

Office for Equity & Accessibility

2022-2023 Annual Report



EQUITY & ACCESSIBILITY
VIRGINIA TECH.

From the Associate Vice President

Each year presents distinctive challenges and opportunities for any university's efforts toward building a safe and inclusive culture. In Virginia Tech's [Office for Equity and Accessibility \(OEA\)](#), we are positioned not only to respond in difficult moments but also to enable progress on our path to an environment free of barriers to equity in education and employment. We approach our charge with care, commitment to our [core values](#), and the understanding that our work has ripple effects well beyond the university.

As I reflect on our office's 2022-23 goals to expand access to our resources, increase education and outreach initiatives, develop sustainable models for gender-based violence prevention, and further improve campus accessibility, I am encouraged by our team's achievements, including but not limited to:



- Developing and sharing our process for providing accommodations to employees experiencing limitations related to pregnancy and childbirth, per regulatory changes in the [Pregnant Workers Fairness Act](#).
- Preparing the university for the enactment of new federal regulations related to Title IX.
- Partnering with the [Sexual Violence Prevention Initiative \(SVPI\)](#) - which was established through the efforts of the [Sexual Violence Culture and Climate Work Group \(SVCC\)](#) - to launch a universitywide sexual violence prevention campaign and provide recommendations for a sustainable prevention model.
- Providing advanced training in nondiscrimination policies and procedures for senior administrative leaders.
- Delivering affirmative action training to Human Resources practitioners and directors.
- Expanding educational offerings on conflict resolution to include a three-day session on restorative justice practices.
- Contributing expertise to the [Campus Accessibility Working Group \(CAWG\)](#), which identified solutions such as the construction of new on-campus pathways and the adoption of best practices for digital accessibility.
- Crafting or contributing to more than a dozen strategic articles and messages on physical and digital accessibility and sexual violence prevention - as well as numerous notices on OEA's services - published in [Virginia Tech News](#).

We are grateful for continued collaboration and engagement with our institutional partners and colleagues in Student Affairs; Services for Students with Disabilities; Human Resources; Faculty Affairs; the Women's Center; Inclusion and Diversity; Campus Planning, Infrastructure, and Facilities; Information Technology; Technology-enhanced Learning and Online Strategies; Communications and Marketing; and others.

Fostering a culture of belonging and respect has its complexities. Together, through our daily work, we find ways to overcome the challenges and create space for every individual to feel valued.

We offer the following annual report to illustrate this significant work and document trends from the 2022-23 year. With the exception of the affirmative action and search exemption information, which is based on the federal fiscal year of October 1, 2022, to September 30, 2023, the data in this report reflect the academic year from August 1, 2022, to July 31, 2023.

In sharing this view of our current campus climate, I look forward to the new ways the community will combine efforts to create a more equitable and accessible Virginia Tech - free from harassment and discrimination - where all employees and students can succeed in the years to come.

Sincerely,

Kelly Oaks
Associate Vice President
Office for Equity and Accessibility

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Our Office's Role

OEA engages in the following activities to further Virginia Tech's commitment to learning and working environments that protect against harassment and discrimination, consistent with our Principles of Community:

- Develop a strong and viable affirmative action program for the university and assess the university's progress toward full equal employment opportunity for women, minorities, protected veterans, and individuals with disabilities.
- Review requests for search exemptions to determine if there are compelling justifications to limit equal employment opportunity in our hiring practices.
- Provide reasonable accommodations to employees with disabilities and oversee institutional practices to ensure physical and programmatic accessibility for students, employees, and visitors.
- Develop and deliver training programs to inform members of our campus community of their rights and responsibilities under Policy 4075: University Accommodations of Persons with Disabilities, Policy 1025: Harassment, Discrimination, and Sexual Assault, and Policy 1026: Title IX Sexual Harassment and Responsible Employee Reporting.
- Respond promptly to allegations of conduct prohibited by the university's nondiscrimination and anti-harassment policies.
- Fulfill our institutional commitment to respond to reports of sexual and gender-based misconduct.
- Serve on campus, community, state, and national committees and boards focused on civil rights, equity, affirmative action, accessibility, and inclusion.

In addition to our response efforts, we focus heavily on strategic partnerships, community engagement, and professional association leadership to ensure the campus fulfills its commitment to equity and accessibility. OEA team members:

- Coordinate and provide administrative guidance to the Campus Accessibility Working Group (CAWG), an ongoing university priority.
- Partner with the Division of Information Technology, Technology-enhanced Learning and Online Strategies (TLOS), and Communications and Marketing to lead campus efforts supporting digital accessibility in all university communications.
- Align efforts with the Division of Campus Planning, Infrastructure, and Facilities and other campus partners to implement improvements for physical accessibility on the university's campuses.
- Collaborate with the Division of Human Resources to ensure equitable hiring processes.
- Chair and advise the President's Sexual Violence Culture and Climate Work Group (SVCC) to develop a sustainable model for sexual violence prevention.
- Maintain active membership in the National Industry Liaison Group to champion effective relationships between federal contractors and the federal agency that oversees contractor compliance.
- Engage in campus governance activities via roles in the Commission on Equal Opportunity and Diversity, Administrative and Professional Faculty Senate, Commission on Administrative and Professional Faculty Affairs, and Staff Senate.

Affirmative Action

As a federal contractor, Virginia Tech takes proactive steps to ensure equal employment opportunity for women, minorities, covered veterans, and individuals with disabilities. We continually evaluate our personnel processes, analyze our recruiting efforts, and develop action-oriented programs to succeed in our efforts.

In 2020, OEA received approval from the [U.S. Department of Labor Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs \(OFCCP\)](#) to implement a functional affirmative action plan (FAAP) structure for the university thus allowing senior management areas with 50 or more employees to develop individual affirmative action plans. Nationally, Virginia Tech leads the charge within higher education to implement this format and serves as a resource to other higher education institutions considering the FAAP structure.

During the past year, the affirmative action team:

- Welcomed a new director and senior affirmative action specialist.
- Worked collaboratively with the Division of Human Resources and college diversity leaders to develop and implement plans, as well as revise existing processes, that address barriers to equal employment opportunity.
- Conducted senior management briefings with the 26 leaders of our FAAPs to ensure they understand their successes, challenges, and opportunities in diversifying the workforce.
- Provided training to aid search committees in conducting equitable and fair hiring processes.
- Provided specialized training to assist the campus community in understanding affirmative action and our obligations as a federal contractor.

Members of OEA's affirmative action team hold membership in the National Industry Liaison Group and in a regional industry liaison group. These groups comprise a consortium of federal contractors and subcontractors who work in partnership with federal agencies to achieve equal employment opportunity for all employees. Their efforts are critical to strengthening the relationships federal contractors have with the OFCCP and ensuring contractors have a voice in regulatory changes.

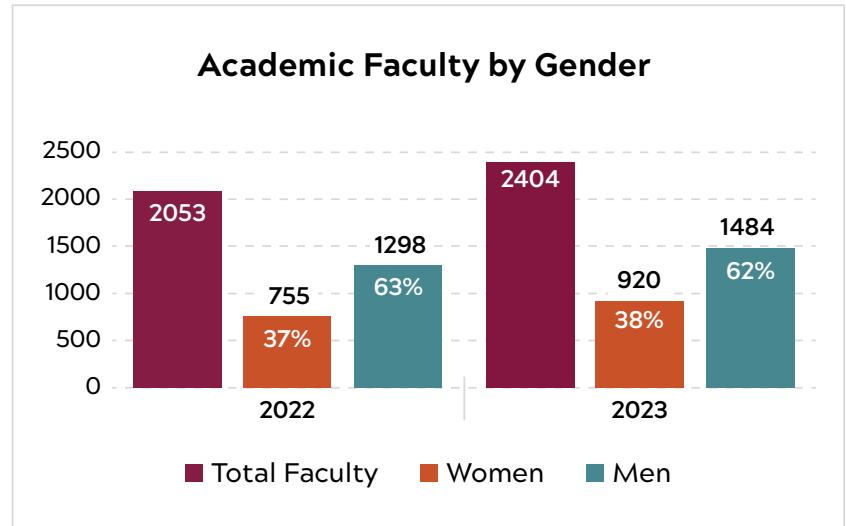
University Workforce Data

The affirmative action team takes a snapshot of the university's workforce annually on Oct. 1 to evaluate successes and challenges in diversifying the campus as well as to track our progress toward full alignment with the core values and priorities as outlined in the 2020 strategic plan: [The Virginia Tech Difference: Advancing Beyond Boundaries](#).

As of the third quarter of 2023, the overall gender distribution at Virginia Tech was 49.3 percent men and 50.3 percent women, with 0.4 percent of employees identifying in other categories. Men represented majorities in the teaching and research faculty categories whereas women represented 56.7 percent of administrative and professional (A/P) faculty. For overall race and ethnicity distribution, 65.2 percent of employees identified as white. Among populations of color, individuals identifying as Asian represented a majority at 17.4 percent (Workforce and Diversity Metrics, CY 2023 Quarter 3, Division of Human Resources).

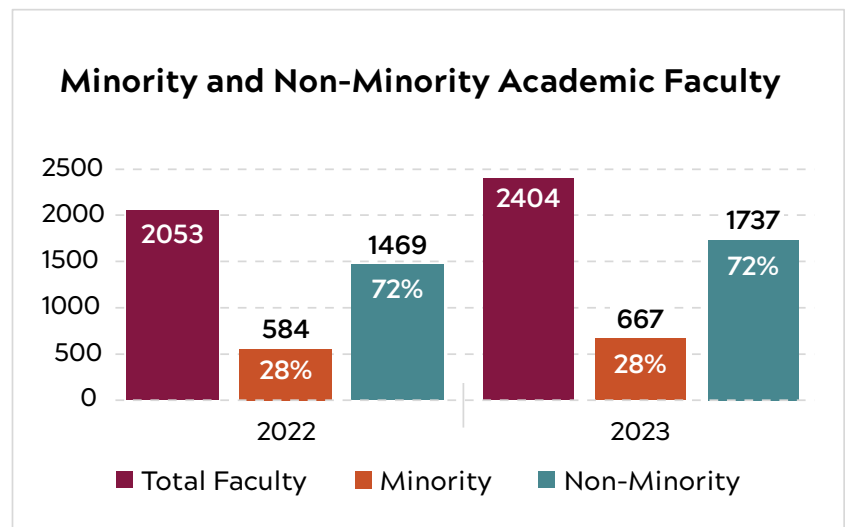
In 2022 and 2023, the percentage of women in tenure track, tenured, non-tenure track, and research faculty positions increased slightly to 38 percent (**Figure 1**). The percentage of minorities in those categories also remained constant at 28 percent year over year (**Figure 2**). Within A/P faculty and staff job categories, percentages increased slightly for women and minorities (**Figures 3 and 4**).

Figure 1



NOTE: 2023 faculty totals include part-time faculty positions. These part-time roles were not included in 2022.

Figure 2

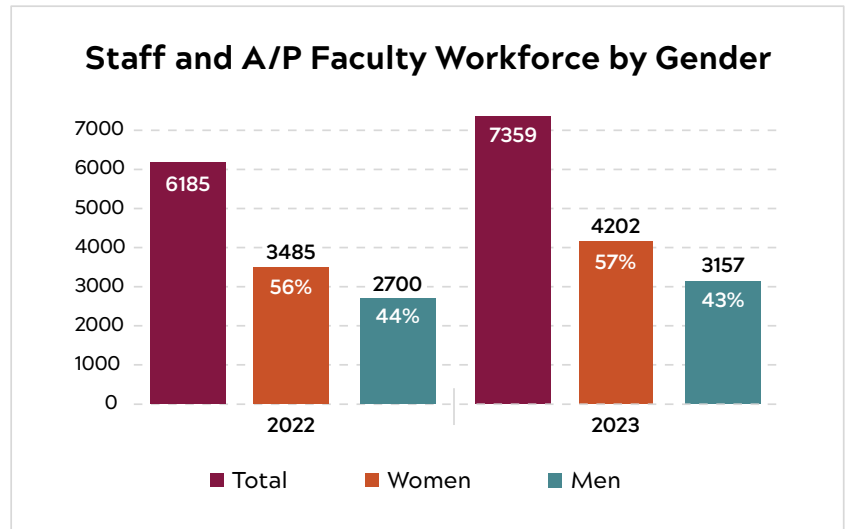


The overall representation of veterans in the workforce across all employment categories remained constant at 3 percent. As a [Virginia Values Veterans \(V3 Program\)](#) certified employer for the Commonwealth of Virginia, one of the university's in-house recruiters attends workshops, hosts virtual job fairs, and visits military installation bases in a proactive approach to recruit and communicate with the [university's Veteran Caucus](#) and the veteran community about the importance of self-identification.

As reported in Banner, 2.6 percent of Virginia Tech employees self-identify as having a disability. The affirmative action team revised and updated the Voluntary Self-Identification Form for People with Disabilities to reflect the most recent categories of disabilities consistent with guidelines from the OFCCP. Additionally, OEA began regular communications to university employees throughout the year to encourage them to self-identify.

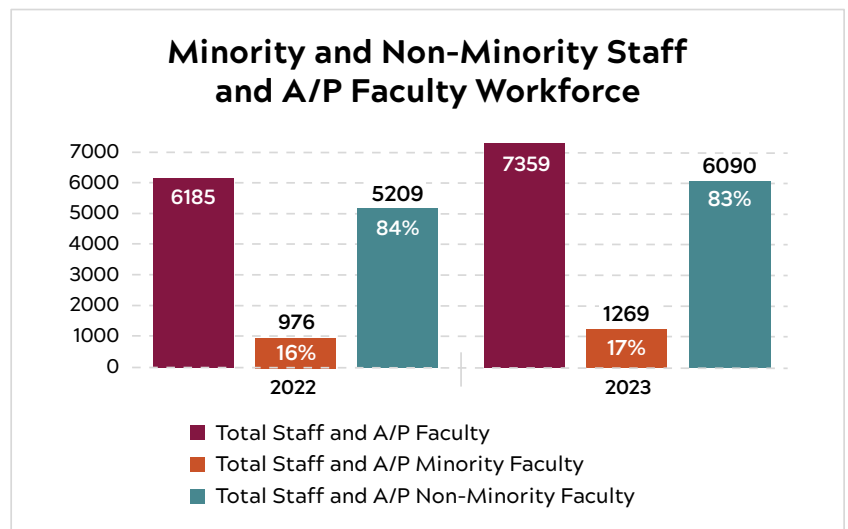
Working in collaboration with colleagues in the [Division of Human Resources](#), [Office for Inclusion and Diversity](#), and [Office of the Executive Vice President and Provost](#), the affirmative action team will continue to evaluate our efforts to improve the demographic representation of our workforce.

Figure 3



NOTE: 2023 staff and A/P faculty totals include part-time staff and A/P faculty positions. These part-time roles were not included in 2022.

Figure 4



Note: Data include tenure-track and tenured faculty, non-tenure track faculty, and research faculty.

Source: Snapshot of workforce Oct. 1, 2022, and Oct. 1, 2023, Virginia Tech Main Campus Functional Affirmative Action Plan, using data from Banner Human Resources Information System.

Search Exemptions

Virginia Tech is committed to providing equal employment opportunity for all qualified individuals. In support of this commitment, competitive searches are conducted to fill many of our vacancies. There are some instances in which the competitive process is not used, and the positions are filled using the search exemption process when specific criteria are met.

During the 2022 affirmative action plan year of Oct. 1, 2022, to Sept. 30, 2023, 347 search exemptions were processed by OEA. Most of these exemptions were for individuals who self-identify as men in the category of gender (**Figure 5**) and as white in the category of race and ethnicity (**Figure 6**). The majority of requests were for research faculty roles at 49 percent, followed by teaching and research (T&R) faculty at 36 percent; at 14 percent, A/P faculty had the lowest percentage.

