February 15, 2022

This week, we are kicking off a new partnership with Yale’s Title IX Office [1]! Throughout the spring semester, we will be spotlighting different resources, students, staff, and facts that will help you get to know the Title IX team and the important work they do across campus. The goal of these features are to bring more awareness around Title IX issues and the resources that are available you!

Today, we are excited to spotlight Jessica Bediako, a current international student at the Yale School of the Environment and Graduate Fellow at the Title IX Office. A big shoutout to Jessica and the three other fellows who are doing such important work outside of the classroom while they are at Yale!

Tell us a bit about yourself and your journey to the U.S. and higher education.

I’m from the capital city of Ghana, Accra, and completed my undergraduate degree there and lived with my spouse. I am a proud first-generation graduate student pursuing a Masters in Environmental Management at the Yale School of the Environment. I have so much to be grateful to God for, as my parents had a tough time seeing me and two siblings through our education. This required me to start working at the early stages of life which to a greater extent, launched me into adulthood pretty fast. Those were memorable experiences.

Growing up, I always dreamt of furthering my education abroad as that would be my first time experiencing life outside my home country and presenting an opportunity to achieve more. I carry an unwavering belief that everyone can be who they so desire only if they stay true to their dreams and remain determined. I enjoy volunteering my time and skills in serving people and communities with needs I can meet, especially young people
who seek career and self-development guidance. As such, I have taken on volunteer roles in times past with the Yale Peabody Museum’s EVOLUTIONS After School Program and the MasterCard Foundation Scholars Program in Africa.

Tell us about your role with Yale's Title IX Office.

As one of four Graduate Fellows of the Yale Title IX Office (shoutouts to Hannah Gorman, Miranda Rector, and Sydney Muchnik), our role is to support the office in a range of activities such as educational, communications, and training initiatives. I have the responsibility of managing the initial Communications and Newsletter project of the Title IX office. This project seeks to improve the office’s visibility within the Yale Community with an information structure that largely uses media to connect especially the student body to the office and all its offerings.

As an international student yourself, what are three things you wish you knew about the Title IX Office when arriving on campus?

Starting off graduate school in the peculiar time of the COVID-19 pandemic came with many challenges. I did my first semester online from my home country. Hearing about Title IX for the first time during orientation meant little to me because I wasn’t familiar with such a system. Most international students may still share this same sentiment. Though there are Title IX Coordinators for each school, a Sexual Misconduct Response and Prevention section on the University’s website, and available training held for faculty, staff, and students, I wish I knew that the work of the office goes beyond receiving complaints on sexual misconduct or harassment. I also wish I knew that the office works together with incredibly helpful resources such as the SHARE Center in connecting students with appropriate resources for their wellness. Lastly, I wish I understood better the need to speak up to a Title IX representative on any experiences had or witnessed incidents or behavior in the course of my education.

What is one resource that Title IX offers that isn’t regularly highlighted?

One resource that I was not aware of is that the Title IX Office is able to provide residential accommodations to students who have experienced sexual misconduct.

How can students get in touch with Title IX to learn more?

Students should feel free to contact their school’s Title IX Coordinator [2], the SHARE Center [3], or the Title IX Office [1] for assistance at any time. These resources can offer a private conversation to answer questions, identify options, and provide assistance to you and those affected by sexual misconduct.

Title IX Coordinators

- Discuss concerns and questions related to sex- or gender-based discrimination or sexual misconduct
- (203) 432-6854
- 9am – 5pm weekdays

SHARE Center

- Confidential and anonymous hotline that provides support regarding sexual misconduct of any kind, including sexual assault, sexual harassment, stalking, intimate partner violence, and more
- (203) 432-2000
- 24-hour availability

University-wide Committee (UWC)
- Addresses formal complaints of sexual misconduct as Yale's internal disciplinary committee
- (203) 432-4449
- 9am – 5pm weekdays


Links
[1] https://smr.yale.edu/
[3] https://sharecenter.yale.edu/