



UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS CREATES SEXUAL ABUSE POLICY TASK FORCE

The University of Illinois has created a task force pegged with the task of examining the university's policies and procedures when it comes to dealing with sexual abuse. The school formed the team in response to the sexual abuse scandal rocking Penn State University right now according to University President Michael Hogan. Hogan remarked about the task force during his meeting with the Board of Trustees earlier this month. A series of phases will be used by the task force when it conducts its examination. The task force will write a letter, or another type of communication, that will be submitted to the University community. The letter, or other type of communication, will reiterate the fact that "laws and policies apply to all members of our community, irrespective of position or level," Hogan told the Board of Trustees, according to the Daily Illini. The message sent forth by Hogan also emphasizes that those who witness sexual abuse, misconduct, or criminal behavior are required by University policy to report the incident they witnessed to the proper authorities. Also to be notified are the supervisors and administrators of the university. The task force will also investigate federal, state, and University laws that cover child sex abuse and other types of misconduct. The task force will study situations involving background checks being conducted. Maureen Parks, the executive director of Human Resources at the University, has been asked by Hogan to make sexual harassment training for all employees of the University mandatory. A special emphasis in those training sessions will be made on summer music camp and youth sports hosted at the university. The University will also develop "appropriate communications to inform the public of the steps we are taking to provide additional safeguards in these settings," Hogan said. "All of us are saddened and shocked by the tragic news from Penn State, regarding the handling of sexual abuse reports dating back several years," he said. Christopher Kennedy, the Board of Trustees Chairman, was thanked by Hogan for the board's interest in how the school is geared to prevent similar situations from happening. Hogan scheduled a cabinet meeting immediately after the sexual allegations surfaced at Penn State to look at the ways the school handles these problems and reports the incidents. Kennedy also asked Hogan to perform an investigation into the policies and then report to the board in the future. "(This should be) an overreaching mandate to protect kids," Kennedy said. "That should be a simple message." The University's General Counsel, Tom Bearrows, will lead the task force. The Office of the Ethics and Human Resources will also have employees on the task force. Penn State President Graham Spanier and head football coach Joe Paterno were fired by the board of trustees as a result of the child sexual abuse allegations. Former defensive coordinator Jerry Sandusky was arrested days before those two men were fired for molestation charges stemming from 1994 to 2008.

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