

Life Inside the Title IX Pressure Cooker

X

By SARAH BROWN

Andrea Goldblum put her goods in storage and took a job in Denver after being forced out as Title IX coordinator at the U. of Cincinnati. Her story is not unique. (*Maddie McGarvey for The Chronicle*)

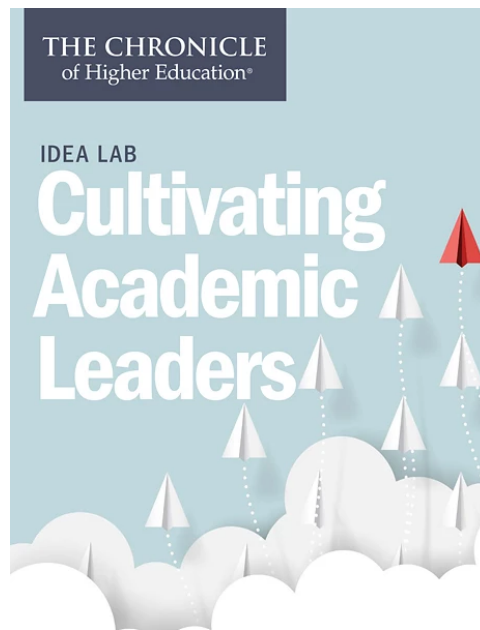
September 5, 2019

Seven months ago, Andrea Goldblum made a decision. It cost Goldblum her job, her home, her health insurance. She moved into a family member's condo. She dipped into retirement savings to pay bills. She wondered whether her 30-year career in higher education was over.

Goldblum had been in charge of overseeing sexual-misconduct cases at the University of Cincinnati. Her job was to investigate complaints, prevent sexual assault and harassment on campus, and comply with Title IX, the gender-equity law.

In February, she said, she was faced with a choice. Her boss had told her not to do something. But if she heeded that order, she believed she'd be failing sexual-assault victims. She believed she'd be violating Title IX.

Goldblum followed her conscience. A month later, she said, she was forced to resign.



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Goldblum, who has sued the university, was one of four different people who have filled the role of Title IX coordinator at Cincinnati in the past three and a half years. One left in the spring of 2016, after 18 months. Then an interim stepped in. It took more than two years to find a permanent replacement, in Goldblum. After less than a year, she was gone, too.

Cincinnati has a new interim (<https://www.uc.edu/titleix.html>)

in place, and has started the search (https://jobs.uc.edu/job/Cincinnati-Executive-Director-of-Gender%2C-Equity-&-Inclusion-OH-45201/575687500/?utm_campaign=google_jobs_apply&utm_source=google_jobs_apply&utm_medium=organic) to find Goldblum's successor. But another academic year has begun without stable leadership in the Title IX office.

What happened at Cincinnati isn't unique, and neither is Goldblum's story. Nationwide, the administrators who are in charge of dealing with campus sexual assault and harassment are turning over fast. Many colleges have had three, four, or even five different Title IX coordinators in the recent era of heightened enforcement, which began eight years ago.

Two-thirds of Title IX coordinators say they've been in their jobs for less than three years, according to a 2018 survey by the Association of Title IX Administrators, or Atixa, the field's national membership group. One-fifth have held their positions for less than a year.

The Chronicle interviewed three dozen current and former administrators to find out what's behind the churn. Many of them were reluctant to speak on the record, fearing retaliation, legal action, or the prospect of torpedoing future career opportunities. They painted a picture of a profession that is constantly under the gun: One whose internal and external pressures threaten to cloud sound decision-making.

Any job on a college campus can be stressful at times. But in Title IX offices, stress is woven into the fabric of the positions themselves. Higher education has few other roles where the rules that dictate how the job is done can change at any moment, criticism comes from all directions, and, in the end, no one's ever satisfied.

The Title IX enforcers described living in a constant state of uncertainty, in which new federal guidance, state laws, or court rulings could abruptly upend the status quo. Fearing that one tiny misstep could lead to a lawsuit or an investigation by the Education

Department's Office for Civil Rights. Lacking resources and institutional support, even as rape reports soared.

They described feeling overwhelmed and emotionally drained. Turning over cases in their heads at all hours. Some of them, like Goldblum, talked about a moment. A moment when there's a particularly tough investigation in play, or pressure to do something that conflicts with what they think is right.

