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3 colleges scrutinized over handling of assault cases

By **Matt Rocheleau** | GLOBE CORRESPONDENT JULY 29, 2014



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Brown University, Hampshire College, and the University of Massachusetts Dartmouth have become the latest schools in the region under investigation by the federal Education Department for their handling of sexual assault cases.

The investigation into the Brown case began July 10; Hampshire, on July 17; and UMass Dartmouth, July 16, according to officials at the Education Department's Office for Civil Rights.



Neither the office nor the colleges would release details about the investigations, which center around the schools' compliance with Title IX, a federal law that mandates gender equality in campus life.

Brown administrators said Tuesday that the university "will cooperate fully."

"We continue to work to ensure that we adhere to all best practices under Title IX, and have communicated the establishment of a task force charged with recommending improvements to our procedures," the university said in a statement.

Jonathan Lash, president of Hampshire College, said the school "will be open, transparent, and collaborative" with federal investigators and welcomed the review.

He said the investigation there was not prompted by a specific complaint against Hampshire filed with federal officials, "nor does the opening of the review signify that we are not currently in compliance."



However, Dorie Nolt, a spokeswoman for the Education Department, told the Globe recently that compliance

reviews are “not random audits of schools” but are launched based on data, news reports, or information from parents and advocacy groups “to remedy possible violations of students’ rights.”

UMass Dartmouth spokesman John Hoey said the university “will fully cooperate” with the investigation.

The problem of campus sexual assault has been in the national spotlight in recent months. In the spring, the White House unveiled new guidelines for schools to follow in their efforts to address the issue.

In May, federal education officials took the unprecedented step of identifying every college in the country under investigation for possibly violating rules governing the handling of sexual violence and harassment cases.

That initial list named 55 campuses, including six in Massachusetts: Amherst College, Boston University, Emerson College, Harvard University’s undergraduate college, Harvard Law School, and the University of Massachusetts Amherst.

More than a dozen schools, including the Berklee College of Music, have been added to the list.

Earlier this spring, Tufts University initially denied, then accepted findings from an Education Department investigation that the university was not complying with Title IX rules regarding the handling of sexual assault cases.

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