Figure 5

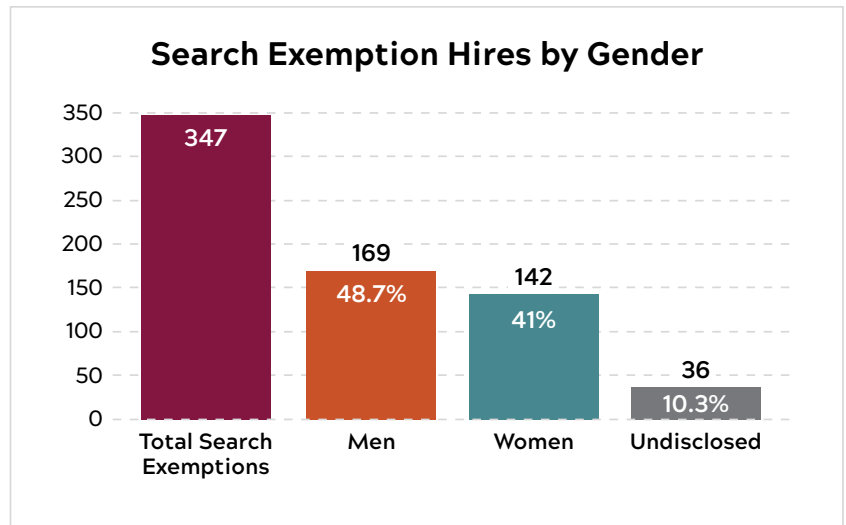
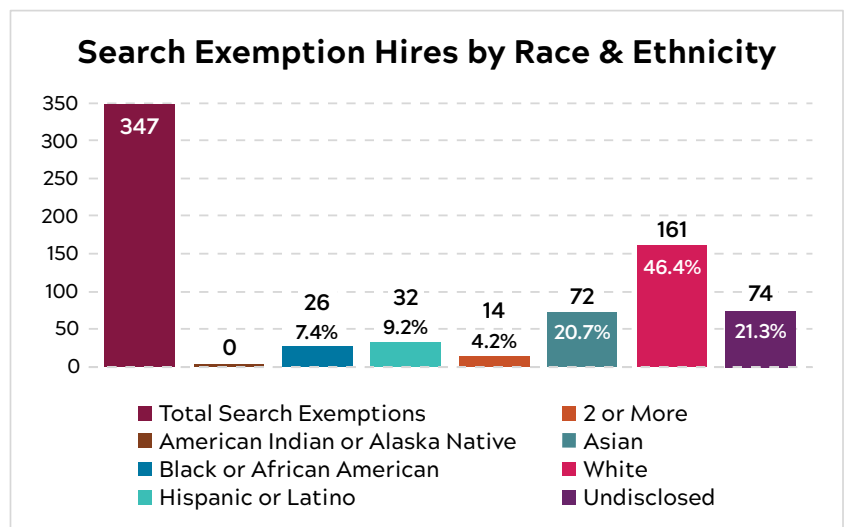


Figure 6



Note: No Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islanders were hired via the search exemption process during the reporting year.

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Accessibility

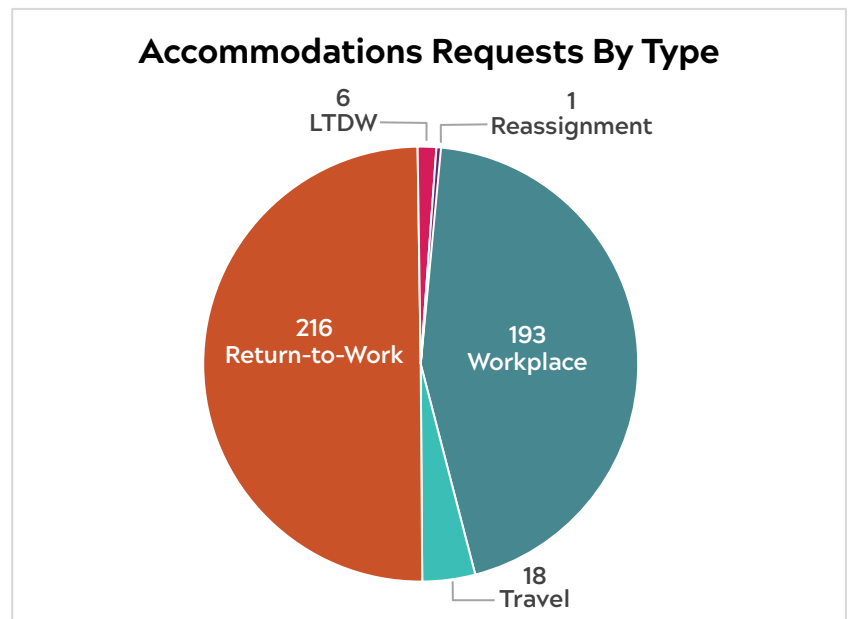
Virginia Tech is committed to equal employment and education opportunity for individuals with disabilities and complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), as amended; the Rehabilitation Act, as amended; and other state and local laws that apply to individuals with disabilities. The ADA and Accessibility Services team handles Title I employee accommodation requests and authorizes reasonable accommodations per Policy 4075: University Accommodations of Persons with Disabilities for qualified employees with disabilities.

ADA and Accessibility Services received 434 requests for accommodations during the August 1, 2022 - July 31, 2023 annual reporting period. Of those requests, 297 were authorized. Reasons accommodations were not provided included: employee no longer needed accommodation (74), no response from employee (38), no reasonable accommodation (16), pending determination (6), referred to Human Resources (2), and referred to Services for Students with Disabilities (1). Of the 74 employees who no longer needed accommodations, more than half (48) were classified as return to work (RTW). Reasons for the RTW employees no longer needing accommodations included returning to work at full duty or utilizing another benefit.

The majority of accommodation requests were return-to-work cases (216) as shown in **Figure 7**. The ADA team received requests for 193 workplace accommodations, 18 travel accommodations, six long-term disability working (LTDW) accommodations, and one reassignment.

As shown in **Figure 8**, there were 370 physical health-related accommodation requests and 64 mental health-related accommodation requests.

Figure 7



Outreach and Training

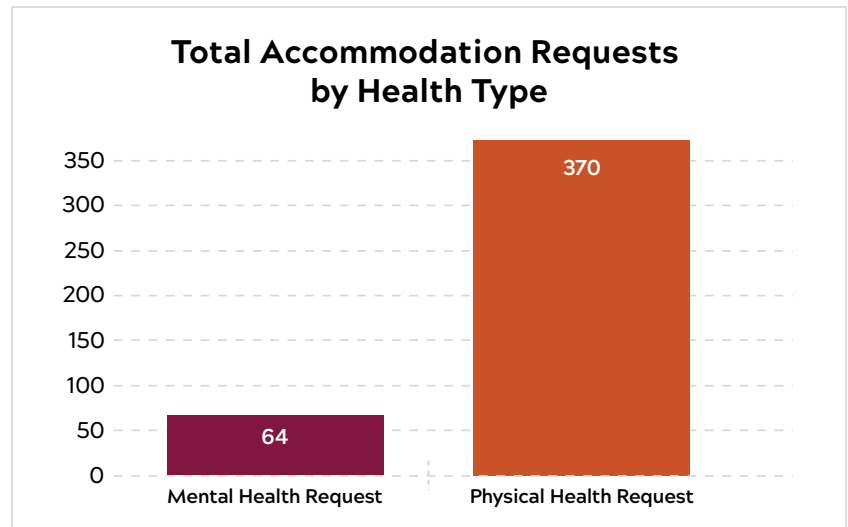
The team offers educational and outreach opportunities throughout the year. These include departmental trainings, resource fairs, ADA Liaisons Network meetings, graduate student trainings, educational trainings, new employee orientations, and National Disability Employment Awareness Month events. During the reporting period, the team provided 110 training and outreach opportunities for 5,986 members of the university community – a 182 percent increase in participants year over year. Participants included graduate students, supervisors, HR division directors and managers, staff, faculty, and undergraduate students.

Physical Accessibility

The campus ADA architect ensures compliance with the [ADA Standards for Accessible Design](#) in all new construction and renovations. This role:

- Evaluates, assesses, and improves accessibility in existing campus structures.
- Educates the campus community on accessibility through presentations, trainings, and consultations.
- Investigates and works with campus teams to resolve barrier reports.
- Collaborates with construction personnel on a wide range of accessibility-related issues on construction projects such as ramps, walkways, and building interiors.
- Works with numerous departments across disciplines on the most beneficial and cost-effective ways to address and correct complex accessibility issues on the Blacksburg and Washington, D.C., area campuses.

Figure 8



In the past year, 36 barrier reports were filed and all were resolved. Those reports involved doors or door operators (11), accessible routes (10), parking (4), access to instructional spaces (3), elevators (2), and other issues (6).

The architect has developed a database of accessibility issues in existing buildings and facilities on campus; 40 percent of the documented issues have been addressed. Through the identification and cataloging of these issues, potential projects can be generated for consideration by the university's renovations group and the pathways enhancement crew. In the reporting year, the architect completed a comprehensive evaluation and provided prioritized recommendations for Saunders Hall.

Additionally, the campus ADA architect assessed existing parking conditions and advised on reconfigurations of parking areas to benefit the entire campus community. This included relocating ADA accessible parking spaces to more advantageous areas that would support shorter travel distances for individuals with disabilities.

Digital Accessibility

The digital accessibility officer oversees online and electronic accessibility compliance at Virginia Tech, leading efforts to create and streamline processes for digital accessibility testing for products used within websites such as platforms and systems for education, learning management, communications, payments, and registration procured by the university.

In the reporting year, the officer conducted numerous classes, seminars, and consultations on digital accessibility, including 28 classes related to compliance and accessibility and 10 state and national conference presentations. Additionally, the officer updated [University Policy 7215: Information Technology Accessibility](#) and wrote the language for digital accessibility to be included in procurement contracts.

The incumbent's digital accessibility work earned the Spotlight Award from the [Virginia Higher Education Accessibility Partners](#) in 2023.

Civil Rights Compliance and Conflict Resolution

OEA's civil rights compliance and conflict resolution team guides the university's efforts to maintain working, learning, and living environments free from discrimination, harassment, and retaliation. During the reporting year, our team led efforts to strengthen the process for providing reasonable accommodations to any university employee who experiences a limitation due to pregnancy or childbirth. We also focused on increasing our visibility to students and raising awareness of students' rights to report incidents of discrimination and harassment, regardless of whether the reported misconduct involves another student, faculty, staff, or any other member of the university community. We continue to offer a variety of education programs regarding the scope and application of the university's nondiscrimination policies, including Policy 1025 and Policy 1026. And, as always, we continue to provide a prompt and equitable response to reports of discrimination, harassment, and retaliation.

Response to Reports of Prohibited Conduct

Essential to our team's mission to maintain working, learning, and living environments free from discrimination and harassment is our duty to provide a prompt response to reports of incidents that may fall within the scope of the university's nondiscrimination policies, particularly Policy 1025. When we receive a report, with rare exception, we will reach out to the individual or individuals reported to have been directly impacted by discrimination or harassment within two business days. We resolve reports in one of four ways: outreach, consultation, informal resolution, or formal complaint and resolution. A report may result in a complaint and investigation from our office, depending on a number of factors that include the expressed wishes of any person impacted by the reported incident.

Summary of Reports of Discrimination, Harassment, and Retaliation

In the 2022-23 academic year, the team received 154 reports of potential discrimination, harassment, or retaliation – a decrease from the previous reporting year. Reports were tracked and grouped into major categories of classes that receive protection under Policy 1025 (**Figure 9**). Reports about discrimination based on race, color, and national origin are grouped into a single category (“race, color, origin”) that accounts for about a fifth of reports. Reports about discrimination based on sex, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, and gender expression (“sex”) account for a little under half of reports. Other statistically significant categories include disability and retaliation. The “other” category includes reports of discrimination based on age, genetic information, political affiliation, and military status. A single report can – and often does – include multiple bases of discrimination. In such cases, the reports count in all applicable categories.

Additionally, as shown in **Figure 10**, we tracked whether parties impacted by alleged prohibited conduct were undergraduate students, graduate or professional students, employees, or members of other categories (i.e., unaffiliated with the university or identity unknown). About one half of complainants were employees and about 40 percent were students (about 30 percent undergraduates and 10 percent graduate students).

Figure 11 illustrates how reports were resolved. The plurality, just over 40 percent, concluded with consultation. About 30 percent were resolved through a resolution process, such as an investigation or informal resolution. The remainder were resolved after outreach, typically with no response to our outreach.

Prompt and Thorough Response to Complaints

Our team serves as an unbiased, impartial place to file a complaint alleging discrimination or harassment to the university. When we receive a complaint, we provide a response that is both prompt and thorough. While we try to resolve every complaint within 75 days from the date it is filed, in practice, we cannot sacrifice any amount of thoroughness to achieve promptness. In each reporting period, we expect that some complaints will take longer to resolve. Therefore, the team starts each year with the goal of resolving 80 percent of complaints within 75 days or fewer. In the most recent reporting period, we met this goal by resolving 91 percent

Figure 9

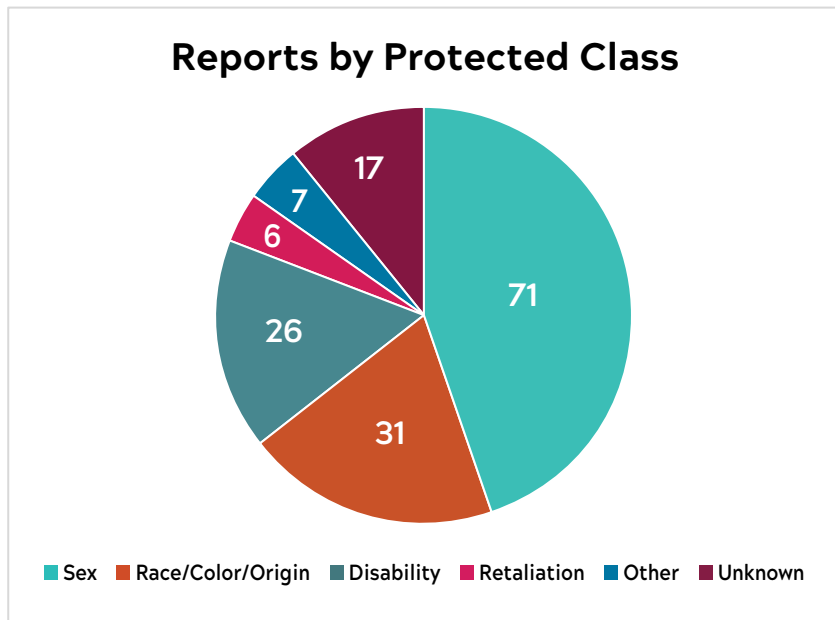
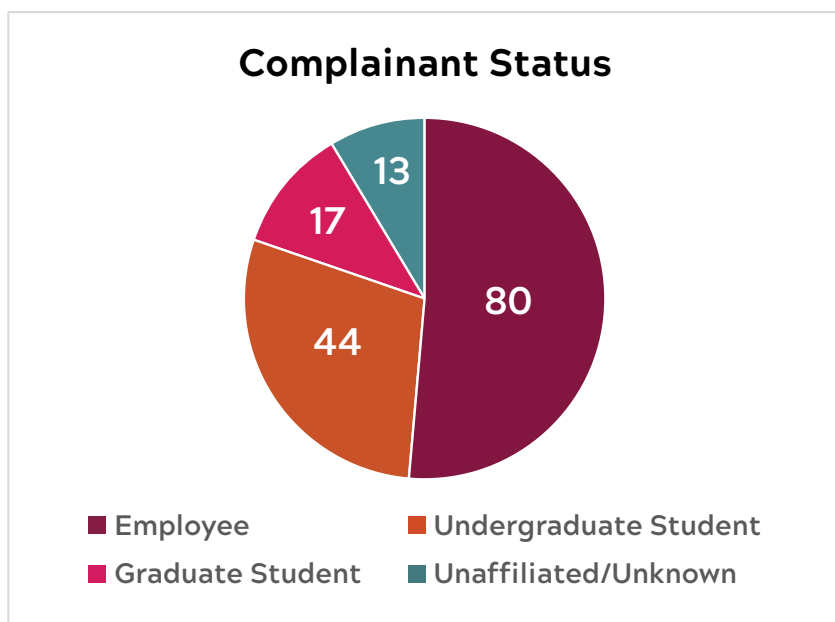


Figure 10



of complaints within 75 days or fewer. It took an average of 32 days for complaints to resolve; the median complaint resolved in 22 days.

