

Online Learning and Title IX Proportionality Compliance

Brian D. Wood & Laura L. Miller, California University of Pennsylvania

While the traditional brick-and-mortar classrooms remain the predominant environment for university instruction, the demand and popularity of online education continues to increase. Many universities now have “virtual classrooms” whereby students are separated by significant geographic distances, often taking courses hundreds or thousands miles away from the institution’s physical campus. In many cases, students are completing their degrees entirely online while never stepping foot on university grounds until commencement.

The purpose of this study was to explore fulltime, 100% online undergraduate students’ impact on an institution’s athletic compliance as it relates to Title IX and the proportionality prong. The researchers’ home institution was selected for the case study and analysis. Approximately, 520 undergraduate students enrolled in two separate online programs were asked to participate in the study. An online survey was utilized and descriptive statistics were generated regarding student demographics, athletic interest and feasibility of participating in collegiate athletics. Additionally, the researchers sought and obtained comment from the Office of Civil Rights (OCR) in order to clarify the current policy as it relates to Title IX and online learning.

The data gathered from this study will serve as a foundation for future exploration of online education and its impact on Title IX compliance. Moreover, it is the hope that future analysis will result in appropriate policy implementation in order to preserve Title IX and its significance within collegiate athletics.