeting frequency depended on what the institutional needs were related to Title IX and the availability of the members. The Title IX Coordinators who met regularly with stakeholders reported that doing so was extremely helpful for them in their roles, and that having shared responsibility for this type of work was useful as well.

**Collaboration Across Schools Lacking**
Although the Title IX Coordinators in this study reported that they benefited from working closely on Title IX with others on their campuses, they did not report that they worked regularly with Title IX Coordinators on other campuses. Although a small group of locally situated Title IX Coordinators have gotten together a few times, there is no formal arrangement in place to meet regularly. In fact, several Title IX Coordinators reported that they did not have time to focus on their own campus, much less to meet with others on another campus. In addition to time, another challenge to collaborating with other Title IX Coordinators was the differences between campuses; what might be helpful to and apply on one campus might not work for another.

The ability to work with other Title IX Coordinators who understand the work they do was discussed throughout the interviews. Due to confidentiality concerns, Title IX Coordinators are not allowed to discuss certain specifics with others, which can lead to a lack of understanding about what the position truly entails. If the Title IX Coordinators were able to gather, they would be able to discuss the challenging parts of their
positions and how they overcome these challenges on their campuses. They would be able to commiserate with one another because they all understand what is required of their roles.

As stated earlier, the time constraints of getting together with other Title IX Coordinators is challenging. However, several of the Title IX Coordinators discussed the ability to communicate over the phone or through email with Title IX staff from a smaller number of local and similarly positioned institutions.

Professional Networks Are Essential
Because Title IX Coordinators found it difficult to get together with other Title IX Coordinators on other campuses, they often relied on professional networks for professional development and information about Title IX. The Association of Title IX Administrators (ATIXA) is the professional network that nearly every Title IX Coordinator reported belonging to and using to inform their work. ATIXA offers many resources, such as trainings in different parts of the country, publications, an email listserv, and a website with countless resources. Through the ATIXA listserv, Title IX Coordinators are able to turn to colleagues at other institutions with questions, and even though the amount of email can at times be overwhelming, the questions posed and information presented via the listserv are quite helpful to them. ATIXA was reported as the most commonly used professional network amongst the sample of Title IX Coordinators in this study.

I also found other professional networks to be contributing to the Title IX field. For example, the College and University Professional Association for Human Resources (CUPA-HR) has started offering professional development related to Title IX for human resources professionals because so many of them are either Title IX Coordinators or involved in Title IX compliance in some other way. The Title IX Coordinators who also worked in human resources stated that it was helpful for them to discuss the intersection of their HR role with their Title IX Coordinator role when they attended conferences.

Since the participants’ backgrounds and other roles were so varied, several of the Title IX Coordinators in the study discussed how other professional organizations to which they belong offer Title IX content through sessions at their annual conferences, on listservs, and in member publications. Title IX is such a popular subject and at the forefront of discussion in higher education that many organizations are providing opportunities for their members to discuss Title IX issues facing college campuses.

Intersectionality Across Roles Is Infrequent
The Title IX Coordinators surveyed came from several different departments on their campuses. With so many occupying dual roles, I really wanted to figure out how, if at all, their dual roles intersected with one another. For some of the Title IX Coordinators, student interaction was an area where their roles diverged. Almost half of the Title IX Coordinators worked out of the human resources department. Because HR departments largely deal with employees and not students, these Title IX Coordinators found a major lack of intersection between their two roles.

In HR, for example, there is not a lot of — if any — student interaction. Title IX Coordinators in departments like HR reported feeling a huge disconnect between the two positions. Because these administrators do not have a lot of student interaction, they do not have experience talking with students about Title IX-related issues. Without experience or a background in student development, the Title IX Coordinators who did not have a great deal of student interaction in their other campus roles saw a severe lack of intersection in their multiple roles.

In addition to a lack of student interaction, there is the possibility that members of the campus community might find a Title IX Coordinator’s dual roles to be confusing. According to the DCL, the designation of an institutional Title IX Coordinator must be explicitly clear, with name and contact information available to the campus community (U.S. Department of Education, 2011). Most of the Title IX Coordinators surveyed reported that their dual roles might cause confusion among members of the campus community, creating misalignment with the DCL guidance. Title IX Coordinators should be well known by everyone at their institution, so that if there is an incident of sexual or interpersonal misconduct, everyone knows whom to go to first.