Most of these administrators said they'd thought about quitting. Some already had.

The turnover in the nation's Title IX offices has far-reaching ramifications. As sexual-assault investigations bounce from one administrator to another, results can be delayed. Victims might not know who's handling their case at a given moment, and they might have to answer the same questions about painful events all over again. They might have to spend more time on campus wondering whether they'll see the person they accused in the library, in the dining hall, on the quad.

Institutional knowledge could go down the drain, forcing new staff members to scramble to get up to speed. Students and employees who are upset with how a case turned out may latch onto perceived inexperience, or apparent disparities between campus policies and how their own cases played out. They might decide to sue. Title IX disputes can balloon into scandals that bring costly settlements and reputational damage. Instability doesn't help.

Most importantly, when victims of sexual misconduct are coming forward about the worst experience of their lives, they want to tell a person they know they can trust. Turnover can undermine that trust. And victims might not come forward at all.

A decade ago, there was nothing that resembled the modern campus Title IX office.

Then colleges faced a groundswell of anger over sexual assaults. Some studies suggested that between one in four and one in five women experienced a form of sexual misconduct while in college. Students spoke out, saying colleges had swept their complaints under the rug. Joe Biden, vice president at the time, threw the weight of the federal government behind their cause and publicly excoriated institutions for failing victims.

The Office for Civil Rights wielded a sledgehammer, sending colleges a warning: If you keep messing up, you could lose all of your federal funding. Until then, Title IX was known principally for mandating equity in athletics. Prohibiting sex discrimination, the Obama administration made clear, also meant ensuring students weren't derailed by sexual violence.

So after the federal government issued its "Dear Colleague" letter on the matter, in 2011, colleges scrambled to create systems for investigating sexual-misconduct reports that would pass muster with the civil-rights office. And they put Title IX coordinators in charge.

When people report sexual misconduct, these administrators give advice on the options, whether it's filing a formal complaint, pursuing some sort of informal resolution, or going to the police. They help students secure accommodations like class or dorm changes and make referrals for counseling. They make sure people who are sexually assaulted can get back on track, academically and otherwise. And they make sure offenders are punished.

Every higher-education institution is now supposed to have a Title IX coordinator. Harvard University has designated more than 50 of them.

Amid the initial chaos, Title IX coordinators ended up in their jobs for a lot of different reasons. Some applied for newly created full-time positions. Others volunteered, augmenting their roles as administrators or faculty members, hoping to help students and make a difference. Many were "voluntold," because the feds said someone had to do it, said Courtney Bullard, a former associate general counsel at the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga.

The coordinators suddenly found themselves investigating allegations about intimate moments fraught with blurred memories, and making high-stakes decisions about students' futures. They had to retool policies, build sexual-misconduct databases, and educate the whole campus on Title IX and prevention. What's more, their colleagues in the field were, for the most part, just as new to the role as they were.

Title IX Officers

at a Glance

Title IX administrators have one of the most important and difficult jobs on campus: handling sexual-misconduct cases. Here's a snapshot of who's in Title IX offices and what their jobs are like, according to survey data provided by the Association for Title IX Administrators, the field's primary membership organization.

Every higher-education institution that receives federal funding must designate a Title IX coordinator who's the primary point person for gender-discrimination issues like sexual misconduct, per guidance from the Education Department's Office for Civil Rights. Most Title IX coordinators are white women.

2018

72% women

74% white

As Title IX offices have become a more established presence on campuses, and as the field has professionalized, these administrators have gained clout among senior leaders and secured more funding to pay for things like prevention training and professional development for staff.

2018

**46% report
to the president**

2015

**7% report
to the president**

2018

**62% of institutions
had a budget
dedicated to Title IX**

2015

**33% of institutions
had a budget**

dedicated to Title IX

But they continue to lack experience and don't stay in their jobs for long. Most of them also continue to hold other roles on campus, like human resources or diversity and inclusion, in addition to Title IX. Full-time Title IX coordinators are not the norm.

2018

**20% less than one year in their current job,
64% less than three years,
87% less than five years**

2015

**39% less than one year in their current job,
80% less than three years,
93% less than five years**

2018

21% of institutions had full-time Title IX coordinators, 61% had additional responsibilities

2015

10% of institutions had full-time Title IX coordinators, 70% had additional responsibilities

Source: Association of Title IX Administrators

That lack of experience has caused problems — at least according to the many federal investigations, lawsuits, and media outlets, both traditional and partisan, that have covered the alleged mishandling of campus sexual-misconduct cases.