Training and Education Efforts

To maintain environments free from discrimination and harassment, we depend on university leaders – administrators, managers, supervisors – and all employees. Our mandatory civil rights compliance training is the foundation of our efforts to enhance understanding of nondiscrimination policies and reporting responsibilities. New hires complete the training within 90 days of their first day, and all employees are expected to retake the compliance training every two years. **Figure 12** shows how many employees completed compliance training in the reporting year in comparison to the three previous academic years.

Each year, we explore and implement innovative ways to augment the compliance training and engage with key partners to provide education about the university’s nondiscrimination policies. Topics include reporting requirements, prevention, and even in-depth information about the civil rights laws and regulations that underlie the team’s work. This year, we offered an advanced training in nondiscrimination policies and procedures attended by representatives from leadership groups in most of the university’s senior administrative units. We plan to continue to offer the advanced training upon request.

Figure 11

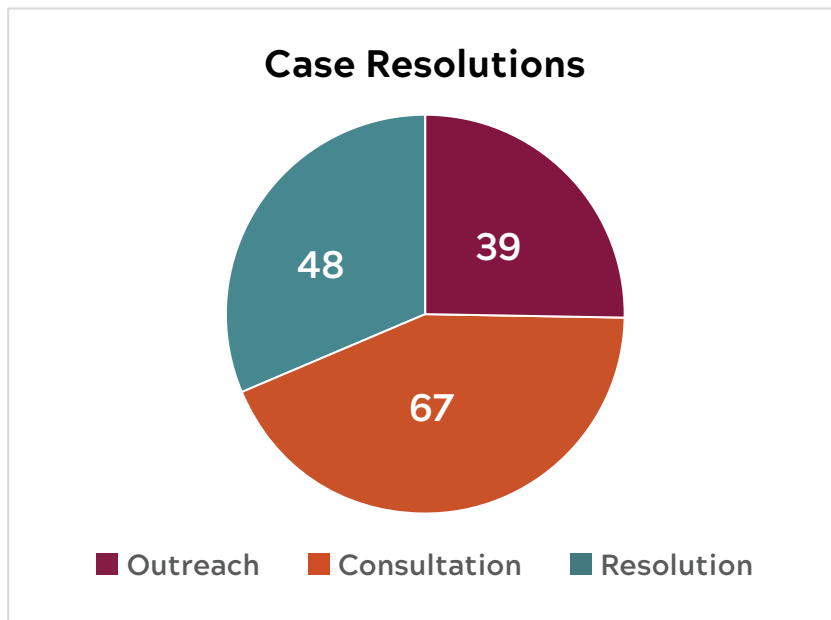
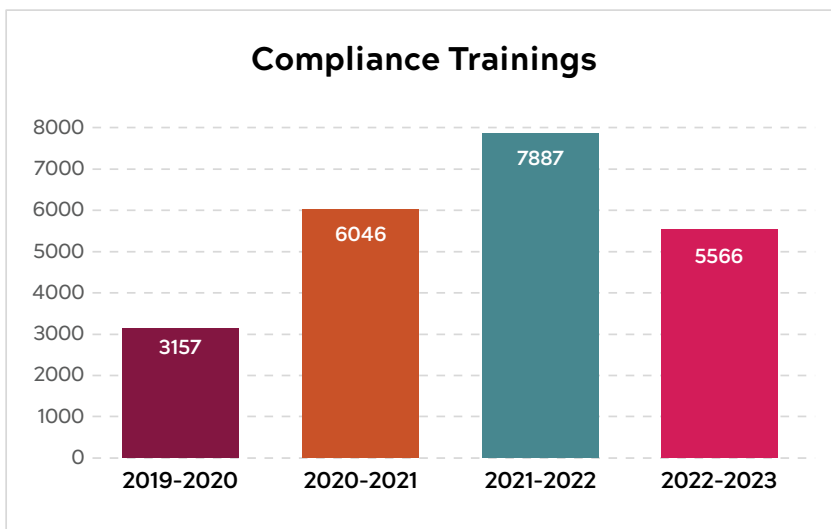


Figure 12



Conflict Resolution Services

We take the view that a great civil rights process must, when possible, empower parties and stakeholders to make the choices that are best for them. Our civil rights compliance and conflict resolution team offers a range of opportunities for employees to resolve conflicts and concerns informally – meaning without filing a complaint and participating in a formal process. Participation in a conflict resolution service or process is always voluntary, and services range from individual conflict coaching sessions to department- or office-wide climate reviews. The goal of these services is always to look forward and explore ways to strengthen communication and increase collaboration and inclusion. In the reporting year, we provided individual conflict coaching sessions to more than 150 students and employees, and more than 1,000 members of the university community received training in effective conflict resolution and communication skills. We also led efforts to raise awareness of the variety of available conflict resolution options, including by hosting a workshop designed to provide a foundation for a cohort of 25 university leaders to incorporate concepts of restorative justice into university processes.

Equity Services in the Washington, D.C., Area

Reporting to the director of compliance and conflict resolution, OEA's equity manager is based in the greater Washington, D.C., metro area and serves as a regional, in-person point of contact for questions and concerns related to the university's nondiscrimination policies. The equity manager works with our partners, such as the [Cook Counseling Center](#), human resources, and the [university ombuds](#) and [graduate ombuds](#) offices, to create a robust network of support for the region's students, faculty, and staff.

During the reporting year, in addition to hosting regular office hours across [Virginia Tech's campuses in the Washington, D.C., region](#), the equity manager co-facilitated or co-hosted events for students and employees, and provided conflict resolution for faculty and staff in the region.

Title IX

OEA's Title IX team is dedicated to addressing discrimination on the basis of sex, including sexual harassment and violence. In collaboration with partners across the university, the team works to respond to reports of harassment and violence, offering support measures to limit the significant impact of those experiences and stewarding an equitable process to investigate and resolve complaints. The office works diligently to ensure that Virginia Tech's policies and procedures comply with relevant laws and are in service of the university community. Underscoring the team's work is the goal of creating a university community free from sex-based discrimination and harassment and a university culture that protects against sexual violence.

Responding to Reports

During the reporting period, the Title IX team responded to 364 reports of sexual harassment, including sexual violence, intimate partner violence, and stalking. In addition to investigating 25 formal complaints, Title IX staff provided meaningful support services aimed at restoring access to a safe and equitable academic environment to 131 students. For many students, that support was critical to continuing their academic careers. To provide a full picture of these issues impacting the Virginia Tech community, we provide data on all official reports of sexual harassment and violence regarding students via a separate Title IX annual report on the [SAFE at VT website](#).

Monitoring Policy and Practice

The Title IX team regularly monitors and reviews university policy and process related to Title IX. The Title IX coordinator leads an advisory group comprised of key university partners who meet on a weekly basis to ensure that all reports of sexual harassment and violence receive a consistent and appropriate response. The coordinator also hosts the Student Title IX Advisory Council to garner feedback directly from students on issues related to university policy and processes for responding to student experiences of harassment and violence. The team also held two retreats for all university administrators responsible for handling Title IX matters. Those full-day retreats were comprised of training on university processes, building strong partnerships, and establishing a clear and seamless process for addressing reports.

During the reporting period, the U.S. Department of Education announced that it would enact new federal regulations related to Title IX. Though the final rule has not yet been enacted, the Title IX team has worked to prepare the university for this imminent change. The team reviewed the department's proposed draft with the Student Title IX Advisory Council for feedback, established a standing policy and practice committee based on recommendations from the Sexual Violence Culture and Climate Work Group (SVCC), and began establishing a framework for complying with the new requirements included in the draft rules.

Promoting a Culture that Protects Against Harassment and Violence

Availability of information about sexual harassment and violence prevention and resources for those who experience sexual assault is especially important in the earliest days and weeks of students' experiences in higher education. The Title IX team administered online training for every incoming first-year, transfer, graduate and professional student at the start of both the fall and spring academic semesters.

In 2021, Virginia Tech President Tim Sands established the SVCC to further the institution's commitment to preventing sexual violence. SVCC continued its work and the Title IX coordinator continued to serve as chair in the 2022-23 academic year. Over the course of the reporting period, the work group:

- Launched a universitywide prevention campaign.
- Hosted community engagement events.
- Explored alternative resolution and restorative justice models.
- Made final recommendations for elements of a sustainable model for collaborative and meaningful sexual violence prevention.
- Hosted the first annual Sexual Violence Culture and Climate Summit, featuring Drs. Jennifer Hirsch and Shamus Kahn, authors of *Sexual Citizens: A Landmark Study of Sex, Power, and Assault on Campus*.

Looking Forward

In the 2023-2024 academic year, OEA will expand its roles and responsibilities to include a wide range of services that proactively prevent harassment, discrimination, and barriers to access. The office will also utilize and expand informal resolution approaches and methodologies. Goals for the office, by unit, include:

Affirmative Action

- Enhancing the partnership with the Division of Human Resources and college leaders to review and revise existing strategies, focusing on outreach and recruitment efforts essential to the AAP component designed to increase the diversity of applicant pools in areas of underutilization at Virginia Tech.
- Implementing an updated search committee training module.
- Sponsoring and providing training on transitioning veterans from a military career to a civilian career.

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Accessibility Services

- Expanding ADA outreach and training opportunities to include accessible online ADA training, if available.
- Evaluating current physical and digital barrier reporting systems for adequacy.
- Continuing to provide prompt responses to requests for accommodation.

Civil Rights Compliance and Conflict Resolution

- Designing a new, in-house civil rights compliance training that will be available on demand.
- Continuing to take a multi-pronged approach to raising awareness of OEA's commitment to maintaining environments free from discrimination and harassment, particularly with students and community members in Roanoke and the Washington, D.C., area.
- Continuing to provide a prompt, equitable, and thorough response to complaints and reports of discrimination, harassment, and retaliation.

Title IX

- Evaluating the team's work and monitoring barriers to accessing help based on feedback from the Student Title IX Advisory Council and assessment of the university climate related to sexual harassment and violence.
- Building an alternative resolution process to address appropriate Title IX matters and other civil rights concerns.
- Moving forward with a Title IX policy and practice group to regularly review and update university policy and procedures related to sex-based discrimination, including harassment and violence.
- Bolstering support services available to students encountering difficulty related to pregnancy, parenting, and pregnancy-related conditions.

Resources

Accessible Technologies

assist.vt.edu

Cook Counseling Center

ucc.vt.edu

OEA Glossary

oea.vt.edu/about/glossary

Report a Barrier

vt.edu/accessibility/barrier

SAFE at VT

safe.vt.edu

Services for Students with Disabilities

ssd.vt.edu

**Gender-Based Harassment
and Violence Reporting Form**

bit.ly/TitleIX_Reporting_Form



**Discrimination and Harassment
Reporting Form**

bit.ly/VT_Discrimination_Reporting_Form



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2022-2023 Title IX Annual Report

Report on Sexual Harassment and Violence at Virginia Tech



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From the Title IX Coordinator

Dear Community,

Transparency regarding the student experience of gender-based harassment and violence is an important step toward a culture that leaves no room for it.

In publishing the Title IX report annually, the Office for Equity and Accessibility (OEA) intends to provide insight into the impact of harassment and violence on our Virginia Tech community and the ways we are working together to address it.

This report shares information about reports involving students received by OEA, including the types of experiences students reported, the ways they interacted with the Title IX team and received support, and the outcomes of the formal complaints they filed.

It is important to note that this report only reflects matters formally reported to the university. Sexual assault, intimate partner violence, and stalking generally are significantly underreported. We continue to work to remove barriers to reporting, support students in need of help, and prevent the occurrence of sexual harassment and violence.

There are many ways, big and small, that each member of our community can help: Employees should report students in need of help to the Title IX team, everyone can learn more about ways to support a friend who experiences harm, and students can get involved with efforts to prevent violence and build a culture that protects against it.

Take care,

Katie Polidoro

Title IX Coordinator



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Reporting Sexual Harassment and Violence

When students report their experiences of sexual harassment and violence to the university, their needs are as varied as their reasons for reporting. Our obligation under Title IX is to limit the impact of those experiences and ensure that students continue to have the opportunity to fully participate in campus life. For some, that might mean accessing resources and support measures. Others might choose to participate in an investigation process aimed at ensuring accountability and addressing the behavior that harmed them. In all cases, this means meeting students where they are, respecting their choices, and working with them to find the help they need.

Reports, 2022-2023

During the 2022-23 academic year, the Title IX team in the Office for Equity and Accessibility (OEA) received 364 reports of incidents of sexual harassment or violence – a 16 percent decrease from the previous year in which there was a sharp increase to 435 reports. When compared to reporting rates over time, the number of reports received this year is high.

As in past years, the most reports occurred during the fall semester. At 222 reports during the academic year, the most common type of incident was sexual harassment. The second most common incident type was sexual assault with 100 reports.

Of reported sexual assault incidents, 38 occurred during the fall semester and 24 occurred during the spring. Ten occurred in previous years, including prior to the reporting student's attendance at Virginia Tech. In the remainder of cases, the reporting student chose not to share information about their experience.

The Title IX team also received 19 reports of intimate partner violence and 23 reports of stalking.

University Response

While the Title IX team contacted every identified individual who reported harm or was the subject of a third-party report, some individuals chose not to engage with the office. As the goal is to meet students where they are, no student is ever required to meet, share details, or participate in any Title IX process.

Of those students who reported, 131 were provided with support measures and referrals to resources both on and off campus. Twenty-five students filed formal complaints against other students.

2022-2023

364 new reports of harassment or violence

16% decrease in reports year over year

For resources on sexual harassment and assault prevention, visit safe.vt.edu.

Support Measures

One of our guiding principles is to acknowledge that sexual harassment and violence causes significant disruptions in the lives of those who experience it. Those in our community who experience these incidents deserve our care and support to ensure that their work and goals are not derailed. Support measures are an important part of limiting disruption to students' participation in academic life.

Of the students who reported experiencing harm, 131 received support measures. The most common measures provided included academic assistance, no contact orders, referrals to other resources, and housing assistance. In many of those cases, support was provided over a sustained period of time, with some students receiving assistance over the course of a semester or the school year. Ninety-seven percent of students provided with support measures continued on to future academic semesters or graduated.

131 students received support measures

25 students filed formal complaints

97%

of students who received support measures **continued their studies** at Virginia Tech

Investigations and Their Outcomes

The decision to pursue a formal complaint is a deeply personal one. Individuals often weigh their wellbeing, desired outcomes, and ability to participate in an investigation before deciding how to proceed. In many cases, a student received support measures and met multiple times with Title IX team members and confidential resources before they were ready to file a complaint. On average, students took more than one month to move forward with a complaint.

The 25 formal complaints filed during the academic year involved the full spectrum of behaviors that fall under Title IX and the gender-based violence policies outlined in the [Student Code of Conduct](#). In five cases, due to the seriousness of the allegations and the threat to the safety of individuals or the community, students received interim suspensions, pending the investigative outcomes.

The Title IX team works together with the [Office for Student Conduct](#) to resolve Title IX cases, with Student Conduct holding required live hearings and deciding the outcomes, including sanctions, in each case. During the 2022-23 academic year, 13 students were found responsible for violating university policies related to sexual harassment and violence, and seven students were found not responsible. For cases in which a student was found to have violated university policy, sanctions included dismissal from the university (3 cases), suspension (4 cases), and deferred suspension (6 cases). All suspensions and deferred suspensions also included additional educational sanctions, which includes assignments or activities designed to provide opportunities for reflection, learning, and growth.