It became very clear from the interview and questionnaire results that several Title IX Coordinators have
been at their institutions for a long period of time. Several themes emerged when digging deeper into their time at their institutions and how they became the Title IX Coordinators. First and likely most importantly, the Title IX Coordinators felt that they have strong relationships with the upper administration and are trusted by their colleagues. Because they have been at their institutions for so long, coming into the Title IX role was easier because they did not have to forge new relationships, but instead relied on previous ones. Title IX Coordinators need the support of the campus community to do their jobs, and to already have established relationships was extremely helpful.

**Longevity Is Helpful Trait**

Another benefit to the Title IX Coordinators having longevity at their institution is that some of the challenges they've faced in terms of budgeting and support were minimal. I found that of the Title IX Coordinators with whom I spoke that had been at their institutions for longer than nine years, getting support for an increase in budget or for adding more Investigators was not as challenging as it was for those who had been at their institutions for less time. They attributed this to the trust and relationships they had established previously.

Lastly, the Title IX Coordinators that have longevity at their institutions were chosen by the upper administration for a reason. Because this is a high-profile role and one that is extremely important to the university, finding someone who the campus community already knew and trusted was essential. Navigating institutional culture is such an important piece of Title IX, and if the person that was chosen to fill this role already knew the institutional culture, s/he would be able to understand what was needed, where to go for support, and how to garner appropriate resources.

**More Understanding from Faculty, Staff Needed**

Title IX work takes the efforts of multiple staff members on each campus, especially at small and medium-sized, private institutions, where the Title IX Coordinator is often responsible for other tasks. Furthermore, Title IX Coordinators benefit from support of the campus and, in particular, the stakeholders who have a shared responsibility for the work. However, the Title IX Coordinators interviewed reported that there was a significant lack of support and understanding amongst the faculty at their institutions regarding Title IX-related matters.

Likely, the lack of understanding by faculty comes from a lack of time discussing Title IX. The Title IX Coordinators reported difficulty in trying to reach faculty members. This was often due to faculty retreats and meetings being packed with other important agenda items, such that to get even five minutes to present information was challenging. Because of this, the Title IX Coordinators felt that it was hard to get them to understand their Title IX responsibilities as faculty members, specifically how to communicate incidents or concerns about which they might hear. For example, because students see faculty members as authority figures at the university, the students may believe that discussing a sexual misconduct incident was how they needed to file a report. If faculty members are not informed about their reporting obligation, the institution could be held liable for not addressing a potential issue. It is imperative that Title IX Coordinators have ample time to reach the faculty so that they know what their reporting obligations are and understand to whom they must report.

In addition to a lack of understanding, Title IX Coordinators reported that faculty members are not readily available to provide support for Title IX. For example, the stakeholder groups who meet regularly to discuss Title IX issues on their campus rarely include faculty members. Including faculty members in these discussions could increase visibility for Title IX issues among instructors and create greater awareness of their reporting obligations.

The need to gather support and educate faculty was discussed in every interview, the only exception being a Title IX Coordinator who was also a faculty member. The Title IX Coordinators recognize that faculty members are an important part of not only of the institution but also in supporting students and the issues they may be facing. Therefore, educating the faculty about what Title IX is and their responsibility therein was a high priority for the Title IX Coordinators.

**Recommendations**

**Pool Funding From Existing Budgets**

Title IX budgets are either non-existent or are too small to sustain Title IX efforts. Unfortunately, following the DCL recommendations, there were no suggestions about funding for the educational programs, training of staff, and educational materials needed to carry out Title IX work. As a result, there is a lack of understanding about what financial resources are needed. If the
Title IX Coordinators had budgets that they oversaw and had the ability to allocate funds where they were necessary, they could provide a more comprehensive Title IX program. While higher education in general is facing financial difficulties, money could potentially be pulled from existing budgets and into a dedicated Title IX budget. For example, if the Director of Human Resources is also the Title IX Coordinator and currently using the HR budget for Title IX, I recommend pulling the money already being used for Title IX work out of the HR budget and creating a Title IX budget with those funds. Furthermore, money can be pooled from various departments that are part of the Title IX stakeholders’ group so that, again, the budget is created from existing budgets. Because financial difficulties overwhelmingly emerged as a major challenge, having significant funds, as well as a dedicated budget, would allow the Title IX Coordinators to better perform their roles.

Support Staff Make Big Difference
The data revealed that those participants who had a good support staff person, or an assistant, were much more confident in their abilities as Title IX Coordinators. Having a support staff member who is able to manage schedules and appointments allows the Title IX Coordinator to focus on other areas of the job instead of focusing on administrative tasks. Additionally, the staff person can catalog the annual Title IX training that Investigators attend, as well as the prevention programs being provided, so that there is a record of the Title IX work being performed on campus. The Title IX Coordinators who first lacked a support person and then acquired one later on stated that it made a huge change in how they were able to do their jobs, and that the workload was much easier to manage with someone supporting them.