Students and victim advocates have described inaction and mistreatment by Title IX staff: months of delays, inadequate accommodations, and unsatisfying resolutions. They've felt wronged when the people they accused were allowed to remain on campus after their

cases had concluded. Some have gone so far as to say that their experience with the Title IX office was worse than the actual sexual assault.

Katherine W. McGerald, executive director of SurvJustice, which provides legal help to student victims, said a lot of Title IX officials seem well intentioned, but they're often not well trained and hold biases for one side or the other.

McGerald sees it in the way administrators frame their questions in interviews with alleged victims. They ask things like: Why did you text him? Why did you stay with him? They don't understand, she said, that students will sometimes continue to talk to the person who attacked them, especially if they're in a coercive relationship.

Accused students, meanwhile, have said they were punished with little evidence and not given a fair shake. They've said they didn't get the same rights as alleged victims, like access to all of the evidence against them, and were asked questions during investigations and hearings that presumed their guilt.

Title IX work, he added, is “grinding up good people and spitting them out.”

Andrew T. Miltenberg, a lawyer who has advised many students accused of sexual assault, said some Title IX officials are blatant in their dismissive treatment of men who face sexual-assault accusations. “They're dogmatic in their belief that no one would ever make up these allegations,” he said. He's seen cases where “huge swaths of the accused's narrative” are omitted from the final investigative report.

Betsy DeVos, the secretary of education, has also described what she sees as the failures of campus Title IX proceedings. She's sought to bolster the rights of the accused through her proposed Title IX regulations, which would make campus sexual-assault procedures more legalistic, requiring live hearings and cross examination. Other critics, including defense lawyers and opinion columnists, frame Title IX systems as “kangaroo courts” and question whether colleges should handle these cases at all.

As a result, the narrative about Title IX administrators is often that they don't do their jobs very well.

The administrators themselves push back. Mistakes happen, they say, but not nearly as often as people might think. As they tell it, they are going through training. They're not expelling students immediately when sexual-assault allegations are reported. They're not intentionally letting cases drag on for months.

But even Title IX officials concede that their efforts to run the best possible process are sometimes thwarted by factors outside of their control. As a result, they said, they can wind up in positions where doing what's best for students can be difficult. Sometimes, they said, it can feel impossible.

Andrea Goldblum started a new job this month as director of student conduct and support at the Community College of Denver after the U. of Cincinnati ousted her as Title IX coordinator. *(Maddie McGarvey for The Chronicle)*

Before Goldblum accepted the offer to become Cincinnati's Title IX coordinator, in 2018, she had a potential deal-breaker question for Bleuzette Marshall, who would be her boss: Will I be able to do my job with integrity and in compliance with the law?

Goldblum's wariness was a product of her extensive higher-education experience. She was handling Title IX cases before they were Title IX cases. She remembers well one of the first sexual-misconduct reports she ever had to deal with, decades ago: an alleged gang rape. Before assuming Ohio State University's Title IX coordinator position in 2013, she had led the student-conduct office there for seven and a half years.

More recently, Goldblum had seen many Title IX coordinators leave their jobs quickly because they felt they didn't have institutional support. She wanted to be sure that wouldn't be the case at Cincinnati. Marshall, Goldblum said, assured her that she was coming to the right place.

As the 2018-19 academic year got underway, Goldblum quickly built a rapport with Marshall, the vice president for equity, inclusion, and community impact. Goldblum loved her staff.

And she was happy to be in Cincinnati. Over the previous four years, she had led the Title IX offices at both Kenyon College and at the University of the Pacific. Kenyon's campus felt too remote, she said, and the University of the Pacific felt too far away from her family

in the Midwest. Cincinnati seemed like the perfect fit.

But Goldblum also saw red flags. For instance, she heard that the student-conduct office, which handles punishments for students who commit sexual assault, was watering down sanctions. Some students found to have violated the Title IX policy would take a two-hour workshop on masculinity and write a reflection paper, she said.