The remainder of the complaints were closed before a hearing. Cases are closed in this manner for limited reasons, including: closure at the request of the reporting party, closure if the respondent was removed from the university due to another conduct matter, or closure when the allegations in the complaint would not meet the definition of a sexual harassment or violence policy violation, even if proven true. In the latter category, cases are referred to another appropriate office. For instance, a case may be referred to Student Conduct if the alleged behavior may constitute a violation of a portion of the Code of Conduct other than gender-based or sexual misconduct.

Trends

Each year, it is important to review reports made to OEA for arising trends and themes. This review helps us better understand our students' experiences, assess whether our current practices meet their needs, and identify areas to improve prevention, awareness, and education efforts.

Consistent with previous years, August and September saw more reports and incidents of sexual violence than any other months, again indicating the increased risk for experiencing violence during the early weeks of the academic year. Another trend that should be highlighted is a rise in sexual violence cases involving alcohol use in the latter part of the spring semester. While the majority of all reported incidents, including sexual harassment, occurred on campus, sexual assault specifically was reported to have occurred off campus more frequently than on campus. More than 70 percent of reported sexual assaults occurred off campus. During the year, information about these specific themes was shared with university partners engaged in prevention work to ensure that prevention efforts and messaging included these important issues.

Culture and Climate

In 2021, President Tim Sands charged the Sexual Violence Culture and Climate Work Group (SVCC) with developing a framework for sustainable climate and cultural transformation that establishes sexual violence prevention as a shared responsibility of the entire university community.

During the 2022-23 academic year, SVCC continued its efforts toward transforming Virginia Tech's culture into one that protects against sexual violence. Building on its inaugural year, the group expanded its membership to include more undergraduate and graduate students as well as academic faculty. This year, SVCC:

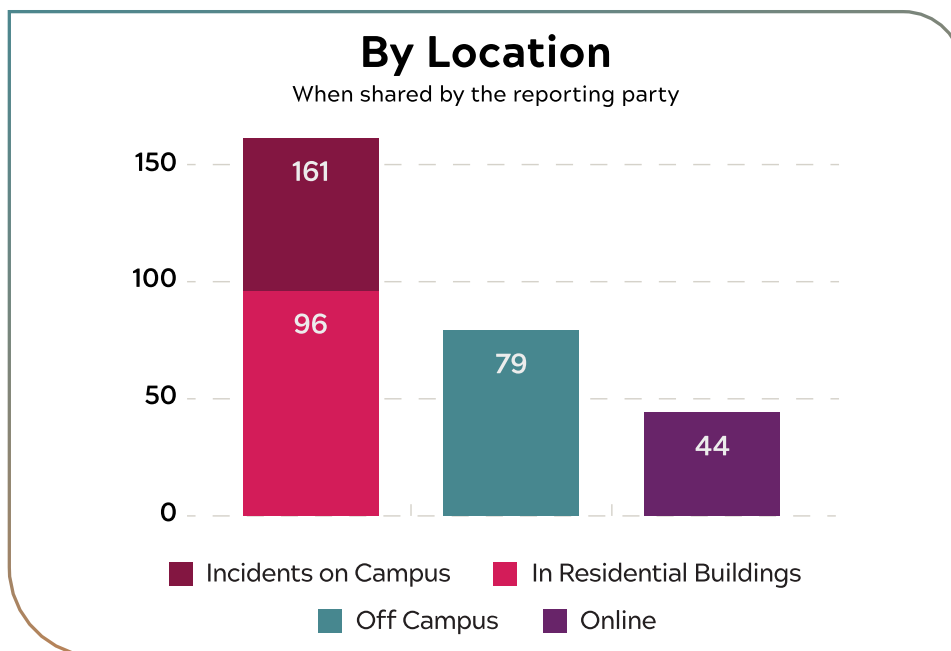
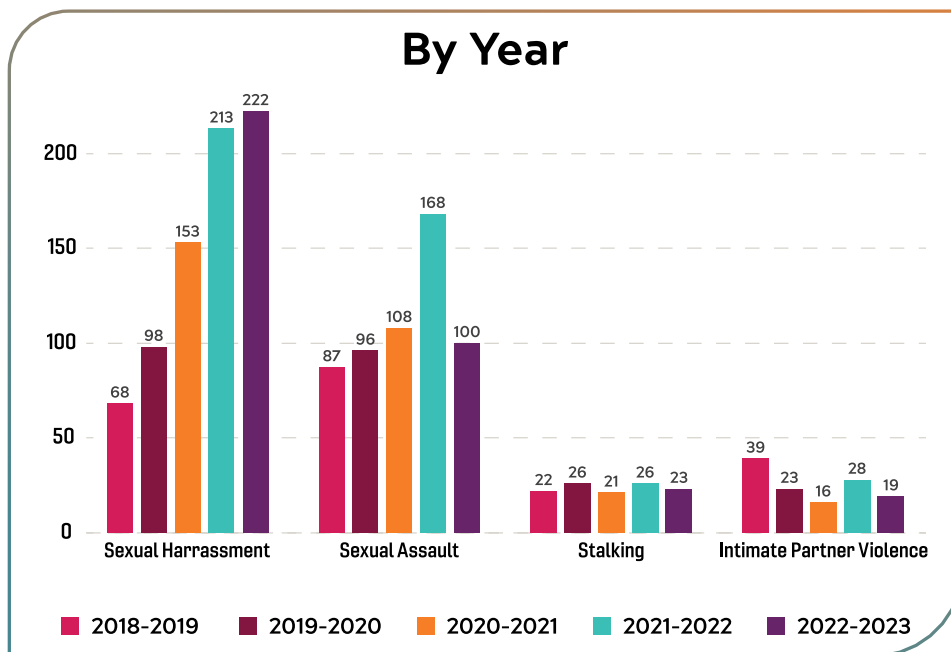
- **Hosted several community events to engage students, faculty, and staff in conversations related to sexual violence prevention, including:**
 - Two “Deconstructing Sexual Violence” workshops, in collaboration with Hokie Wellness and open to all community members. A total of 42 students attended.
 - Outreach tabling events on the Blacksburg campus.

- A Day of Service with End Rape on Campus to improve access to information and resources related to campus sexual assault for students.
 - An SVCC summit featuring Drs. Jennifer Hirsch and Shamus Kahn, authors of *Sexual Citizens: A Landmark Study of Sex, Power, and Assault on Campus*. The summit consisted of a meeting with the President's Council and a keynote lunch with the authors and a panel of Virginia Tech students. More than 120 people attended in person. Another 85 viewed a live stream of the panel.
 - A student facilitator training event focused on holding conversations about *Sexual Citizens*, attended by 16 students.
- **Made recommendations for creating a sustainable structure, including the formation of standing committees, including:**
- A Policy and Practice committee dedicated to regularly reviewing and updating university policies and procedures related to sexual harassment and violence.
 - The Sexual Violence Prevention Initiative (SVPI), dedicated to moving forward the university's prevention efforts.
 - Two undergraduate and graduate student committees that will inform SVPI's work.
- **Created and implemented a progressive universitywide prevention campaign, SAFE at VT, consisting of:**
- Monthly educational messages related to sexual violence, intimate partner violence, and stalking.
 - Distribution of messaging via flyers and digital signage in areas frequented by students and on the Cassell Coliseum jumbotron.
 - Events recognizing Denim Day on April 26 to raise awareness of sexual violence.
- **Increased communications with the Virginia Tech community to improve transparency and share the university's efforts to address and prevent sexual violence.**
- Messages and articles related to sexual violence, SVCC, and prevention work are compiled on the SAFE at VT website.

SVCC as a committee concluded at the close of the 2022-23 academic year. The ongoing shared work to foster a safer and more inclusive Virginia Tech community will continue, in part, through SVPI.

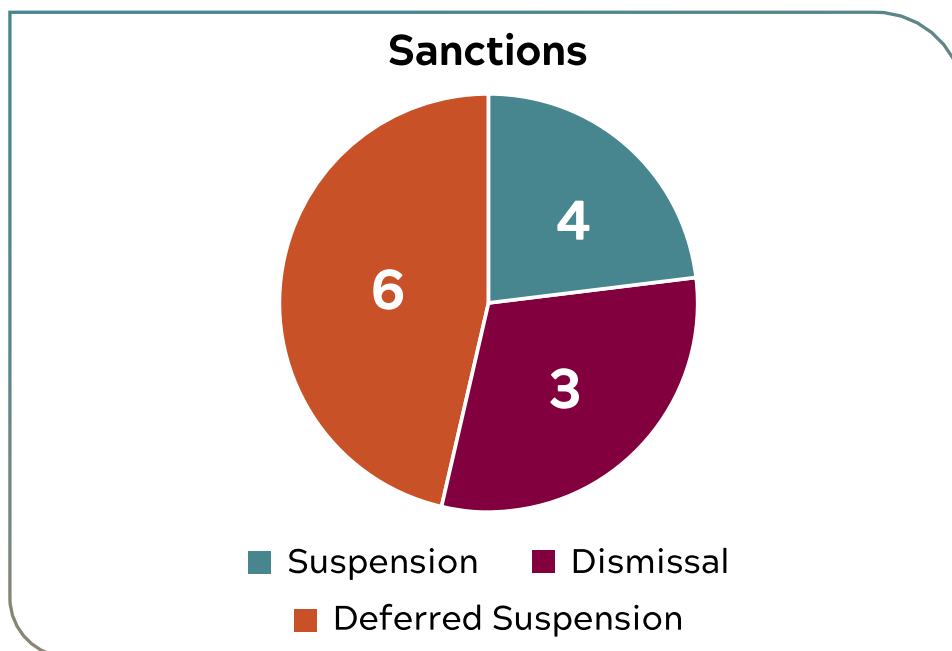
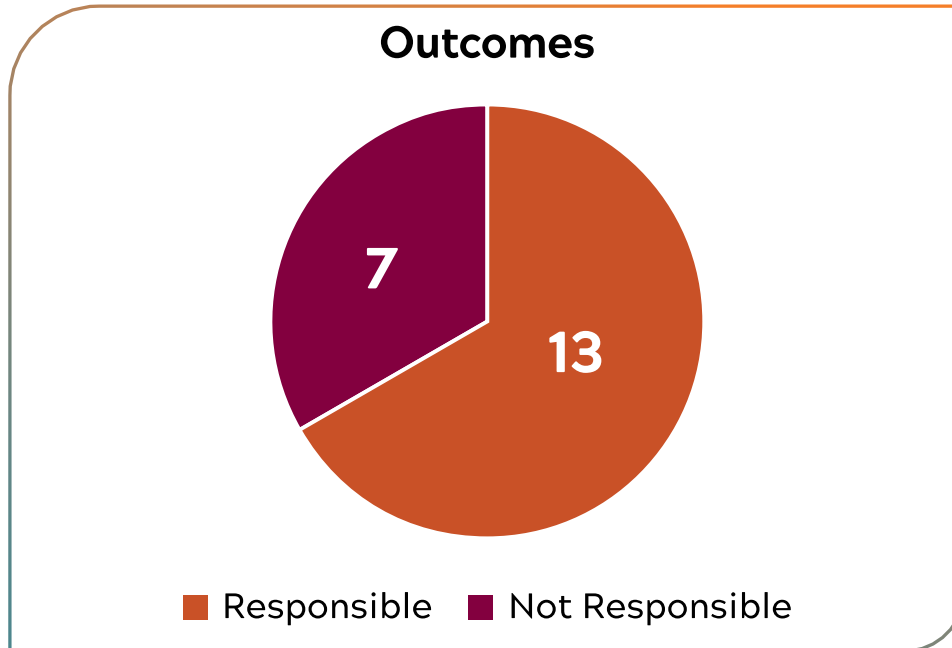
Sexual Harassment and Violence Fact Sheet

The Office for Equity and Accessibility received 364 reports of gender-based harassment and violence involving students. Of those reports, 222 were of sexual harassment, 100 of sexual assault, 23 of stalking, and 19 of intimate partner violence.



Outcomes

Of the reports that resulted in formal complaints and investigations, a student was found responsible for gender-based harassment or violence in 13 cases. In seven cases, the respondent was found not responsible. For cases in which a student was found to have violated university policy, sanctions included dismissal from the university (3 cases), suspension (4 cases), and deferred suspension (6 cases).





Katie Polidoro, Title IX Coordinator

Office for Equity and Accessibility

P: 540-231-1821

polidoro@vt.edu • safe.vt.edu

Every member of our community has the right to live in an atmosphere free from sexual harassment and violence.

Virginia Tech is committed to providing a safe environment, consistent with our [Principles of Community](#), free from harassment and violence of any kind. If you have experienced sexual harassment or violence, we encourage you to reach out for support. Advocacy and assistance, including measures through Title IX, are available to you – whether you choose to report or not and no matter where you are located.

Report to the University

Scan this code to report gender-based harassment and violence.



Office for Equity and Accessibility

220 Gilbert Street, Suite 5200

540-231-2010

equityandaccess@vt.edu

Virginia Tech Police Department

911 • 540-382-4343

police.vt.edu

Calling 911 from a Virginia Tech landline in Blacksburg will reach the Virginia Tech Police Department. Calling 911 from a cell phone will connect with the local off-campus police department.

Confidential Resources

Confidential resources cannot share identifying information about you without your consent. They can support and advise you as you make decisions.

Cook Counseling Center

ucc.vt.edu

CARES Program for Survivors

womenscenter.vt.edu/advocacy

Schiffert Health Center

healthcenter.vt.edu

Office of the Ombudsperson - Graduate School

graduate.ombudsman.vt.edu

TimelyCare Virtual Mental Health Counseling

timelycare.com/virginiatech

Private Resources

Private resources are required to report some information about incidences to the Title IX Coordinator. Other university departments may also be involved to help survivors or protect the campus community.

Office of Student Conduct

studentconduct.vt.edu

Dean of Students Office

dos.vt.edu

Cranwell International Center

international.vt.edu

Get Involved

Each member of the community can help the university in the ongoing work to transform our culture and protect against sexual violence.

Visit safe.vt.edu

to access resources and learn how you can be part of Virginia Tech's culture of change.

Resources

Accessibility Portal	vt.edu/accessibility
Accessible Technologies	assist.vt.edu
Cook Counseling Center	ucc.vt.edu
OEA Glossary	oea.vt.edu/about/glossary
Report a Barrier	vt.edu/accessibility/barrier
SAFE at VT	safe.vt.edu
Services for Students with Disabilities	ssd.vt.edu



Scan the QR code or click the link below for the Gender-Based Harassment and Violence Reporting form.

bit.ly/TitleIX_Reporting_Form



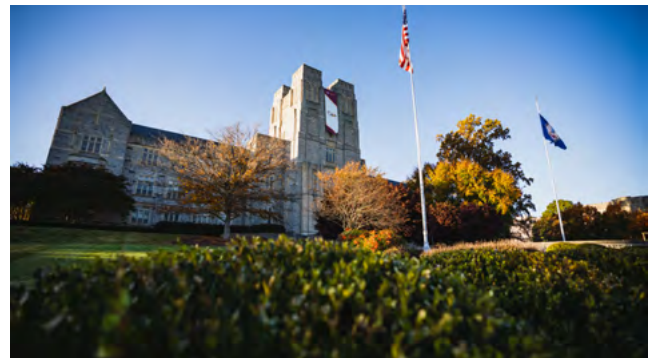
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Office for Equity & Accessibility

2021-2022 Annual Report



EQUITY & ACCESSIBILITY
VIRGINIA TECH.

