



## Compliance Community

*System Compliance Program  
Office of Audits & Analysis*

### **Equal Employment Opportunity and Diversity**

An email from the Human Resources or Compliance department informing you that it is once again time to take an Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) course is often met with a groan and the thought that it is simply one more item to put on your already full to-do list. However, have you ever considered why EEO training is so important?

Information dissemination and training on EEO-related topics help ensure that everyone has an equal opportunity to compete for hiring, promotion, and other employment benefits. EEO is derived from federal, state, and local laws that govern all employment-related actions. While diversity (which is often confused with EEO) is not a law or requirement, it is a benefit of EEO practices that promotes acceptance of and respect for others while fostering a more creative and innovative workplace through combining different valuable talents, viewpoints, and experiences. Diversity has been shown to improve employee retention because employees are more likely to remain at an organization where they feel respected and valued for their unique perspectives.

The Texas State University System embraces an inclusive education and work environment free of unlawful discrimination or harassment. This organizational culture is achieved through a commitment to EEO and diversity. The TSUS values inclusiveness and respect and strives to identify and eliminate all types of discrimination among constituents. Compliance with both federal and state laws in this area is attained through proactively distributing applicable information and providing training programs on an ongoing basis.

The U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) is responsible for enforcing federal laws such as Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Title VII), which makes it illegal to discriminate against a job applicant or an employee because of the person's race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, or disability. EEOC also enforces the

Pregnancy Discrimination Act, the Equal Pay Act of 1963, the Age Discrimination in Employment Act of 1967, and Title I of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. Most recently, the Genetic Information Nondiscrimination Act of 2008 was added to Title VII, and makes it illegal to discriminate against employees or applicants because of genetic information, including information about an individual's genetic tests and the genetic tests of an individual's family members, as well as information about any disease, disorder or condition of an individual's family members.

In addition to the requirements outlined in federal law, Chapter 21, Section 21.010 of the State of Texas Labor Code requires institutions of higher education to provide employees with an employment discrimination training program that delivers information regarding applicable policies and procedures relating to employment discrimination, including employment discrimination involving sexual harassment. All employees are required to complete the training program within 30 days of hire date, and every two years thereafter.

Additional information on EEOC and diversity can be obtained on the [EEOC website](#), the [Texas Workforce Commission website](#), the Human Resources department of each TSUS institution, or by contacting the [TSUS Compliance Officer](#).

## *Community Spotlight*



## **Heather Varela, SHSU Human Resources Diversity Coordinator**

Heather Varela joined Sam Houston State University (SHSU) in July 2016 as the Diversity Coordinator. She works in the Human Resources department on Equal Employment Opportunity and Affirmative Action policy and procedures to ensure fairness in access to education and in all aspects of the employment process, including hiring, training, and promotion. Heather is a graduate of The University of Texas at Austin, and earned a Diploma in Hispanic Studies at The University of Salamanca in Spain. She is a certified Professional in Human Resources (PHR) with 19 years of Human Resources experience. Heather's previous work concentrated on employee relations, employment law, and staffing, and she has led training sessions on diversity and fairness in the employment process. She is married to a veteran of the U.S. Air Force and they have two funny, energetic children.

Heather's primary duties relate to Title VII (EEO) and federal contract compliance; however, she also works as a Title IX investigator. Heather recognizes diversity is a strength of the University and should be celebrated. She enjoys working with various diversity committees on campus to enhance appreciation of diversity in all its forms and is a member of the University Diversity Committee and the Diversity Leadership Conference Committee.

Last March, she helped the College of Humanities and Social Sciences Diversity Committee celebrate Women's History Month, arranging for former Houston Mayor, Annise Parker, to visit the campus and meet with students and employees. She is looking forward to the 14th Annual Diversity Leadership Conference, which will be held at SHSU on February 23-24, 2018. The conference is open to students, faculty, staff, and any interested members of the community.

Get information about the Sam Houston State University Diversity Leadership Conference [here](#).

### **Compliance Hotline**

The Texas State University System maintains a reporting hotline through a private contractor, EthicsPoint, to provide a confidential avenue for reporting concerns about potential waste, fraud, and abuse of resources, the lack of compliance with laws and regulations, or violations of the System's

Code of Ethics. A detailed description and the opportunity to make a report can be accessed [here](#).

## Subscribe

Please feel free to forward this newsletter to others who may be interested or who may benefit from the information. The goal is to expand readership to offer this ongoing resource to as many members of the TSUS community as possible. New readers can subscribe by using the link below.

## Subscribe

The Texas State University System is committed to complying with all applicable laws, regulations and policies. The System compliance program advises and collaborates with components to develop effective ways to mitigate compliance risks on TSUS campuses. Serving to advance the goals of the System and its institutions, the Compliance Office offers resources, education, information and guidance while promoting a culture of responsibility and accountability.

Feedback regarding the System compliance program or the Compliance Community newsletter is welcome. Please contact [Kelly Wintemute](#) with suggestions.

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