

Barnard College Joins List Of 94 Colleges Under Title IX Investigations

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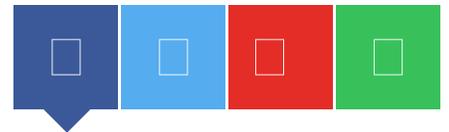


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NEW YORK — Barnard College, the women’s liberal arts school affiliated with Columbia University, is under federal investigation for how it handles sexual violence, the U.S. Department of Education confirmed Wednesday.

Barnard joins the University of San Diego and Purchase College, part of the State University of New York system, as one of the most recent institutions to come under review by the Education Department’s Office for Civil Rights. The agency is now conducting 97 investigations at 94 colleges and universities over concerns that the schools violated the gender equity law Title IX in their handling of sexual violence cases.

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OCR began an investigation of Barnard on Dec. 29, 2014. The school, officially known as Barnard College of Columbia University, is an undergraduate school affiliated with the New York-based Ivy League institution.

A group of students filed a federal complaint last year alleging that Columbia mishandled a number of disability cases, as well as cases involving sexual assault and harassment on campus. The complaint has received national attention, due in part to one of the complainants, Emma Sulkowicz, [carrying a mattress around campus for months](#) in protest of what she calls the school's mishandling of her alleged rape.

Since then, students involved in the complaint tell The Huffington Post, the Education Department has divided the complaint in two, with one complaint focusing on Barnard and another on Columbia's four main undergraduate and graduate colleges. Students say the Education Department has yet to determine whether it will investigate Columbia as a whole or not.

Department officials have declined to discuss the specifics of what prompted any of the investigations or how the Department is handling any complaints it's received.

"Barnard does not tolerate violence or discrimination of any kind, and we are deeply committed to maintaining a campus environment that is safe for every member of our community," Amy Zavadil, Barnard's associate dean for equity and Title IX coordinator, told HuffPost in a statement. "Senior administrators are carefully reviewing the OCR inquiry and will respond in accordance with applicable law, and in a manner consistent with our own core values as an institution. As this is an ongoing matter, it would be premature to comment any further at this time."

Investigations of this type focus on whether a school has violated the gender equity law Title IX, which prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex. Due to [court precedent](#) and federal interpretation, the law also covers sexual harassment and assault, and colleges must respond to reports of sexual misconduct whether or not a criminal investigation is initiated.

OCR concluded that six of the institutions it investigated [had violated Title IX in 2014](#). Each investigation resulted in a mandatory overhaul of school policy in handling such cases. Princeton University was also required to reimburse tuition costs for [three sexual assault victims](#).

The SUNY Purchase review launched on Monday, making it the first case to be opened for investigation in the new year. However, school officials declined to comment, saying they have not yet been notified of the federal inquiry.

The University of San Diego, which came under federal scrutiny on Dec. 22, 2014, confirmed its investigation was due to a student's complaint. USD declined to comment further.

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