Goldblum suspected it was because the university was afraid of getting sued. In the past five years, Cincinnati has faced multiple [lawsuits](https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2014/11/26/university-cincinnati-lawsuit-sex-assault-accused-students/19518741/) (https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2014/11/26/university-cincinnati-lawsuit-sex-assault-accused-students/19518741/) from accused students who claimed they were railroaded by an unfair Title IX process. But she also heard that some students had left the university or were considering doing so because their assailants had been allowed to remain on campus.

And then came William Houston.

In January, Cincinnati published an innocuous-looking feature story on its website, detailing how six students in the College of Arts and Sciences had overcome hardships to earn their degrees. Faculty members had nominated them to wear special cords at graduation in the fall. One was Houston. The article said he had overcome “immaturity” to graduate.

But when the College of Arts and Sciences shared Houston's graduation honor [on social media](https://twitter.com/uc_artsci/status/1092806055996911616?lang=en) (https://twitter.com/uc_artsci/status/1092806055996911616?lang=en) February 5, [angry comments](https://www.facebook.com/UCArtSci/photos/a.478281874499/10156947490844500/?type=3&theater) streamed in (https://www.facebook.com/UCArtSci/photos/a.478281874499/10156947490844500/?type=3&theater). Houston, it turned out, was a registered sex offender.

“#RapistsAreSafeHere.” “Applauding sexual predators is a slap in the face to student survivors.” “Here we have rape culture where perps aren’t ashamed while survivors are CONSTANTLY victim blamed and shamed for being assaulted.”

According to the article, Houston had attended six colleges in the previous five and a half years. People quickly found his disciplinary history online. When he was on the football team at Bowling Green State University, he had been [charged with gross sexual imposition](http://www.icrimewatch.net/offenderdetails.php?) (http://www.icrimewatch.net/offenderdetails.php?

[OfndrID=2233343&AgencyID=55190](https://www.toledoblade.com/local/2015/05/19/Former-BGSU-athlete-listed-as-sex-offender/stories/20150518222)) after an incident at a party (<https://www.toledoblade.com/local/2015/05/19/Former-BGSU-athlete-listed-as-sex-offender/stories/20150518222>) and, in 2015, he was sentenced to three years' probation.

Goldblum said she later discovered that he was kicked out of two colleges for committing sexual misconduct, and said police reports indicated that he had as many as 11 alleged victims. M.B. Reilly, Cincinnati's spokeswoman, told the campus newspaper (https://www.newsrecord.org/news/uc-no-plans-to-retract-article-that-highlights-registered-sex/article_0834b160-2e16-11e9-b639-7f347a16cae3.html) that her office hadn't known about Houston's past when staff members shared the article.

A Title IX staffer alerted Goldblum to the comments, she told *The Chronicle*. As she read through them, some from students who said they were sexual-assault victims, she instantly saw a Title IX issue. "If somebody says they're assaulted," Goldblum said, "the primary thing we have to do is offer resources and options."

She said she also saw an obligation to investigate whether Cincinnati had enrolled other students like Houston. Was there a special admission process for applicants with a history of sexual misconduct? Who was involved in those decisions?

Goldblum said she told Marshall, her boss, that Title IX required the university to advertise campus resources to the victims who had spoken out. But Marshall told her to wait, according to Goldblum, because university officials were working on an official response.

Marshall declined a request for an interview. "Due to Ms. Goldblum's ongoing litigation, I cannot address these issues at this time," she said in a statement, provided to *The Chronicle* by a spokeswoman.

Goldblum waited. But by Tuesday, February 12, she said, her frustration reached a boiling point. A week had passed since students had seen the Houston honor and said they doubted Cincinnati's commitment to preventing sexual assault. *The News Record*, the campus newspaper, had published a story (https://www.newsrecord.org/news/uc-no-plans-to-retract-article-that-highlights-registered-sex/article_0834b160-2e16-11e9-b639-7f347a16cae3.html) the day before about criticism of the university's handling of the matter.

So Goldblum drafted a letter to the editor to submit to the *News Record*. It was 155 words long.

To print the document, click the "Original Document" link to open the original PDF. At this time it is not possible to print the document with annotations.

At noon that day, she sent the letter to Marshall, according to emails obtained by *The Chronicle*. Later that afternoon, she also emailed the university's media-relations department the letter and described her plans to submit it.

