



Compliance Community

*System Compliance Program
Office of Internal Audit*

Community Spotlight



Shelly Vitanza, Director of Public Affairs, Lamar University

Shelly Vitanza is a corporate communicator with more than 30 years of experience in media relations, publishing, writing, broadcasting, and government and public relations. Ms. Vitanza serves as the Director of Public Affairs, and in that role is responsible for internal and external communication, media relations, and reputation risk mitigation. She is a graduate of Texas A&M University, is married with three children, and serves on several nonprofit boards including IEA Ben's Kids, the Symphony of Southeast Texas, Family Services of Southeast Texas, and Young Life. Ms. Vitanza enjoys reading, cooking, and spending time with family.

Communication and Compliance: Guest Column by Shelly Vitanza

Following the rules and being compliant with laws, policies, and procedures is more than just the right thing to do; it's critical to mitigating risks and protecting your institution's reputation.

As Director of Public Affairs, I must think of the many moving parts at our University, and be prepared to communicate the varying scenarios and solutions to the community via the media in the most positive light. There are inherent risks on a college campus, and additional risks can be reduced when policies and procedures are followed. One relatively new risk is the tendency of all people to use cell phones and other devices to post photos and videos anytime, anywhere, of anything and everything – and to upload their productions on social media, where infinite viewership potential exists. This is one of the areas in which I must anticipate what may happen, and work to protect the University's reputation.

With all the possibilities of what could happen on campus, having established rules, laws, policies, and procedures – and following them - eliminates the guesswork when the unexpected happens. In fact, following established procedures should be an institution's first line of defense in mitigating risks and to responding to a public incident.

A community is much more accepting and forgiving when it can be reported that rules, policies, and practices were in place and followed. For example, that a background check revealing a clear record was conducted prior to hiring a staff member who later comes under investigation for theft, or that the institution took immediate action when an allegation was made, and followed Title IX procedures, and sanctioned an individual appropriately helps protect the University.

When an institution is not compliant with established requirements, it jeopardizes its reputation, which influences all stakeholders. The trickle-down effect can impact donors, recruiting, retention, hiring, and employee morale, for years. There is too much at risk, reputationally and otherwise, to not comply with established laws and policies.

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](#).

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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.

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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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