

# **POLICY AND PROCEDURES FOR SUPPORTING PREGNANT AND PARENTING STUDENTS<sup>1</sup>**

Created: August 12<sup>th</sup>, 2022

## **I. POLICY STATEMENT**

Susquehanna University is committed to creating and maintaining a community where all individuals enjoy freedom from discrimination, including discrimination on the basis of sex. Sex discrimination, which can include discrimination based on pregnancy, marital status or parental status is prohibited by the University. We establish this policy and associated procedures for ensuring the protection and equal treatment of pregnant individuals, persons with pregnancy-related conditions, and new parents.

## **II. SCOPE OF POLICY**

The policy applies to all aspects of the University's program, including but not limited to admissions, educational programs and activities, hiring, leave policies, employment policies and health insurance coverage.

## **III. TITLE IX AND THE TITLE IX COORDINATOR**

The following individuals are responsible for coordinating Susquehanna University's efforts to comply with Title IX and this Policy:

Christiana Paradis, Director of Title IX Compliance (Title IX Coordinator), 570-372-4321 [paradis@susqu.edu](mailto:paradis@susqu.edu), Student Life

Grace Lowry, Deputy Title IX Coordinator for Employees and Senior Director of Human Resources, 570-372-4157, [lowryg@susqu.edu](mailto:lowryg@susqu.edu), Selinsgrove Hall

Amy Davis, Deputy Title IX Coordinator and Assistant Director of Inclusion & Diversity, 570-372-4590, [davisam@susqu.edu](mailto:davisam@susqu.edu), Degenstein Campus Center

Stephanie Johnson, Deputy Title IX Coordinator and Associate Director of Athletics, 570-372-4605, [johnsonstephanie@susqu.edu](mailto:johnsonstephanie@susqu.edu), Garrett Sports Complex

Please contact any of the above with questions regarding Title IX or this Policy. The Title IX Coordinator manages the Title IX Team and acts with independence and authority free from bias and conflicts of interest. The Title IX Coordinator oversees all resolutions under this Policy and these procedures. The members of the Title IX Team are vetted and trained to ensure they are not biased for or against any party in a specific complaint, or for or against Complainants and/or Respondents, generally.

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<sup>1</sup> Based on the ATIXA Model Policy titled, *Title IX Rights of Pregnant and Parenting* ©ATIXA. Used with permission.

To raise any concern involving bias, conflict of interest, misconduct, or discrimination by the Title IX Coordinator, contact the Vice President for Student Life and Dean of Students. Concerns of bias, misconduct, discrimination, or a potential conflict of interest by any other Title IX Team member should be raised with the Title IX Coordinator.

For complaints involving student conduct, questions may be directed externally to:  
Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights  
U.S. Department of Education

Office for Civil Rights  
400 Maryland Avenue, SW  
Washington, D.C. 20202-1100  
Telephone: 800-421-3481  
TDD#: 877-521-2172  
Email: [OCR@ed.gov](mailto:OCR@ed.gov)  
Web: <http://www.ed.gov/ocr>

#### **IV. JURISDICTION**

This policy applies to a student's right to access all of the University educational programs and activities free from discrimination.

#### **V. DEFINITIONS**

**Caretaking:** caring for and providing for the needs of a child.

**Medical Necessity:** a determination made by a qualified health care provider (of the student's choosing) that a certain course of action is in the patient's best health interests.

**Parenting:** the raising of a child by the child's parents in the reasonably immediate post-partum period.

**Pregnancy and Pregnancy-Related Conditions:** include (but are not limited to) pregnancy, childbirth, false pregnancy, termination of pregnancy, conditions arising in connection with pregnancy and recovery from any of these conditions.

**Pregnant Student/Birth Parent:** refers to the student who is or was pregnant. This policy and its pregnancy related protections apply to all pregnant persons, regardless of gender identity or expression.

**Reasonable Accommodations** (for the purpose of this policy): changes in the academic environment or typical operations that enables pregnant or students with pregnancy-related conditions to continue to pursue their studies and enjoy the equal benefits of the University.

#### **VI. FORMAL COMPLAINT PROCESS**

For any acts of sex or gender-based discrimination related to pregnancy or pregnancy-related conditions, please see the formal complaint process outlined in the University's *Policy and Procedures for Addressing Sex and Gender-Based Discrimination and Harassment*.

#### **VII. REASONABLE ACCOMODATIONS OF STUDENTS AFFECTED BY PREGNANCY, CHILDBIRTH, OR RELATED CONDITIONS**

- a. The University and its faculty, staff, and other employees will not require students to limit their studies as the result of pregnancy and pregnancy-related conditions.
- b. The benefits and services provided to students affected by pregnancy will be no less than those provided to students with temporary medical conditions.
- c. Students with pregnancy-related disabilities, like any student with a short-term or temporary disability, are entitled to reasonable accommodations so that they will not be disadvantaged in their courses of study or research and may seek assistance from the Title IX Office.
- d. No artificial deadlines or time limitations will be imposed on requests for accommodations, but the University is limited in its ability to impact or implement accommodations retroactively.
- e. Reasonable accommodations may include, but are not limited to:
  - a. Providing accommodations requested by a pregnant student to protect the health and safety of the student and/or the pregnancy (such as allowing the student to maintain a safe distance from hazardous substances);
  - b. Making modifications to the physical environment (such as accessible seating);
  - c. Providing mobility support;
  - d. Extending deadlines and/or allowing the student to make up tests or assignments missed for pregnancy-related absences;
  - e. Offering temporary remote learning options approved by faculty;
  - f. Excusing medically-necessary absences (this must be granted, irrespective of classroom attendance requirements set by a faculty member, department, or division);
  - g. Granting leave per the University's medical leave policy or implementing incomplete grades for classes that will be resumed at a future date; or
  - h. Allowing breastfeeding students reasonable time and space to pump breast milk in a location that is private, clean, and reasonably accessible. Bathroom stalls do not satisfy this requirement.