From the Associate Vice President

As members of the Virginia Tech community, we are entrusted with the responsibility of creating and protecting our culture of inclusivity, safety, and care. Our university's [core values](#) and motto, *Ut Prosim* (That I May Serve), are essential in sustaining the university's rigorous scholarship, professional development, and commitment to a climate of respect. The [Office for Equity and Accessibility](#) (OEA) leads the charge to cultivate an educational and professional setting free from harassment, discrimination, and retaliation – one in which all employees and students can thrive and achieve their most ambitious goals.



OEA directs the university's efforts pertaining to Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), Section 504 and Section 508 compliance; affirmative action and Section 503 compliance; response to discrimination, harassment, and sexual misconduct, including Title IX reports; prohibited conduct prevention; and civil rights and conflict resolution training.

This is not work we do alone. These efforts require continuous engagement and collaboration with institutional partners. We are thankful for our campus colleagues in Student Affairs; Services for Students with Disabilities; Human Resources; Faculty Affairs; the Women's Center; Inclusion and Diversity; Campus Planning, Infrastructure, and Facilities; Information Technology; Technology-enhanced Learning and Online Strategies; Communications and Marketing; and others. Our joint efforts shape a community of belonging for us all.

Through outreach and prompt attention to requests and reports, OEA enables Virginia Tech to maintain equitable access and service as well as mitigate risks. Accordingly, we offer the following 2021-2022 annual report to illustrate the important work of our office and document trends, including those that emerged during the COVID-19 pandemic. With the exception of the affirmative action and search exemption information, which is based on the federal fiscal year of October 1, 2021, to September 30, 2022, the data in this report reflect the academic year from August 1, 2021, to July 31, 2022.

It is my hope that this report provides insight into our current campus climate and the opportunities for each of us to continue building the welcoming community of knowledge, discovery, and creativity that is central to our mission and collective success.

Sincerely,

Kelly Oaks

Associate Vice President

Office for Equity and Accessibility

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Our Office's Role

OEA engages in the following activities to further Virginia Tech's commitment to learning and working environments that protect against harassment and discrimination, consistent with our Principles of Community:

- Develop a strong and viable affirmative action program for the university and assess the university's progress toward full equal employment opportunity for women, minorities, protected veterans, and individuals with disabilities.
- Review requests for search exemptions to determine if there are compelling justifications to limit equal employment opportunity in our hiring practices.
- Provide reasonable accommodations to employees with disabilities and oversee institutional practices to ensure physical and programmatic accessibility for students, employees, and visitors.
- Develop and deliver training programs to inform members of our campus community of their rights and responsibilities under university Policy 1025: Harassment, Discrimination, and Sexual Assault and Policy 1026: Title IX Sexual Harassment and Responsible Employee Reporting.
- Respond promptly and fairly to allegations of conduct prohibited by the university's anti-discrimination and anti-harassment policies when the alleged misconduct involves a university employee or university-operated program or activity.
- Fulfill our institutional commitment to respond to reports of sexual and gender-based misconduct.
- Serve on campus, community, state, and national committees and boards focused on civil rights, equity, affirmative action, accessibility, and inclusion.

In addition to our response efforts, we focus heavily on strategic partnerships, community engagement, and professional association leadership to ensure the campus fulfills its commitment to equity and accessibility. OEA team members:

- Coordinate and provide administrative guidance to the Campus Accessibility Working Group (CAWG), an initiative of the Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer, to ensure accessibility is an institutional priority.
- Partner with the Division of Information Technology to lead campus efforts supporting digital accessibility in all university communications.
- Chair and advise the President's Sexual Violence Culture and Climate Work Group (SVCC) to develop a sustainable model for sexual violence prevention.
- Serve in regional and national leadership positions with the Industry Liaison Group to champion effective relationships between federal contractors and the federal agency that oversees contractor compliance.
- Engage in campus governance activities via roles in the Commission on Equal Opportunity and Diversity, Administrative and Professional Faculty Senate, and Commission on Administrative and Professional Faculty Affairs.
- Contribute to the development of universitywide protocols, including those for the COVID-19 pandemic response and return to campus for the Fall 2021 semester.

COVID-19 Pandemic Response

As for all higher education institutions, the COVID-19 pandemic presented several challenges for Virginia Tech. As the university prepared for the Fall 2021 semester, OEA teams and campus partners developed strategies to fulfill our institutional commitment to an in-person semester that maintained the hallmarks of the Hokie experience and ensured employees and students received support as necessary to continue their work and studies in unprecedented circumstances.

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Accessibility and Civil Rights Compliance

Approximately 22 percent of accommodation requests submitted to the ADA and Accessibility team during the reporting year were for COVID-19 vaccine exemptions requested in August 2021 following the announcement of Virginia Tech's vaccine requirement. While the university later eliminated the requirement, the response to the initial requests required deliberate but swift development of revised university protocols to authorize exemptions based on documented medical reasons. The ADA and Accessibility team also worked in conjunction with the Civil Rights Compliance team to respond to and authorize COVID-19 vaccine exemption requests for sincerely held religious beliefs.

The ADA team adjusted its approach to meet revised guidance from the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission and engaged in trainings with [Human Resources](#) to ensure universitywide alignment.

Further details on the ADA team's pandemic response are provided on page 11.

Title IX

To continue the essential work of conducting meetings with students during the pandemic, the Title IX team transitioned to virtual sessions. The new process reshaped the office's perspective on in-person interviews and demonstrated students' increased comfort with meetings facilitated by technology.

Affirmative Action

As part of our responsibility as a federal contractor, Virginia Tech is committed to ensuring equal employment opportunity for women, minorities, covered veterans, and individuals with disabilities. We continually evaluate our personnel processes, analyze our recruiting efforts, and develop action-oriented programs to succeed in our efforts.

In 2020, OEA received approval from the U.S. Department of Labor Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs (OFCCP) to implement a functional affirmative action plan (FAAP) structure for the university thus allowing senior management areas with 50 or more employees to develop individual affirmative action plans. Nationally, Virginia Tech leads the charge within higher education to implement this format and serves as a resource to other higher education institutions considering this FAAP structure.

For OEA, affirmative action plans are not just documents on shelves but viable programs that produce intended results. The Affirmative Action team:

- Works collaboratively with Human Resources and college diversity leaders to develop plans that address barriers to equal employment opportunity.
- Conducts senior management briefings with the 26 leaders of our FAAPs to ensure they understand their successes, challenges, and opportunities in diversifying the workforce.
- Provides training to aid search committees in conducting equitable and fair hiring processes.
- Sponsors and provides specialized training to assist the campus community in understanding our affirmative action obligations.

Members of OEA's Affirmative Action team held leadership positions with the National Industry Liaison Group (NILG) and in a regional industry liaison group. These groups comprise a consortium of federal contractors and subcontractors who work in partnership with federal agencies to achieve equal employment opportunity for all employees. Their efforts are critical to strengthening the relationships federal contractors have with the OFCCP and ensuring contractors have a voice in regulatory changes.

Through involvement in these national and regional organizations, the Affirmative Action team hosted various national webinars focused on compensation equity, disability inclusion, veteran inclusion, and the intersection of race and disability; served on the committee to plan the annual conference for the NILG; and developed partnerships with disability-focused organizations to remove barriers to recruiting and retaining individuals with disabilities.

University Workforce Data

The Affirmative Action team takes a snapshot of the university's workforce annually on October 1 to evaluate successes and challenges in diversifying the campus as well as to track our progress toward full alignment with the core values and priorities as outlined in the 2020 strategic plan: [The Virginia Tech Difference: Advancing Beyond Boundaries.](#)

As of the 2022 snapshot date, the overall gender distribution at Virginia Tech was 49.7 percent men and 50.0 percent women, with 0.2 percent of employees identifying in other categories. Men represented majorities in the teaching, research, and part-time faculty categories whereas women represented 56 percent of administrative and professional (A/P) faculty. For overall race and ethnicity distribution, 66.7 percent of employees identified as white. Among populations of color, individuals identifying as Asian represented a majority at nearly 52 percent (Workforce and Diversity Metrics, CY 2022 Quarter 3, Division of Human Resources).

In 2021 and 2022, the percentage of women in tenure track, tenured, non-tenure track, and research faculty positions remained constant at 37 percent (**Figure 1**). The percentage of minorities in those categories increased slightly year over year (**Figure 2**).

Note: Data include tenure-track and tenured faculty, non-tenure track faculty, and research faculty.

Figure 1

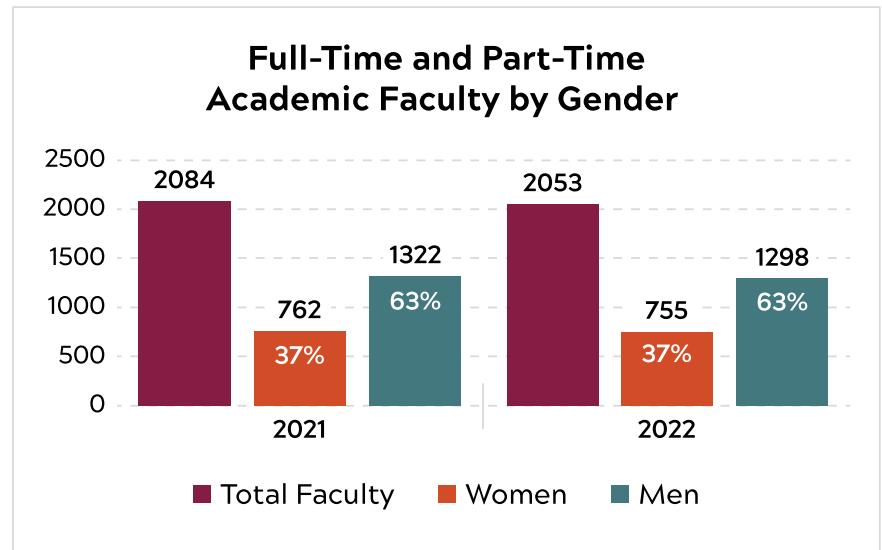


Figure 2

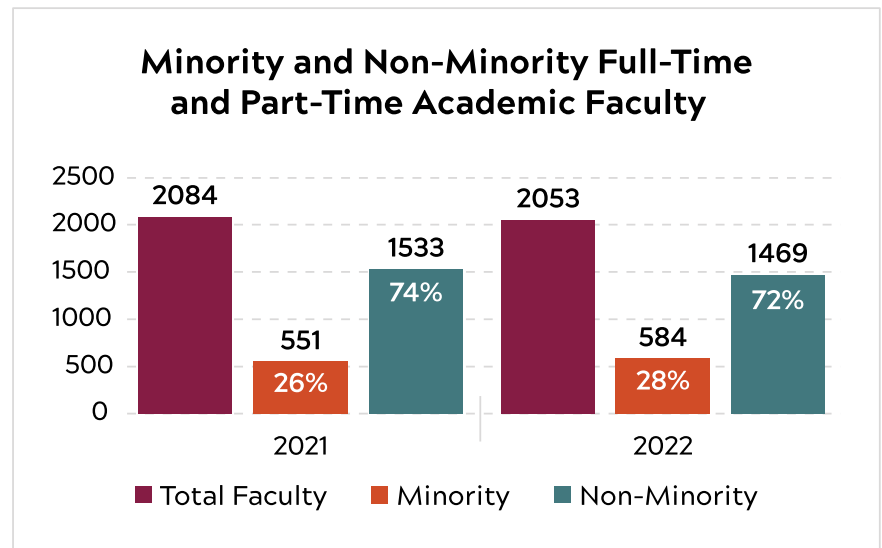
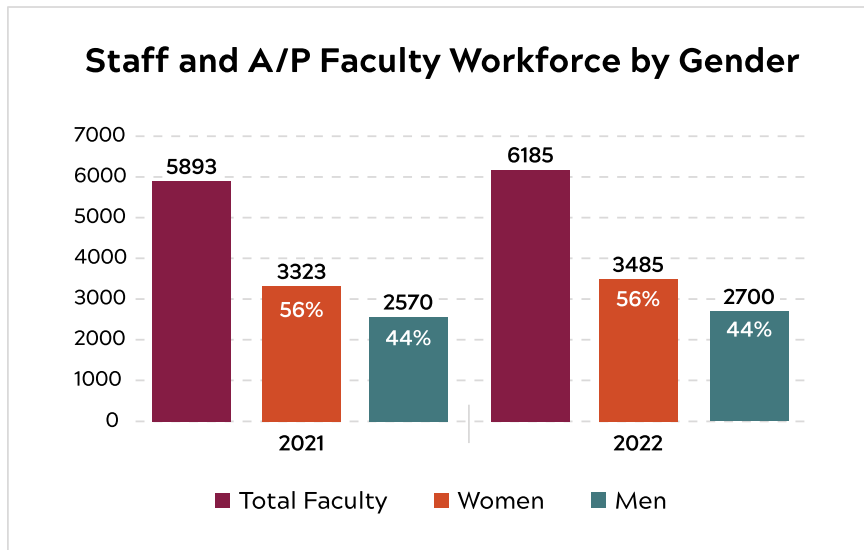
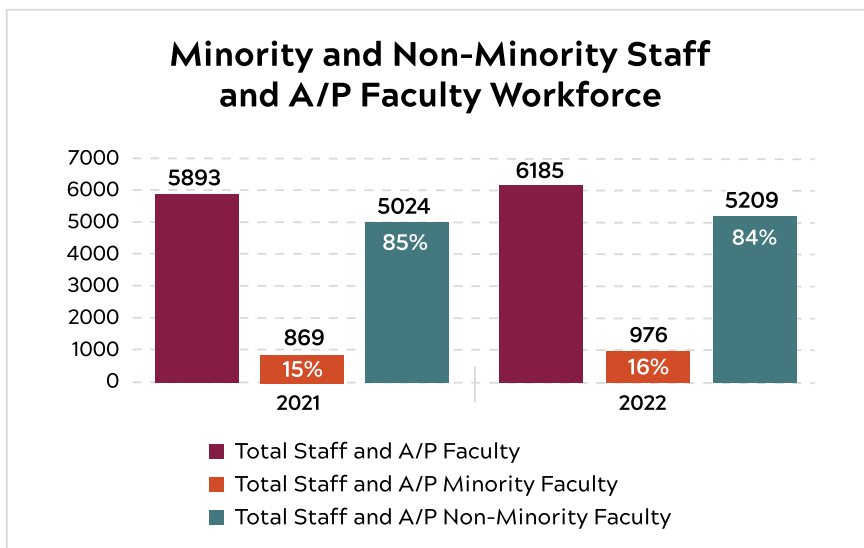


Figure 3

Within A/P faculty and staff job categories, percentages remained constant at 56 percent for women (**Figure 3**) and increased slightly for minorities (**Figure 4**).

While the overall representation of veterans in the workforce across all employment categories remained constant at 3 percent, the number of veterans who self-reported increased due to several factors, including the Affirmative Action team's attention to developing outreach and recruitment activities and Vietnam Era Veterans' Readjustment Assistance Act plans in conjunction with FAAP partners. Additionally, as a [Virginia Values Veterans \(V3 Program\)](#) certified employer for the Commonwealth of Virginia, one of the university's in-house recruiters attends workshops, hosts virtual job fairs, and visits military installation bases in a proactive approach to recruiting and communicating with the Veterans Caucus and the veteran community about the importance of self-identification.

Figure 4

Note: The data include university staff, classified staff, and A/P faculty.

Source: Snapshot of workforce Oct. 1, 2021, and Oct. 1, 2022, Virginia Tech Main Campus Functional Affirmative Action Plan, using data from Banner Human Resources Information System.

Working in collaboration with colleagues in [Human Resources](#), the [Office for Inclusion and Diversity](#), and the [Office of the Executive Vice President and Provost](#), the Affirmative Action team will continue to evaluate our efforts to improve the demographic representation of our workforce.

Search Exemptions

Virginia Tech is committed to providing equal employment opportunity for all qualified individuals. In support of this commitment, competitive searches are conducted to fill many of our vacancies. There are some instances in which the competitive process is not used, and the positions are filled using the search exemption process when specific criteria are met.

