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By **Matt Rocheleau**

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The US Education Department has opened an investigation into Northeastern University's handling of sexual assault complaints, making it the 11th college in the state and one of more than 85 nationwide facing such an inquiry.

The investigation into Northeastern began Oct. 30, according to the Education Department, which has said it does not release more details about ongoing investigations.

Northeastern spokeswoman Renata Nyul said campus officials have not been informed about the specifics of the investigation and federal student privacy laws prohibit the school from commenting about individual student cases.

Still, Nyul said, "We look forward to working collaboratively with the Office for Civil Rights on this important matter."

The university's "first priority is the safety and well-being of our students," added Nyul. "We take reports of sexual assault very seriously and investigate every allegation swiftly, thoroughly and with respect to the rights of all parties involved."



In May, the Education Department took the unprecedented step of identifying every college and university in the country under investigation for possibly violating rules governing the handling of sexual violence and harassment complaints. Those rules are outlined in Title IX, a federal law that mandates gender equality in campus life.

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.

The list has since grown to 86 schools and includes four other Massachusetts schools: Berklee College of Music, Brandeis University, Hampshire College, the University of Massachusetts-Dartmouth.

Four more schools in other New England states are under investigation, as well: Brown University, Dartmouth College; Marlboro College in Vermont, and the University of Connecticut.

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

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