URGE Complaints and Reporting Policy for Williams College

This is what was found by the Williams GEOS+ URGE pod at Williams College regarding policies for handling complaints, the reporting process, resources, and possible outcomes. Some information was public; answers that were only found through follow up with contacts are noted.

The link(s) to the reporting policy at our organization are here:

If a case involves faculty or staff, the college policy listed in the Faculty handbook applies. See Section II-T: Non-Discrimination, Harassment, and Sexual Misconduct Policy (page 70-78), Outline of the Discrimination, Harassment, and Sexual Misconduct Grievance Procedures (page 78-82) and Appendix A Discrimination, Harassment, and Sexual Misconduct Grievance Procedures (161-176).

If only students are involved, the recommending reporting mechanism according to the faculty handbook is through the Dean of the College’s office. The Dean of the College page does not list anything about discrimination explicitly, but harassment is one of the potential violations listed under Social Misconduct.

The Institutional Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (IDEI) office has additional information on discrimination on their page, including a specific section on who a student can report the incident to.

The IDEI page links to the staff handbook for further information on reporting procedures. That is not viewable from off campus (though it is with a VPN connection), at which point you can follow the link to Discrimination Grievance Procedures. This page lists the positions (not names) to report discrimination, harassment, or sexual misconduct to for staff and faculty.

There is no online reporting form.

What mechanisms are available for reporting complaints, bias, microaggressions, harassment, and overt racism?

From the faculty and staff handbooks: “Reports of discrimination, harassment, or sexual misconduct may be brought directly to the Vice President for Institutional Diversity and Equity or the Assistant Vice President for Institutional Diversity and Equity/Title IX Coordinator. Reports may also be made to an appropriate deputy of the office (for students, the Dean of the College; for staff, the Director of Human Resources; for Faculty, the Dean of the Faculty) or relevant
American with Disabilities Act (ADA) officer, who will then work with the Office of Institutional Diversity and Equity to resolve the concern. Campus Safety and Security, local police, and state and/or federal agencies may also be contacted, either immediately or at any point during a college investigation. Normally, College investigations and hearings can occur simultaneously with external ones.”

*There is no specific reporting mechanism in place for complaints, bias, microaggressions, or other subtler forms of racism that do not rise to the level of discrimination or harassment.*

Williams College does not have an ombudsperson or other neutral third party to report to.

The designated individuals for reporting incidents are:

- Vice President for Institutional Diversity – Leticia Haynes
- Assistant Vice President for Institutional Diversity and Equity/Title IX Coordinator – Toya Camacho
- Dean of the College – Marlene Sandstrom
- Director of Human Resources – Danielle Gonzalez
- Dean of the Faculty – Safa Zaki

Reports cannot be made online. The reporting process is not anonymous. Police are not involved in the college’s process, but a parallel report to the police can be made by the person reporting.

**What are the outcomes or consequences for reported individuals?**

In cases involving respondents who are faculty, sanctions can be minor (“a reprimand, warning, or restriction for a limited period of time on the kinds of teaching and advising roles in which the faculty member may serve”), major (“suspension from service for a stated period”) or termination of their appointment.

Discrimination is not listed in the sanction rubric for students, but harassment by a student results in sanctions ranging from disciplinary probation through expulsion and is a reportable offense.

For cases involving only staff and/or faculty, reports can follow either the informal or formal process of resolution.

In the *informal* process, the Assistant VP for IDEI, the complainant, and the respondent come to an agreement about the facts and desired resolution of the case. The resolution takes the form of training, education, changes to work, academic, or housing assignments, discussion with the respondent’s supervisor, “no contact” directives, a facilitated discussion, and/or suspension.
In the **formal** process, parties involved are assigned trained advisors from the college staff and given reasonable accommodations during the process. An investigator hears statements from the respondent and complainant, asks follow-up questions, collects statements from others, and gathers evidence. The resulting report is reviewed by the Assistant VP for IDEI, and then the parties involved have a period to respond to the report, before it moves to the adjudication process. The panel consists of members of the Standing Grievance Panel and a member from the office of the Dean of the College, and must vote at least 4-1 that there is a preponderance of evidence showing a violation of the college’s non-discrimination policy. The panel recommends a sanction to the relevant senior administrator.

**What resources are available for individuals reporting?**

“In support of an individual’s request for confidentiality and the college’s interest in learning about incidents of discrimination, Williams College provides confidential advising: for students, the College Health Center and Integrative Well-being Services, the Chaplain’s office, and the Director of Sexual Assault Prevention and Response; for faculty and staff, the Employee Assistance Program. These advisors must still comply with anonymous reporting under federal and state law.”

In cases where a student is making a complaint against a professor, they can be removed from the class and finish the semester as an independent study.

No evidence of access to same-race counselors, etc, though mental health services has pushed hard to hire a more diverse group of counselors.

**What resources are available to groups raising issues or proposing changes?**

There is nothing formal, though there are often ‘town hall’ fora when specific issues arise on campus though there is no mechanism for information gathered from these events to be turned into policy or action. Student groups often organize protests, marches, sit-ins, etc, on specific topics such as Black Lives Matter. The college sometimes convenes ad hoc working groups or committees to address specific issues.

*Investigate the process for reporting complaints, microaggressions, harassment, and overt racism, and how these incidents are documented and addressed at different levels within your organization (e.g. lab/work group, department/division, university/organization).*

**Discussion for us as a group:** What happens when a student reports an incident to one of us, members of the faculty/staff, in regards to another student or faculty/staff member? Something that doesn’t rise to the level of a Title IX violation, i.e., doesn’t require mandatory reporting but is nonetheless troubling?