According to Goldblum, Marshall told her that "some people" were worried that the letter was biased and that it suggested the university bore responsibility for wrongdoing. Again, Goldblum said, Marshall told her to wait.

But Goldblum said she felt she had to submit her letter to the *News Record* in order to comply with Title IX. "I felt like my integrity was at stake," she said. At 5:26 p.m., she hit send.

That evening, Goldblum got a phone call. It was Marshall. According to Goldblum, Marshall said: You defied me.

Even writing a simple message to the campus community or updating students about the status of their case can be swamped by concerns about bias and liability, Title IX officials told *The Chronicle*. At some institutions, there's a "paranoia" about putting anything in writing or communicating with anyone involved in a Title IX investigation, said Amanda L. Walsh, a former Title IX coordinator at Brown University.

Fear of lawsuits is just one of the sources of pressure that Title IX officials said they face in their day-to-day lives. There are many others.

For one, Title IX officials can't tell students who have worked up the courage to report a sexual assault at 4:30 p.m., "I have to leave at 5, so come back tomorrow." That period of crisis is typically students' first impression of the Title IX process. So they settle in for the evening. They rely on spouses or others to pick up the kids from daycare or school.

When students report, they're putting their faith in the institution to do something. But Title IX officials are neutral fact finders, not advocates. They have to tell students who come forward, "The person you accused has rights, too." Many victims don't see fairness in that statement. They see someone who's not taking sexual misconduct seriously.

Robinette Kelley, a former Title IX coordinator at Iowa State U., still thinks about the sorority member she was unable to help: "We're supposed to be compliant, not compassionate." (*Travis Dove for The Chronicle*)

Robinette Kelley, a former Title IX coordinator at Iowa State University, said there's not much she can do about that. "We're supposed to be compliant, not compassionate," she said. Once, a sorority member at Iowa State reported being raped by a fraternity brother. Deep down, Kelley believed the woman. "She was depending on me to try to find out what happened," Kelley said.

But there wasn't enough evidence. Kelley ultimately had to tell her: "I can't substantiate your case." (Kelley was fired from Iowa State in 2015, and she sued, alleging that the university had prevented her from investigating some Title IX cases and collecting historical data on sexual assaults. She settled last year for \$125,000 and is now a consultant.)

Title IX officials also can't make a sexual assault go away, no matter how well they run investigations, said Warren R. Anderson, Title IX coordinator at Harrisburg Area Community College, in Pennsylvania. "I was not prepared for the overwhelming sense of guilt, where your policies couldn't prevent sexual violence from taking place," he said. He's also vice president for inclusion and diversity, but he said he spends more than half of his time on Title IX.

Sometimes, when Anderson wraps up a case, he's left with a nagging feeling: Could I have done something differently? "Nobody wants to be that story of what not to do," he said. But he knows he can't be stuck in a state of indecision. He reminds himself of his experience: I've successfully closed more than 100 of these cases.

Even if a case is concluded successfully, though, it doesn't mean the people involved feel good about the outcome. Title IX is a business of lose-lose situations. The best-case scenario is that the investigation doesn't take too long, the process is fair, and if there's enough evidence, an accused student is punished. If there's not enough evidence and the case is closed without a sanction, it doesn't mean that the student who reported the incident feels any less hurt.

What's more, these administrators can't just make a decision on a sexual-assault case and move on. They are part of an intimate campus community. They'll continue to see students they've worked with. At commencement, they'll see some of them graduate. And they'll think about the students who aren't graduating, perhaps because of the outcome of a Title IX case.

"When it's your program and you work there, you live in it," said Paul Apicella, a former Title IX coordinator at three universities.

That can lead to isolation. Several Title IX coordinators said they don't socialize much at their institutions. They don't stop and chat with students on campus. They keep everyone at arm's length, because people might come under investigation at any time. That means they have to figure out how to build trust without building too close of a relationship.

Often, it's not hard to stay isolated, Title IX officials said. Colleagues see Title IX as the principal's office. When the Title IX coordinator walks into a meeting, it can feel like people are thinking: *Oh no, the equity person's here. They're going to come after me.*

As more colleges hired Title IX coordinators starting in 2011, the staffing boom tended to lead to more awareness and an increase in the reporting of sexual assaults. But then the coordinators had to go to senior administrators with those numbers.