During the 2021 affirmative action plan year of October 1, 2021, to September 30, 2022, 163 search exemptions were processed by OEA. Most of these exemptions were for individuals who self-identify as men in the category of gender (**Figure 5**) and as white in the category of race and ethnicity (**Figure 6**). The majority of requests were for research faculty roles at 63 percent, followed by A/P faculty at 21 percent; at 17 percent, teaching and research (T&R) faculty had the fewest search exemption requests.

Figure 5

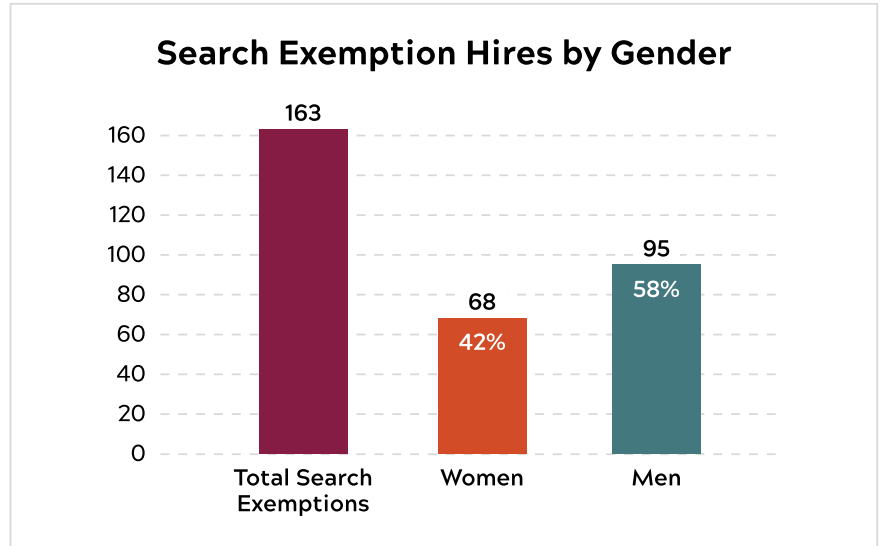
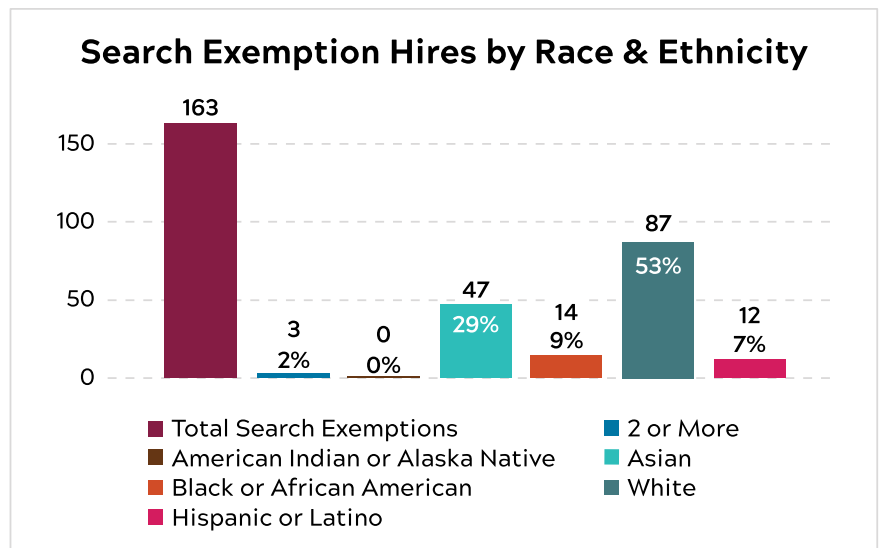


Figure 6



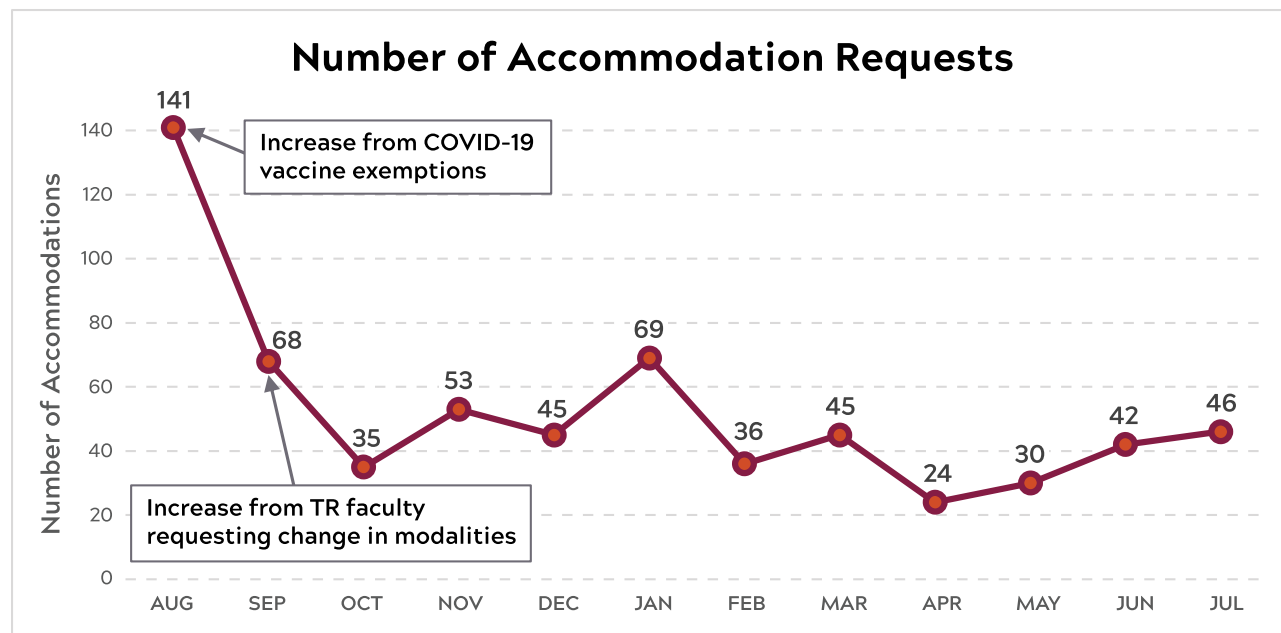
Note: No Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islanders were hired via the search exemption process during the reporting year.

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Accessibility

Virginia Tech is committed to equal employment and education opportunity for individuals with disabilities and complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), as amended; the Rehabilitation Act, as amended; and other state and local laws that apply to individuals with disabilities. The ADA and Accessibility team handles Title I employee accommodation requests and authorizes reasonable accommodations per Policy 4075: University Accommodations of Persons with Disabilities for qualified employees with disabilities.

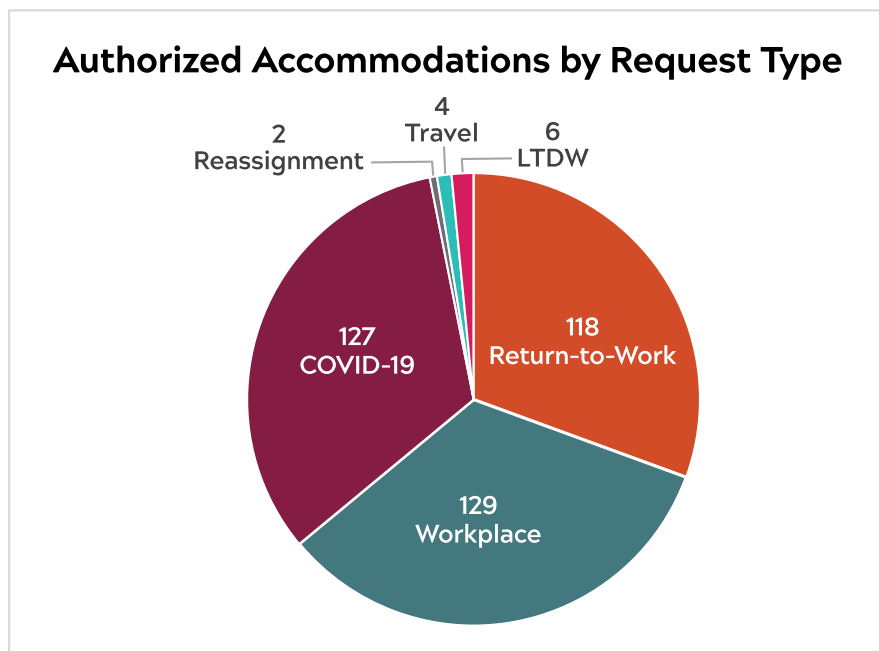
In the reporting year, the team received 634 requests for accommodations. Of those requests, 141 were COVID-19 vaccine exemption requests received in August 2021, coinciding with the university's announcement that all employees would be required to receive the vaccine by October 2021. The number of accommodation requests peaked in August 2021 and January 2022 at the start of the fall and spring semesters, respectively (**Figure 7**).

Figure 7



The majority of authorizations (129) were for workplace accommodations. There were 127 COVID-19-related accommodations resulting from requests to continue previously authorized accommodations or provide new accommodations due to high-risk medical conditions in the midst of COVID-19 variants. Additionally, as shown in **Figure 8**, the team processed 118 authorized accommodations for return-to-work with restrictions, six for long-term disability work (LTDW), four for travel, and two for reassignment.

Figure 8



Outreach and Training

The ADA and Accessibility team also offers educational activities regarding accessibility to the university community. During the reporting period, the director and the ADA team provided ADA training for 1,126 graduate students, 80 [Dining Services](#) employees – including supervisors and managers – and 73 supervisors in coordination with Human Resources.

Outreach events included Employee Appreciation Day in May 2022, with more than 3,000 employees in attendance. The October 2021 celebration of [National Disability Employment Awareness Month](#) featured three separate virtual events and drew an audience of 73 employees.

Physical and Digital Accessibility

Fulfilling our commitment to accessibility for all requires collaborative initiatives that address both physical access on Virginia Tech campuses and digital access to the institution's online and electronic resources. In addition to the unit's director, case manager, and accommodations specialists, the ADA and Accessibility team includes a campus ADA accessibility architect responsible for campus infrastructure compliance, and a Section 508 and digital accessibility officer who ensures compliance for content served via technology.

The team engaged in various digital and physical accessibility projects during the reporting year, including the redevelopment of the [interactive campus map](#), which now features accessible navigation, integrates real-time closure information, and aids users in identifying accessible pathways. Launched in August 2022, the new map is a joint success for the Division of Information Technology's Enterprise GIS group; [Division of Campus Planning, Infrastructure, and Facilities](#) GIS group; [Communications and Marketing](#); the [Disability Alliance and Caucus](#); and OEA's campus architect and digital accessibility officer.

Campus ADA Accessibility Architect

The campus ADA accessibility architect is responsible for reviewing all design and building plans for compliance with the [2010 ADA Standards for Accessible Design](#) and the [ADA Accessibility Guidelines](#) regarding alterations, renovations, and capital and non-capital construction plans for the university.

The accessibility architect evaluates barrier reports and engages in numerous built environment consultations regarding facilities, buildings, pathways, ramps, parking, signage, and maps. In addition to the interactive campus map, the accessibility architect served as ADA consultant for numerous campus projects, including the Presidents Quad Redesign Project, Derring elevators, and Squires Hall ramps, during the reporting year.

Barrier Reports

OEA offers the Virginia Tech community an easy way to report physical and digital campus barriers through the [Report a Barrier website](#). In the reporting year, the campus ADA accessibility architect responded to 47 physical barrier reports. The architect promptly investigated each report and delivered notification of barrier resolutions to build confidence and rapport with users. Active monitoring of the website and rapid response to barrier reports by the architect and the maintenance, housekeeping, and other service teams facilitates safety and promotes increased enjoyment of the campus environment.

The types of barriers reported were distributed across the following categories: accessible restrooms (4), interior accessible routes (3), exterior accessible routes (13), interior and exterior door controls (12), elevator operation (5), accessible parking (7), and miscellaneous (3). In most cases, the barriers were investigated and mitigated within approximately one day. In some cases, resolution took several days or weeks due to complexity of the repairs, availability of parts, or scheduling the work to coincide with student breaks.

A recently implemented campuswide elevator monitoring system that automatically alerts management personnel when an elevator needs maintenance has allowed for swift resolution of elevator operation barriers – oftentimes before they can be investigated. Barriers involving doors are typically caused by faulty door operators or other hardware, and maintenance personnel is consulted for adjustments, repairs, and replacements as needed. Exterior accessibility barriers – ranging from uneven surfaces to blockage by debris – are addressed by the pathway enhancement crew, grounds crew, and maintenance personnel as appropriate. More significant exterior route issues are resolved by coordinating capital construction projects. Transportation Services is notified of barriers pertaining to the quantity and distribution of spaces across campus as well as the unauthorized use of accessible spaces. The ADA architect studies the existing conditions and inventory of accessible parking spaces and determines methods to increase the number of accessible spaces or improve their distribution.

Section 508 Compliance and Digital Accessibility Officer

The Section 508 compliance and digital accessibility officer serves as a bridge between OEA and the university’s Accessible Technologies group in the Technology-enhanced Learning and Online Strategies (TLOS) team.

The digital accessibility officer leads the university’s efforts to evaluate and recommend accessibility policies, procedures, and best practices for electronic and information technology (EIT). The officer assists with the development of strategic roadmaps to ensure university operations align with Section 508 accessibility requirements; collaborates with university stakeholders to provide compliance guidance, training, and educational opportunities on accessible websites, design strategies, and documents; promotes appropriate support resources; and establishes accountability plans that foster accessibility compliance and inclusivity.

Additionally, the officer collaborates with Virginia Tech’s procurement teams to establish and continuously improve processes for purchasing and deploying Section 508-aligned EIT and is actively involved with the Procurement Efficiency Committee – a group that ensures the university purchases IT software that is accessible to individuals with disabilities. In the reporting year, the office conducted a review of the information technology procurement process concerning Section 508 requirements and proposed plans to implement our legal obligations.

As an institution, it is a legal requirement that all information that is conveyed electronically be accessible to individuals with disabilities in accordance with Section 504, the Americans with Disabilities Act, as amended, and Section 508. To promote compliance, the digital accessibility officer provided numerous targeted trainings to the campus community and led the process to update Policy 7215: Information Technology Accessibility, aligning it with Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.1 AA as the standard for all university information technologies.

In addition to participating in the redevelopment of the campus map, the digital accessibility officer:

- Collaborated with university partners to select an automated and guided cloud-based tool to test websites and web apps for conformance and compliance with TLOS.
- Reviewed university websites, prioritized remediations, and implemented immediate accessibility improvements.
- Developed programs to address the two largest digital barrier report categories – email newsletters and PowerPoint presentations – and worked with university partners to train staff and remediate problems.
- Worked with industrial systems engineering students on a graduate student study regarding blind pedestrians.
- Taught a dozen classes through TLOS' Professional Development Network and directly to administrative departments.
- Provided training on topics such as accessible HTML for communicators and meaningful alternative text to more than 140 participants from the university community.
- Presented at two national conferences: VERA Research Conference 2022 and IDEAx 2022 at Selu Observatory.
- Participated in CAWG as well as the Procurement Efficiency Committee, VT SURE Research Platform Committee, Ensemble Core Web Team, and Accessibility Network.

Civil Rights Compliance and Conflict Resolution

OEA's civil rights compliance and conflict resolution team guides the university's efforts to maintain working and learning environments free from harassment, discrimination, and retaliation. In addition to programs regarding the scope and application of [Policy 1025](#) and [Policy 1026](#), the team provides assistance, training, resources, and supportive measures to students and employees, and university offices and departments.