Nothing in this policy requires modification to the essential elements of any academic program. Pregnant students cannot be channeled into an alternative program or school against their wishes.

## **VIII. MODIFIED ACADEMIC RESPONSIBILITIES POLICY FOR PARENTING STUDENTS**

- a. Students with child caretaking/parenting responsibilities who wish to remain engaged in their coursework while adjusting their academic responsibilities because of the birth or adoption of a child or placement of a foster child may request an academic modification period during the first 3 months from the time the child entered the home. Extensions may be granted when additional time is required by medical necessity or extraordinary caretaking/parenting responsibilities.
- b. During the modification period, the student's academic requirements will be adjusted, and deadlines postponed as appropriate, in collaboration among the Title IX Office, the Center for Academic Success, the student's academic advisor and the appropriate academic department(s).

- c. Students seeking a period of modified academic responsibilities may consult with the Center for Academic Success or with the Title IX Office to determine appropriate academic accommodations requests. The Title IX Office will communicate all requests under this policy to the student's academic advisors and/or the Center for Academic Success unless the student specifically requests that their advisors be excluded. Students are encouraged to work with their advisors and faculty members to reschedule course assignments, lab hours, examinations, or other requirements, and/or reduce their overall course load, as appropriate, once authorization is received from the Title IX Office. If, for any reason, caretaking/parenting students are not able to work with their advisors/faculty members to obtain appropriate accommodations, students should alert the Title IX Office as soon as possible, and the office will help facilitate needed accommodations.
- d. In timed degree, certification or credentialing programs who seek accommodations upon the birth or placement of their child will be allowed an extension up to 3 months to prepare for and take preliminary and qualifying examinations and an extension of up to 3 months toward normative time to degree while in candidacy, to the extent those deadlines are controlled by the University. Longer extensions may be granted in extenuating circumstances.
- e. Students can request academic accommodations under this Policy regardless of whether they elect to take a leave of absence.
- f. While receiving academic accommodations, students will remain registered and retain benefits accordingly.

## **IX. LEAVE OF ABSENCE**

- a. As long as students can maintain appropriate academic progress, faculty, staff, or other University employees will not require them to take a leave of absence or withdraw from or limit their studies as the result of pregnancy, childbirth, or related conditions, but nothing in this policy requires modification of the essential elements of any academic program.
- b. Enrolled students may elect to take a leave of absence because of pregnancy and/or birth, adoption, or placement of a child. The leave term may be extended in the case of extenuating circumstances or medical necessity. (See the University's Medical Leave Policy for more information).
- c. Students taking a leave of absence under this Policy will provide notice of the intent to take leave 30 calendar days prior to the initiation of leave, or as soon as practicable.
- d. A voluntary interim emergency leave, a temporary leave from the University to accommodate a medical or mental health emergency, may be taken with the advance approval of the title IX Office, Center for Academic Success, and students' academic department(s), when medically necessary.
- e. Students who elect to take leave under this Policy may register under a medical leave to continue their eligibility for certain benefits. While registered under that status, students who choose to take a leave of absence under this Policy can elect to keep their health insurance coverage and continue residing in University housing, subject to the payment of applicable fees.
- f. To the extent possible, the University will take reasonable steps to ensure that upon return from leave, students will be reinstated to their program in the same status as when the leave began, with no tuition penalty.

- g. Continuation of students' scholarship, fellowship, or similar University-sponsored funding during the leave term will depend on the students' registration status and the policies of the funding program regarding registration status. Students will not be negatively impacted by or forfeit their future eligibility for their scholarship, fellowship, or similar University-funding by exercising their rights under this Policy.
- h. The Title IX office can and will advocate for student with respect to financial aid agencies and external scholarship providers in the event that a leave of absence places eligibility into question.

#### **X. STUDENT EMPLOYEE LEAVE**

- a. All student-employees will be entitled to the protections of the Family and Medical Leave Act.
- b. Pregnancy and related conditions will be treated as any other temporary disability for job purposes, including leave and benefits.
- c. Pregnancy and related conditions will be regarded as a justification for a leave of absence without pay for a reasonable period of time, at the conclusion of which employees will be reinstated to the status they held when the leave began or to a comparable position, without decrease in rate of compensation or loss of promotional opportunities, or any other right or privilege of employment.

#### **XI. RETALIATION AND HARASSMENT**

- a. Harassment of any member of the University's community based on sex, gender identity, gender expression, pregnancy or parental status is prohibited and will be governed by the University's *Policy and Procedures for Addressing Sex and Gender-Based Discrimination and Harassment*.
- b. Faculty, staff, and other University employees are prohibited from interfering with students' right to take leave, seek reasonable accommodations, or otherwise exercise their rights under this Policy.
- c. Faculty, staff, and other University employees are prohibited from retaliating against students for exercising the rights articulated by this Policy, including imposing or threatening to impose negative educational outcomes because students request leave or accommodation, file a complaint, or otherwise exercise their rights under this Policy.

#### **XII. HOUSING-RELATED ACCOMODATIONS**

Pregnant students' on-campus housing will not be altered based on pregnancy status unless requested by the pregnant student.

#### **XIII. DISSEMINATION OF THE POLICY AND TRAINING**

A copy of this policy will be made available to faculty, staff, and employees in annually required training and posted on the University's website. The University will alert all new students about this policy and the location of this policy as part of orientation. The Title IX Office will make educational materials available to all members of the University community to promote compliance with this policy and familiarity with its procedures.