Even today, some said, they have to explain over and over again: An uptick doesn't mean sexual assault is becoming more prevalent on campuses. It means more students are actually reporting it. And then they try to explain why that load requires more resources. Often, it doesn't work.

Robert Wood, Title IX coordinator at Gwynedd Mercy University, said getting people to understand why it's so important to take sexual assault seriously can feel "like pushing water up a hill."

Robert Wood, Title IX coordinator at Gwynedd Mercy U.: Getting people to take sexual assault seriously can feel "like pushing water up a hill." (*Ryan Collier for The Chronicle*)

Title IX administrators often talk among themselves: How much longer can I do this? With full-throated support from campus leaders, the roles become more manageable.

When particularly tricky sexual-misconduct investigations land on their desk, administrators often rely on Title IX networks within their state or their university system for advice. The Association for Title IX Administrators runs an email list where people can anonymously ask questions of their colleagues.

They've also come up with creative ways to, they hope, avert burnout. Boxing class. Playing hockey. "Long walks with my dog." Riding a motorcycle. "Ping pong Fridays." One Title IX coordinator said having her kids actually ended up becoming a form of self care, because maternity leave forced her to take time away.

The periods of the most intense pressure — when half-a-dozen sexual-assault reports come in at once, or a complex case features dozens of witnesses — tend to ebb and flow. But sometimes, the pressure builds.

Wood, who used to work in law enforcement, has more than a decade of experience as a Title IX official. Several times, he said, doing what he feels is best for students has put him at odds with his colleagues. Before deciding how much to push back, he's talked to his wife. He's told her, "I might not have a job if I do this."

In 2017, when he was the Title IX coordinator at Millersville University, he sparred with colleagues over how to handle sexual-assault investigations. Campus officials alleged that he had been insubordinate, according to documents he provided to *The Chronicle*.

Millersville's policy was that the director of human resources, as a deputy Title IX coordinator, led investigations involving faculty or staff members, and the Title IX coordinator oversaw the process. According to the documents, Millersville officials alleged that Wood had tried to do his own investigations, violating the policy.

Wood sees it differently. In emails and documents, he explained that several students had come to his office to report allegations involving employees. He said he worked with those students but immediately sent any information they provided to human resources. It wouldn't make sense, he said, for him to stop students right when they'd worked up the courage to report misconduct and direct them to another office.

After going through a pre-disciplinary hearing, Wood said he resigned. He filed a complaint with the Office for Civil Rights alleging that the university retaliated against him. Janet Kacskos, a spokeswoman for Millersville, wrote in an email that an outside law firm investigated and found that the university hadn't retaliated, and that the civil-rights office closed its case as a result.

Josh Bronson, meanwhile, grew tired of feeling like he was the target of everyone's frustration and anger. He was a Title IX investigator at the University of Maryland at College Park for three years, and he reached a point where he became disillusioned. "You just never feel like you can actually help anybody," he said.

Bronson feels like the people he helped the most were the students who didn't even want to pursue a formal investigation. They didn't want to go into detail about the assault. They just wanted help working with a professor because they'd done poorly on an exam the day after it happened.

"You deal with it for as long as you can," he said. "But then you have to recognize that it's time to leave." He quit.

Less than a year later, Maryland's Title IX coordinator and three other staff members — totaling half of the Title IX office — resigned, too. Bronson is now director of training for the International Association of Campus Law Enforcement Administrators.

Walsh, who was at Brown and is now a lawyer at the Victim Rights Law Center, said the political climate really got to her. She grew tired of what she described as a lack of public understanding of Title IX. She grew frustrated with federal officials writing the rules for how her job should be done and outside voices weighing in with their own ideas, when most of them hadn't spent much time on campuses.

Another problem also taxed her, Walsh said: "I felt like I was virtually always working." At all hours, she was getting contacted by students, advisers, and colleagues who needed immediate responses. One evening, late in her third trimester of pregnancy, Walsh remembers finally starting to set up a crib. At 3 a.m., she went to the hospital. A student was having a sexual-assault exam. Walsh wanted to be there for her.

Once Walsh's baby was born, there were only so many 9 p.m. student-group meetings she was able to handle. After a year and a half, she quit, too.

By some measures, it seems that Title IX offices are doing what they're supposed to do. Reporting of sexual misconduct at many institutions is higher. Candid campus conversations about consent and sexual autonomy are happening that have never happened before.