Response to Reports of Prohibited Conduct

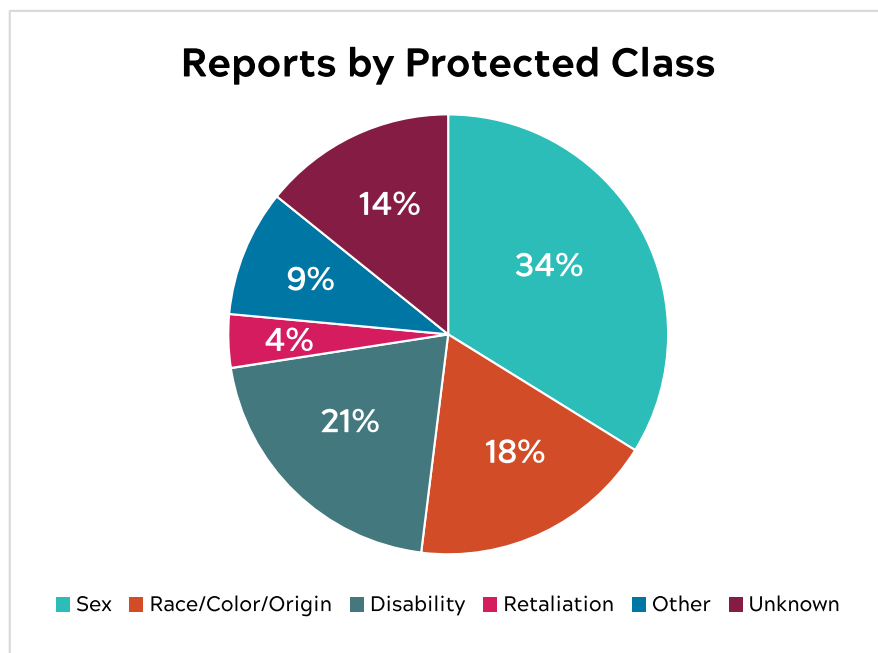
As part of its core responsibility to provide a prompt and fair response to reports of prohibited conduct, the compliance team resolves reports via four methods: outreach, consultation, facilitated or informal resolution, or formal complaint and resolution. Reports may – but need not – result in complaints. A complaint is a formal request for the team to resolve an allegation of prohibited conduct through investigation.

Statistics Regarding Reports

In the 2021-2022 academic year, the team received 181 reports of potential prohibited conduct and 54 complaints containing allegations of prohibited conduct – a 55 percent increase in reports and a 170 percent increase in complaints received compared to the 2020-21 academic year.

The team tracked the reports and grouped them into major categories of classes that receive protection under Policy 1025 (**Figure 9**). Reports about discrimination based on race, color, and national origin are grouped into a single category (“race, color, origin”) that accounts for about a quarter of reports. Reports about discrimination based on sex, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, and gender expression (“sex”) account for over a third of reports. Other statistically significant categories include disability and retaliation.

Figure 9



The “other” category includes reports of discrimination based on age, genetic information, political affiliation, and military status. A single report can – and often does – include multiple bases of discrimination. In such cases, the reports count in all applicable categories.

Additionally, as shown in **Figure 10**, the compliance team tracked whether parties impacted by alleged prohibited conduct were undergraduate students, graduate or professional students, employees, or members of other categories (i.e., unaffiliated with the university or identity unknown). Most complainants – 48 percent – were employees, followed by undergraduate students at 34 percent.

Figure 11 illustrates how reports of potential prohibited conduct were resolved. More than 40 percent concluded with consultation.

Statistics Regarding Complaints

The goal for every complaint received is to reach a resolution within 75 calendar days from the date of filing. In the interest of ensuring an equitable and thorough process, an investigation may take longer.

Figure 10

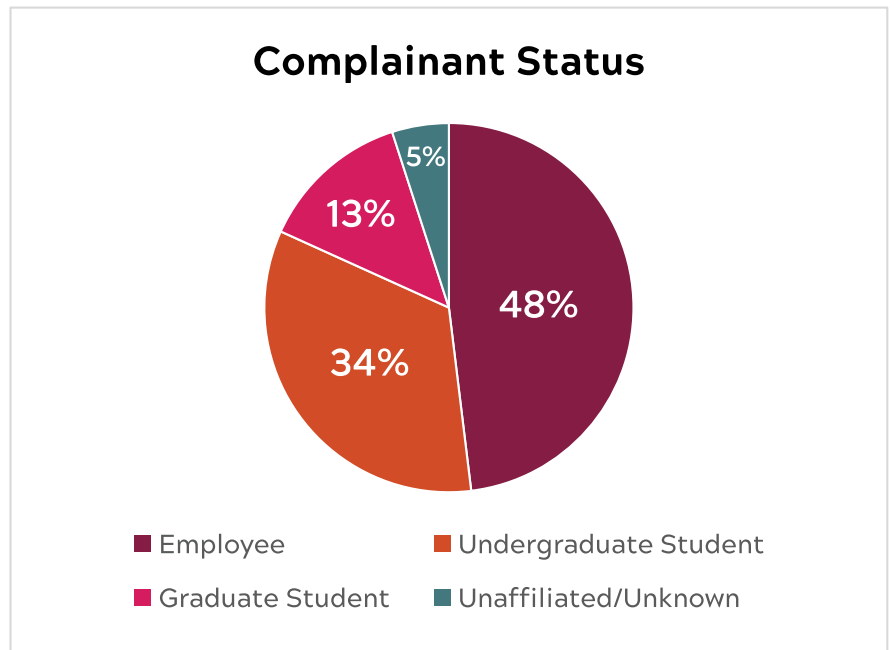
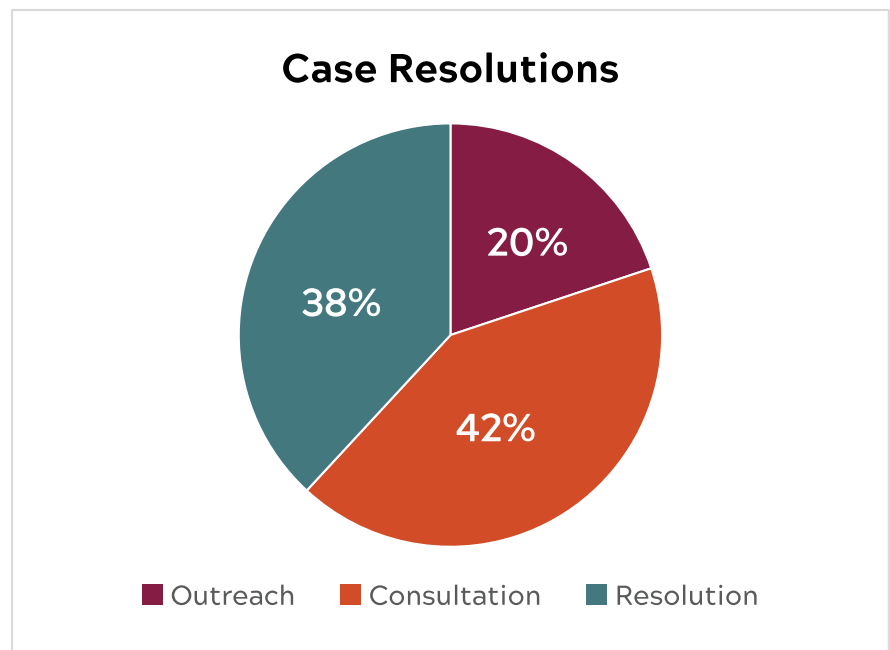


Figure 11

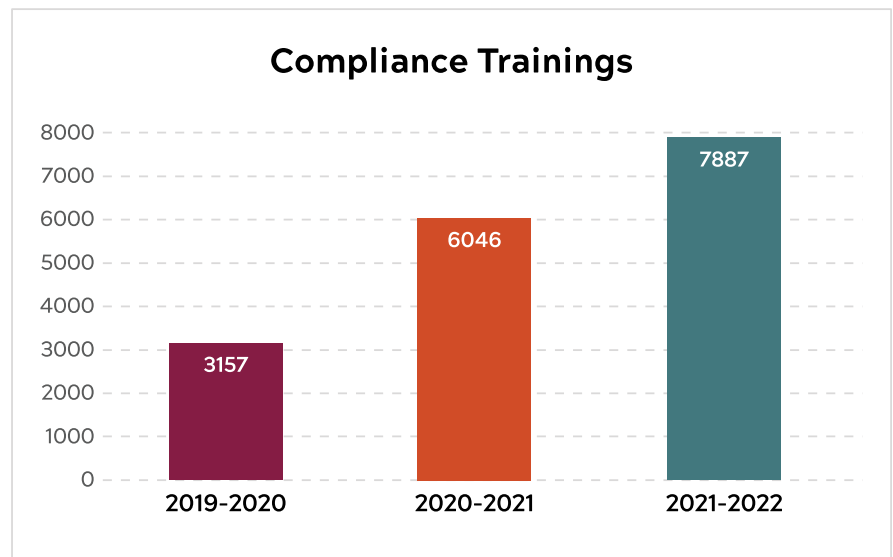


Therefore, the team starts every year with the goal of resolving 80 percent of complaints within 75 days or fewer. In the reporting year, it took an average of 26 days for complaints to resolve; the median complaint resolved in fewer than 16 days.

Compliance Training

The team also engages in outreach and education, including compliance training. Each year, the team sets a goal to increase the rate of employees who have taken the training within the last two years or, for new hires, within 90 days of their first day. **Figure 12** shows how many employees completed compliance training in 2021-2022 in comparison to the two previous academic years. In the coming year, the team will continue its work to ensure that at least 75 percent of employees meet institutional expectations for completing compliance training and identify key partners whose roles frequently intersect with OEA's work for engagement in new training or workshop modules tailored to their positions.

Figure 12



Conflict Resolution

OEA engages multiple departments, units, and teams in efforts to identify and address climate concerns related to fostering inclusive working and learning environments. The office offers informal conflict resolution processes and trainings for individuals, small groups, and university departments to strengthen communication and increase collaboration in the workplace, with particular attention to matters of identity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility. In the reporting year, 47 students, faculty, and staff members participated in individual conflict coaching sessions. More than 400 members of the university community received training in effective conflict resolution and communication skills.

Equity Services in the Washington, D.C., Region

Reporting to the director of compliance and conflict resolution, OEA's equity manager is based in the Washington, D.C., region and serves as a regional, in-person point of contact for questions and concerns related to the university's anti-discrimination and anti-harassment policies. The equity manager works with OEA's partners, such as the [Cook Counseling Center](#), Human Resources, and the [university ombuds](#) and [graduate ombuds](#) offices, to create a robust network of support for students, faculty, and staff in the capital region.

During the reporting year, in addition to hosting regular office hours across [Virginia Tech's campuses in the Washington, D.C., region](#), the equity manager co-facilitated numerous events for students and employees, including an in-person training on [Policy 1025](#) and [Policy 1026](#), a workshop on conflict resolution, and a "Grad School Survival Guide" event which provided resources to the area's graduate students.

Title IX

OEA's Title IX team works so that all members of the Virginia Tech community can fully participate in university activities free from discrimination on the basis of sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression, including sexual harassment and violence. This work is done in partnership with departments across the university and focuses on compliance with Title IX and its regulations, promoting a culture that protects against harassment and violence, and responding to reported sexual harassment and violence with seriousness and care.

Compliance with Title IX and Related Regulations

The Title IX team regularly reviews university policy and process related to Title IX. During the reporting period, the university's Title IX Advisory Council worked to both monitor the response to reported harassment and violence for compliance, as well as ensure that appropriate systems are in place and working well. The Title IX coordinator also hosted a Student Title IX Advisory Group to gather perspective on how students experience those systems. Finally, the team assisted partners across the university as they underwent extensive audits from federal agencies monitoring compliance with Title IX in programs receiving federal grants.

Promoting a Culture that Protects Against Harassment and Violence

Collaborations and partnerships are critical to fulfilling the spirit and intent of Title IX, especially in a highly decentralized university like Virginia Tech. In 2021, President Sands established the Sexual Violence Culture and Climate Work Group (SVCC) to further the institution's commitment to preventing sexual violence and building a collaborative, sustainable model for prevention programming on campus. The Title IX coordinator serves as chair and the associate vice president serves as an advisor of SVCC. In its inaugural year, the work group was charged with focusing on sexual violence culture and climate issues for residential students. The accomplishments of SVCC include:

- Launching the SAFE at VT website.
- Revising timely warning communications.
- Socializing a model for cultural transformation.
- Sponsoring a student engagement forum.
- Developing an assessment tool.
- Collaborating with Residential Well-Being to infuse sexual violence prevention programming into the on-campus living model.

Information about sexual assault prevention and the resources available to those who experience it is especially important in the earliest days and weeks of students' experiences in higher education. Title IX staff administered online training for every incoming first-year, transfer, and first-year graduate and professional student at the start of both the fall and spring academic semesters.

Responding to Sexual Harassment and Violence

Institutional response efforts are also a significant part of our work. While this work is shared with campus partners, the Title IX team serves as the initial point of contact for students reporting sexual harassment and violence, providing support and resources as well as options for filing formal complaints. To provide a full picture of these issues impacting the Virginia Tech community, we provide data on all official reports of sexual harassment and violence regarding students via a separate Title IX annual report.

Looking Forward

In the 2022-2023 academic year, OEA will continue its work to cultivate an educational and professional setting free from harassment, discrimination, and retaliation. Goals for the office include:

- Increasing education and outreach to ensure the university community understands our institution's commitment to an environment free from harassment and discrimination.
- Continuing leadership in campuswide initiatives to improve campus accessibility.
- Conducting a student sexual violence campus climate survey to assess the culture and climate on campus as well as the prevalence rates of gender-based violence.
- Developing sustainable models for gender-based violence prevention.
- Assessing service models to ensure the Washington, D.C., area; Roanoke; and other non-Blacksburg locations have access to the OEA team and services.
- Expanding communications and outreach to inform the university community about OEA's services and achievements.

Resources

Accessibility Portal	vt.edu/accessibility
Accessible Technologies	assist.vt.edu
Cook Counseling Center	ucc.vt.edu
OEA Glossary	oea.vt.edu/about/glossary
Report a Barrier	vt.edu/accessibility/barrier
SAFE at VT	safe.vt.edu
Services for Students with Disabilities	ssd.vt.edu



Scan the QR code or click the link below for the Gender-Based Harassment and Violence Reporting form.

bit.ly/TitleIX_Reporting_Form



EQUITY & ACCESSIBILITY
VIRGINIA TECH.

220 Gilbert Street
Suite 5200
Blacksburg, VA 24061

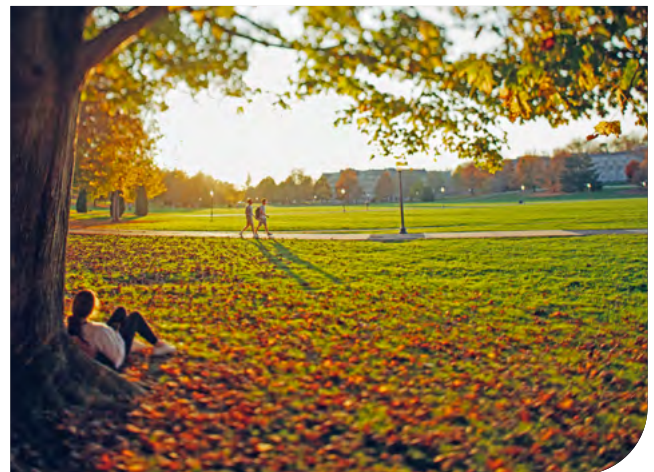
540-231-2010
equityandaccess@vt.edu
oea.vt.edu





2021-2022 Title IX Annual Report

Report on Sexual Harassment and Violence at Virginia Tech



EQUITY & ACCESSIBILITY
VIRGINIA TECH

From the Title IX Coordinator

Dear Community,

The [Office for Equity and Accessibility](#) produces the [Title IX report](#) annually to provide data and context for reports of sexual harassment and violence involving Virginia Tech students.