Compensate, Validate Coordinator Work
As stated earlier, while it is understandable that small and medium-sized, private institutions are largely unable to hire a full-time Title IX Coordinator, the individuals in the Coordinator role should nonetheless be compensated for their Title IX work. I found that most survey participants took on the role with little to no increase in their compensation. Because the role of the Title IX Coordinator is such a high-profile position, being compensated adequately for the amount of work that Coordinators do is crucial. Adding additional compensation would not cost as much as hiring a full-time Title IX Coordinator, but would provide validation for the amount of work and emotional topics that Title IX Coordinators encounter.

Self-Care Is Important
Through the interviews with the Title IX Coordinators, it was clear that the emotionally charged topics with which they deal and work-related stress were on their minds. The Chronicle of Higher Education’s article “Overseeing Sexual Assault Cases Is Now a Full-Time Job” corroborated this finding by stating that the “Title IX Coordinator is a high-stress position even at a college not on the federal investigation list” (June 2014, p. 13). Even at a small school, the position of Title IX Coordinator can be quite stressful and lead to burnout and turnover. Title IX Coordinators could avoid burnout by taking care of themselves during times of high stress, and upper administration can and should encourage them to do so.

Coordinators Should Not Investigate
While it is not a best practice, some Title IX Coordinators conduct investigations. It is my recommendation that investigations not be conducted by Title IX Coordinators, but instead by Deputy Title IX Coordinators or other designated Investigators. Serving as an Investigator is not only time-consuming, but also emotionally draining for Coordinators, who should serve in an oversight role. Title IX Coordinators who conduct their own investigations reported being under a great amount of stress and pressure due to the amount of responsibility placed on their shoulders.

Another recommendation is to have enough trained Title IX Investigators so that when Investigators are being assigned to cases, there is a large enough pool of Investigators to be able to rotate and avoid burnout. Because Title IX Investigators at small and medium-sized, private institutions also have other full-time positions, the Title IX Coordinator can assign cases based on workload and timing of investigations. Additionally, if there were several Investigators ready to step in, it would be easier to conduct team investigations. To allow for the rotation of Investigators, multiple Investigators can be trained at a particular institution, and/or institutions can work with a consortium of colleges or universities in the surrounding geographical location to pool their Investigator resources. Pooling Investigators with like institutions can be a
more cost-effective solution, but confidentiality and privacy must be addressed.

Meeting With Other Coordinators Should Be Supported Practice
As noted earlier, the data from this study revealed that Title IX Coordinators were largely unable to meet with other Title IX Coordinators to discuss best practices. Most thought that it was a good idea in theory, but were unable to dedicate time to travel to another campus for meetings. My recommendation is that there should be support for Title IX Coordinators to have time away to discuss emerging Title IX issues with Coordinators at other local institutions. Collaboration with other Title IX Coordinators would be helpful to discuss best practices and the parts of the position that few others may understands. Self-care was a topic that kept coming up during the interviews as well. Meeting with others who understand what one is going through and who understand what one does could serve as part of Title IX Coordinator’s self-care strategy.

The ability to have a network of Title IX colleagues has been helpful for those who are a part of a university system. One of the participants who was part of a system of colleges discussed how much this helped him in his role. In a Chronicle of Higher Education article, Dawn Floyd, a newly hired Title IX Coordinator at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte, stated, “It helps to be a part of a public-university system with an ‘automatic network’ of counterparts” (June 2014, p. 13). Because private institutions largely do not have access to a system-wide network, they should be supported in creating a parallel network of institutions, similar to that of a state system.

Stakeholder Group Can Provide Shared Responsibility
While participants mentioned several Title IX committees, some Title IX Coordinators did not have a formal committee structure. Because the Title IX work needs to be spread among the campus community, it is advantageous for all Title IX Coordinators to have such a group. This group would not cost the institution additional funds and would create a panel of experts on the topic. Members should include the Title IX Coordinator, Deputy Title IX Coordinators, Investigators, prevention programing staff, campus police or campus safety personnel, faculty members, and possibly residence life and student conduct staff. Because each campus is different, the players at the table might also be slightly different from one institution to the next. The point, however, is that there needs to be a comprehensive approach to forming this group, focused not only on strengthening an institution’s Title IX work, but also on creating relationships and shared responsibility.