Administrators are spending less time just figuring out how to do the job, and more time refining and tweaking the way they handle complaints, investigations, and prevention education.

Some hope that the Title IX field will naturally end up in a better place. That federal regulations will bring clarity and case law will settle. That Title IX offices will become more of a fixture of campuses.

But time alone might not make these jobs more sustainable. It won't change the volume of complaints, the lack of support, the scrutiny. "The success of the position has kind of led to the burnout," said Sue May, a consultant for a search firm that works with colleges.

If the best trained professionals continue to leave, "we're going to be filling positions with those willing to do it, rather than with those who really should be," said Brett A. Sokolow, who leads Ncherm, a risk-management firm with which the Association for Title IX Administrators is affiliated.

Title IX work, he said, is "grinding up good people and spitting them out."

Many of the people with the most experience carry red flags on their résumés. They've been named in lawsuits filed by students who were unhappy with the outcome of a Title IX case. Or they've left jobs after only a few months. Like Andrea Goldblum.

Her letter to the editor was never published. Cincinnati's College of Arts and Sciences posted a statement (<https://www.uc.edu/news/articles/2019/01/n2060727.html?fbclid=IwAR2d4n3xEyQ6WMhPE8038TXVq4tEBMvQJ15vjWhx2rn1CPjPWgIEQBZuUcU>) atop its original article about Houston and amended a Facebook post. But there was no mention of campus Title IX resources.

The morning of March 15, Goldblum walked into the office of Marshall, her boss. There, she encountered Marshall, a representative from human resources, and a campus police officer, according to body-camera footage provided by the university's public-safety department. Marshall told Goldblum that, because of the February 12 incident, she would have to resign immediately or be fired.

"That particular moment, an act of what I see as insubordination, is not something that I can tolerate or can have, given our role within the university and given the work that we do," Marshall said. Fifteen minutes later, Goldblum signed the resignation letter.

Wiping away tears, Goldblum told Marshall that she had major concerns about Cincinnati's campus climate. "If people can't stand for somebody to try to do something with systemic issues when people are harmed," she said, "that's a huge issue."

In a statement, Marshall said the university's "commitment to Title IX is clear." She added: "We've invested in personnel and expanded efforts around prevention education, interim measures, and complaint resolution as well as enhanced partner collaborations. This work continues thanks to our dynamic team and university leadership."

Goldblum told *The Chronicle* that her experience shows what can happen when colleges are consumed by fears that Title IX issues might hurt their reputation. "It became so much not about the individuals involved — students and employees," she said. "It was about the publicity, the negative publicity. Or, were lawsuits going to result from this? How will this impact supporters or donors?"

In the past, when Goldblum went on the job market, she was the sort of administrator colleges were eager to hire. Headhunters had called her regularly. This year, from March to early July, she sent out more than 70 applications and got just one campus interview.

On many mornings, she struggled to get out of bed. She wondered, “How can I even go on?”

Finally, a few weeks ago, she got an enthusiastic call back. It was the Community College of Denver. Officials there praised her, she said, for standing up for her principles. This month, she started as the college’s director of student conduct and support.

But this wasn’t the plan. She’d hoped to finish out the final dozen years of her career at Cincinnati. It was supposed to be her last stop. Now she’s had to leave the Title IX field. She’s had to move, yet again, away from her family. She’s taken a 40 percent pay cut.

Sending that letter cost her a lot. But she doesn’t regret it. “I didn’t do anything wrong,” she said. “I complied with Title IX.”

Sarah Brown writes about a range of higher-education topics, including sexual assault, race on campus, and Greek life. Follow her on Twitter [@Brown_e_Points](https://twitter.com/Brown_e_Points) (https://twitter.com/Brown_e_Points), or email her at sarah.brown@chronicle.com (<mailto:sarah.brown@chronicle.com>).

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Activists, spurred by outrage, a welter of complaints, and support from the Obama administration, forged an issue that has consumed colleges.



Students Accused of Sexual Assault Have the Government's Ear. What Are Their Goals?

These students and their allies stress that they want the campus disciplinary process to be fair. But that's not all they're fighting for.



Title IX Officers Pay a Price for Navigating a Volatile Issue

Two high-profile departures of Title IX administrators underscore the pressures that come with being a college's "moral compass."