By sharing this information transparently, we hope to provide insight into the experience of students in our community and the myriad ways that sexual harassment and violence impacts our university. This report also outlines how the university responds to reports through helpful support measures to individuals and investigations of formal complaints.

Virginia Tech is committed to building a safe environment for all. To that end, this report contains information about trends from the last academic year and the university's ongoing efforts to create a culture that protects against sexual harassment and violence.

Though sometimes difficult to read, it is important to acknowledge and regard the information included in this report with seriousness and care. Understanding our current climate is essential to the success of our efforts to create a safe and inclusive learning environment.

In sharing this report, we seek not only to increase awareness but to ensure continued partnership and accountability. The [SAFE at VT](#) website provides resources and ways to get involved in this important work.

Together, we have the power to transform our community.

Take good care,

Katie Polidoro

Title IX Coordinator
Office for Equity and Accessibility



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Reporting Sexual Harassment and Violence

The decision to report sexual harassment and violence is deeply personal. Survivors often are selective about trusting others with their reports. When individuals share their experiences with most employees – with the exception of confidential resources on campus – those employees are required by university [Policy 1026](#) to report to the Title IX coordinator. The purpose of this requirement is to ensure that those who experience harassment and violence can easily access support measures, resources, and reliable information about their options to file formal complaints.

Each person has their own unique set of needs and desired outcomes, and deserves the autonomy to make their own choices about reporting, seeking help, and filing formal complaints. To every extent possible, Virginia Tech respects those decisions.

Reports, 2021-2022

In the previous academic year, the Title IX team in the Office for Equity and Accessibility responded to 435 new reports of sexual harassment or violence, marking a significant 46 percent increase from the 298 reports in 2020-2021. Of this number, more reports occurred during the fall semester, specifically during the months of September and October.

While the number of students who chose to report directly to the Title IX coordinator increased, the majority of reports were from third parties – university employees that students approached with their stories and who, in keeping with [Policy 1026](#), shared that information with the Title IX coordinator. Most often, these responsible employee reports came from individuals working in residence halls. These employees include student leaders who were approached by fellow students for support and guidance; academic faculty and advisors who were approached when students' experiences interfered with their studies; and Virginia Tech Police Department officers who received reports of crimes such as sexual assault, intimate partner violence, and stalking.

In particular, the increase in reports of sexual assault is cause for concern. The Title IX team received 168 reports involving alleged sexual violence, a 55 percent increase from the 108 reports in the 2020-2021 academic year. Of those reports, 92 were received during the fall semester, with higher reporting rates between September and October.

2021-2022

435 new reports

46% increase in reports

168 reports of alleged sexual violence

55% increase in reports

To increase understanding of how sexual assault occurs in our community, staff tracked when incidents were reported to have occurred. Twenty-five students indicated that their experience of violence occurred either prior to attending Virginia Tech (18) or in a previous year (7). Another 49 students opted not to share any details of their experience, including where or when it occurred. Of the known incidents that occurred during the 2021-2022 academic year, the majority occurred in September (26).

This underscores the sobering fact that the early weeks of the school year are an especially high-risk time for students.

In addition to the reports discussed above, the Title IX team received 213 reports of sexual harassment – the most common incident type – as well as 28 reports of intimate partner violence and 26 reports of stalking.

University Response

The Title IX team contacted every identified student who reported or was the subject of a third-party report of sexual harassment or violence. All non-anonymous reports resulted in direct outreach to a student. Of those students, 415 had follow-up meetings with staff and were provided resources, support measures, and options for filing a complaint.

Support Measures

Sexual harassment and violence deeply impacts students' participation in academic life. To help limit the effects, students are offered resources and support measures. Those include referrals to confidential resources for counseling and advocacy, academic support, housing changes, university-issued no contact orders, and more. In some cases, these initial support measures helped students feel more secure to make future decisions about filing formal complaints or participate in an investigative process. In other cases, students received support measures on an ongoing basis, over multiple semesters and years, to ensure that they had the opportunity to succeed at Virginia Tech.

Virginia Tech offers resources and support measures to students, no matter where or when their experience occurred. During the 2021-2022 academic year, 194 students received support measures. Ninety-one percent of those students continued their studies in the following semesters or graduated from the university.

Sexual harassment was the **most common** incident type.

415 students had **follow-up meetings** and received resources, support measures, and options for filing a complaint.

91% of students who received support measures **continued their studies** at Virginia Tech.

Investigations and Their Outcomes

When an individual chooses to file a formal complaint and pursue an investigation, the Title IX office is obligated to investigate. Staff conducted 28 investigations during the last academic year. The complaints involved the full spectrum of behaviors that fall under Title IX and the gender-based violence policies outlined in the Virginia Tech [Student Code of Conduct](#). In five cases, due to the seriousness of the allegations and the threat to the safety of individuals or the community, students received interim suspensions, pending the investigative outcomes.

The Title IX team works together with the [Office for Student Conduct](#) to resolve Title IX cases, with Student Conduct holding required live hearings and deciding the outcomes, including sanctions, in each case.

During the 2021-2022 academic year, 16 students were found not responsible for violating university policies related to sexual harassment and violence, and 12 students were found responsible.

For cases in which a student was found to have violated university policy, sanctions included dismissal from the university (2 cases), suspension (5 cases), and deferred suspension (5 cases).

Trends

While the data represent individual cases, there are some commonalities that provide insight into how sexual harassment and violence impact our community and how those who experience it make decisions about when and how to report it.

First, it is clear that both reports and incidents in the previous academic year – especially those involving sexual assault – were highly concentrated in the early fall semester. This time of year, sometimes referred to as “the red zone,” marks a time when students are at heightened risk for experiencing violence.

Second, more students than ever before engaged with the Title IX team to receive resources and support measures. For many, these support measures were ongoing, both because the impact of harassment and violence on the university experience is so significant and because the Title IX team has worked to maintain relationships with students over time.

Reports were **highly concentrated** in the early fall semester.

More students than ever before engaged with the Title IX team to **receive resources and support** measures.

Finally, as in previous years, the rate at which students chose to pursue investigations remained low, despite the increased engagement. One possible explanation for this is the investigation and adjudication process itself may be perceived as difficult. It will be imperative to examine policies and procedures to ensure that the process complies with the requirements of Title IX and does not pose any barriers to reporting.

The **rate** at which students chose to pursue investigations **remained low**, despite the increased engagement.

Culture and Climate

In response to increasing reports of sexual violence and student activism, Virginia Tech President Tim Sands created the Sexual Violence Culture and Climate Work Group (SVCC) in the fall of 2021. President Sands charged the group with creating a sustainable transformation to move Virginia Tech’s culture toward one that protects against sexual violence.

During its initial phase, the work group focused on undergraduate students and the high-risk time for violence that occurs in the early months of the school year known as “the red zone.” The group consisted of representatives from offices across the university and included professional faculty, academic faculty, and undergraduate and graduate student representatives.

To carry out SVCC’s ambitious work, the group formed subcommittees dedicated to each element of its charge. SVCC’s key 2021-22 accomplishments include:

- **Identifying a framework for sustainable culture change.**
 - The group identified opportunities to engage with residential undergraduate students to help shape a more protective culture. As a result, employees and student leaders within Residential Well-Being received significant additional training on sexual assault prevention and addressing culture within the residence halls.
 - An organizational model was identified to establish work groups and recurring events, necessary to sustain the work of culture change and maintain awareness of sexual violence at Virginia Tech.
- **Assessing prevention and culture change.**
 - The group inventoried existing efforts and programming aimed at sexual violence prevention and developed a tool to assess the reach and effectiveness of those programs.

■ **Carrying forward recommendations from the 2019 Task Force.**

- In addition to creating a new full-time position dedicated to sexual violence prevention (which was filled in February 2022), the Task Force made recommendations for improving communications about Title IX resources as well as implementing a universitywide prevention campaign. This year, SVCC created the new [SAFE at VT](#) website, which provides useful information for students and survivors in an approachable way. SVCC created the foundations for a universitywide prevention campaign which launched during the fall of 2023 to increase awareness.

■ **Increasing transparency in how the university responds to sexual violence.**

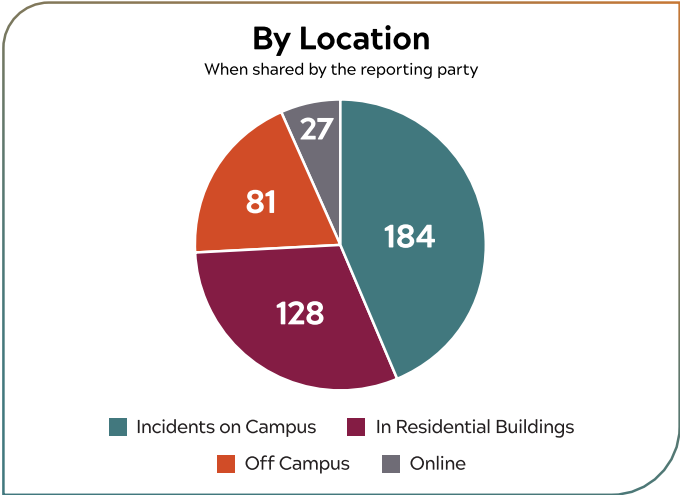
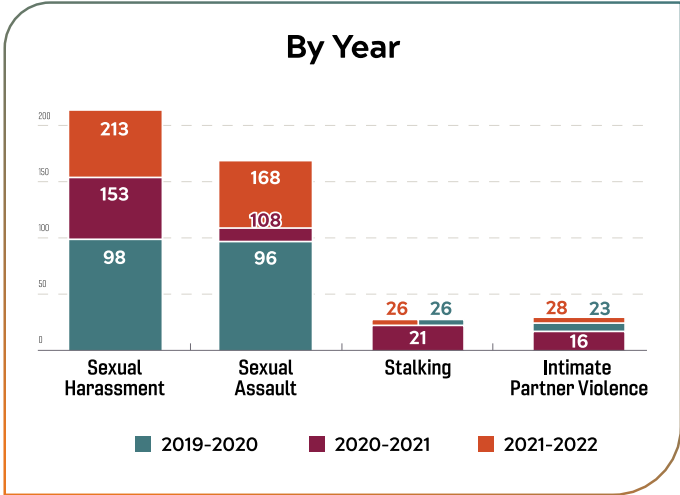
- Based on feedback from community members, including students, improvements were made to the ways the university provides information about sexual violence on campus. [Timely Warning emails](#) were overhauled to provide more clarity and useful information about incidents and prevention.
- Additionally, content was added to both the [SAFE at VT](#) and [Virginia Tech Police Department](#) websites to provide more helpful information about how the university responds to reports.

■ **Encouraging community engagement.**

- In addition to the employees and students appointed to SVCC, subject matter experts and students were invited to join the various subcommittees. In total, 32 university personnel and 57 students served on SVCC or one of its subcommittees.
- A community engagement event, open to all students, was held to gather student feedback on the path of SVCC. Students provided feedback to each subcommittee and that feedback helped guide SVCC's work.

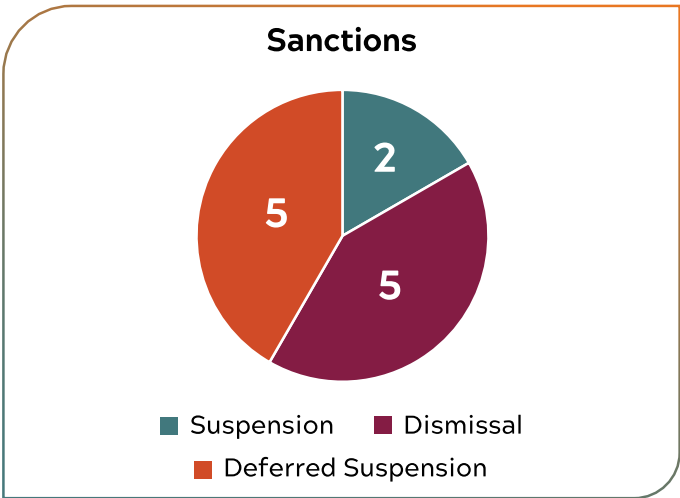
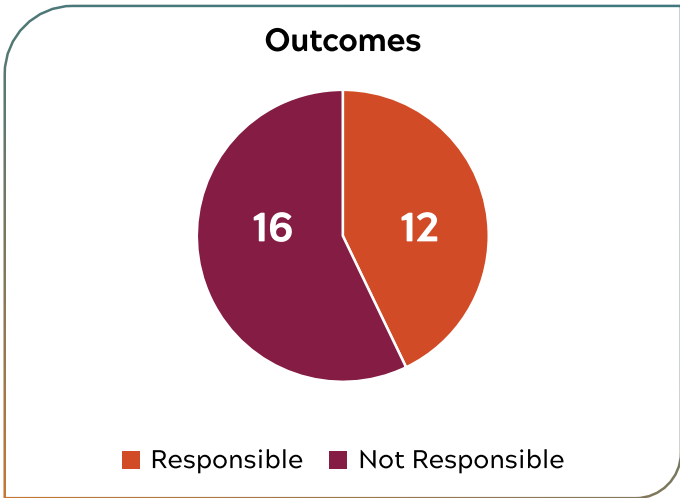
Sexual Harassment and Violence Fact Sheet

The Office for Equity and Accessibility received 435 reports of gender-based harassment and violence involving students. Of those reports, 213 were of sexual harassment, 168 of sexual assault, 26 of stalking, and 28 of intimate partner violence.



Outcomes

Of the reports that resulted in formal complaints and investigations, a student was found responsible for gender-based harassment or violence in 12 cases. In 16 cases, the respondent was found not responsible.





Katie Polidoro, Title IX Coordinator

Office for Equity and Accessibility

P: 540-231-1821

polidoro@vt.edu ▪ safe.vt.edu

Every member of our community has the right to live in an atmosphere free from sexual harassment and violence.

Virginia Tech is committed to providing a safe environment, consistent with our [Principles of Community](#), free from harassment and violence of any kind. If you have experienced sexual harassment or violence, we encourage you to reach out for support. Advocacy and assistance, including measures through Title IX, are available to you—whether you choose to report or not and no matter where you are located.

Report to the University

Scan this code to report gender based harassment and violence.



Office for Equity and Accessibility

220 Gilbert Street, Suite 5200

540-231-2010

equityandaccess@vt.edu

Virginia Tech Police Department

911 ▪ 540-382-4343

police.vt.edu

Calling 911 from a Virginia Tech landline in Blacksburg will reach the Virginia Tech Police Department. Calling 911 from a cell phone will connect with the local off-campus police department.

Confidential Resources

Confidential resources cannot share identifying information about you without your consent. They can support and advise you as you make decisions.

Cook Counseling Center

ucc.vt.edu

Women's Center at Virginia Tech

womenscenter.vt.edu

Schiffert Health Center

healthcenter.vt.edu

**Office of the Ombudsperson –
Graduate School**

graduate.ombudsman.vt.edu

**TimelyCare Virtual Mental
Health Counseling**

timelycare.com/virginiatech

Private Resources

Private resources are required to report some information about incidences to the Title IX Coordinator. Other university departments may also be involved to help survivors or protect the campus community.

Office of Student Conduct

studentconduct.vt.edu

Dean of Students Office

dos.vt.edu

Cranwell International Center

international.vt.edu

Get Involved

Each member of the community can help the university in the ongoing work to transform our culture and protect against sexual violence.

Visit safe.vt.edu

to access resources and learn how you can be part of Virginia Tech's culture of change.

Resources

Accessibility Portal	vt.edu/accessibility
Accessible Technologies	assist.vt.edu
Cook Counseling Center	ucc.vt.edu
OEA Glossary	oea.vt.edu/about/glossary
Report a Barrier	vt.edu/accessibility/barrier
SAFE at VT	safe.vt.edu
Services for Students with Disabilities	ssd.vt.edu



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bit.ly/TitleIX_Reporting_Form



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