Time for Reflection Should Be Encouraged
One of the unanticipated findings from this study was the reflective process that the interview produced. Several of the Title IX Coordinators whom I interviewed were appreciative of the time to discuss what they were working on and reflect on the work they had done. I think that naturally, it is easy to focus on what programs and policies are not working. However, based on this study, I feel as though it is also important to take time to review and assess the Title IX work that seems to be producing positive results. The purpose of doing so is two-fold. First, this allows the Title IX Coordinator to comprehensively review all areas of Title IX compliance. Second, highlighting what is going well can be a helpful process for Title IX Coordinators. In The Chronicle of Higher Education, Karen Williamson, the Title IX Coordinator at Swarthmore College, stated, “A lot of national attention is focused on what’s not working, but I also try to pay attention to what’s working” (June 2014, p. 13).

Study Limitations and Direction for Future Research
There are a few limitations to this study that should be considered. The first is the sample size. Since I spoke only to Title IX Coordinators and there is just one at each institution, I was limited in the amount of interviews that I was able to conduct. The study would have been strengthened if I could have interviewed more Title IX Coordinators in other parts of the United States.

Future research should explore the experiences of Title IX Coordinators in a few ways. In an effort to expand these findings, a similar study should be conducted again in five years. Because this position has changed so drastically since the DCL in 2011, it is likely that it will continue to evolve over time, as will the regulations, with the added possibility of new legislation.

In addition to conducting this study again in five years, research in this area could be conducted longitudinally
with the Title IX Coordinators surveyed. Because self-care was a theme that consistently emerged during the interviews, turnover of these roles may be an issue. Title IX Coordinators deal with heavy and emotional topics on a daily basis, and will likely be unable to do the work for long periods of time, especially if they have another full-time role. A longitudinal study would reveal any turnover issues and likely uncover the rate at which Title IX Coordinators leave their positions.

Conclusion
This study explored the experiences and challenges that Title IX Coordinators face at small and medium-sized, private institutions. I was surprised to discover how many of the Title IX Coordinators surveyed had inherited their roles, and that a majority of them had been at their institutions for nine or more years. Although most of the Title IX Coordinators experienced significant challenges related to budgets, time, support, highly emotional topics, and balancing their multiple roles, all discussed how important this work was to them and the student body.

I expected to hear that the Title IX Coordinators drew a connection between their two positions. However, that was not the case. Very few of the Title IX Coordinators saw a connection between their multiple roles and, in fact, most observed a significant disconnect, which brought on several additional challenges, especially in balancing their disparate roles. Because of this lack of overlap between their two roles, many Title IX Coordinators felt pressed for time and experienced difficulties balancing their responsibilities. There are many difficulties involved with having two positions and inevitably, individuals cannot be fully invested in either role.

I also expected that it was going to be difficult to get the Title IX Coordinators to talk with me and fill out the questionnaire. Because Title IX is such a highly charged subject and one that involves highly confidential information, I expected that it would be difficult to gather data. This was not the case, since the Title IX Coordinators I interviewed were very interested in my results and appreciative of the study as a means for their voices to be heard. Several of the Title IX Coordinators thanked me for sitting down and asking them questions. They were excited to share what they had been doing on their campuses and they felt the interview process was helpful in examining their programs. Since the interview were a reflective process, they were able to think about and feel proud of their accomplishments, and reflect about where they saw gaps in their work.

Early in this article, I discussed the “Dear Colleague Letter” (DCL) of 2011. This letter was produced to motivate institutions of higher education to take an in-depth look at how they were handling sexual violence, make some drastic changes to address the violence, and develop better policies. Since the DCL was released, and based on the data I collected, it is clear that the position of Title IX Coordinator has grown beyond what it was before the letter’s publication. It was clear through the interviews I conducted that Title IX Coordinators are very passionate about the work they do. However, I do not think the intention of the DCL was for institutions to “shoulder tap” administrators that had no prior experience in Title IX or to place an extra responsibility on someone who already had a full-time role.

It seems as though Title IX Coordinators are definitely concerned about making sure they are following the law, but I think the spirit of the DCL has been lost. Title IX Coordinators should be doing more than just checking boxes on a compliance checklist, but there are great challenges presented by Title IX Coordinators occupying multiple roles. My hope is that Title IX Coordinators, especially those in this study and the colleagues that support them, are able to overcome the challenges they face and reduce the amount of sexual violence that occurs on their college campuses.

References


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