



**OFFICE OF CIVIL RIGHTS  
AND INVESTIGATIONS**  
530 S. Asbury St., Suite 5  
Moscow, ID 83843

208-885-4285  
ocri@uidaho.edu  
uidaho.edu/ocri

April 24, 2024

Dear Vandal:

As college campuses across America continue to experience a rise in reports of discrimination, harassment, and hate speech based on shared ancestry, shared ethnic characteristics, and connection, I write to remind you of the University of Idaho's commitment to nondiscrimination. That commitment includes prohibitions on discrimination and harassment based on religion and national origin, which covers conduct based on shared ancestry, shared ethnic characteristics, and connection to a country with a dominant religion or distinct religious identity.

Every member of the Vandal community has the right to a university environment that is free from discrimination, including harassment, based on protected characteristics. You can find out more about the University's commitment to nondiscrimination in University policies [FSH 3200](#), [FSH 3210](#), and [FSH 2300](#). Those policies codify requirements from State and Federal laws like the [Idaho Human Rights Act](#) and [Title VI](#) and [Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964](#).

Under the University's policies, discrimination and harassment based on race, color, national origin, and religion are prohibited. Discrimination and harassment based on shared ancestry, shared ethnic characteristics, or connection to a country with a dominant religion or distinct religious identity are also prohibited as a type of national origin discrimination. Discrimination based on Arab, Buddhist, Christian, Hindi, Hispanic/Latino, Israeli, Iranian, Jewish, Muslim, Palestinian, and Sikh ancestry or ethnic characteristics are some examples of prohibited discrimination.

The University's Office of Civil Rights and Investigations has a longstanding commitment to addressing discrimination in the University's programs and activities, including enforcing the University's policies prohibiting discrimination based on race, color, national origin, and religion. OCRI investigates complaints of prohibited conduct based on a protected characteristic, including different treatment and harassment, which is unwelcome conduct based on a protected characteristic that is so severe or pervasive that it negatively impacts a person's ability to work, learn, or enjoy other benefits or services of the University.

Examples of conduct that can be prohibited harassment based on religion or national origin, including shared ancestry, shared ethnic characteristics, or connection to a country with a dominant religion or distinct religious identity, include engaging in violence toward an individual or group based on their national, ethnic, or ancestral connections or origin; subjecting someone to ethnic or ancestral slurs; commenting about how someone looks, dresses, or speaks when related to their ethnicity or ancestry (e.g., skin color, religious attire, language spoken); stereotyping someone based on perceived shared ancestral or ethnic characteristics; and intimidating or threatening an individual or a group through threats of violence.

OCRI has processes in place to address reports of discrimination promptly, thoroughly, and fairly, including through both formal and informal complaint resolution processes. Any person can report alleged discrimination to OCRI [online](#) or using [other contact information for OCRI](#). Alleged harassment need not be directed at a particular individual or animated by an intent to harass to be reported. Nor do individuals need to be members of the racial, ancestral, or ethnic group on which harassment is focused to report the harassment to OCRI.

In most cases, reporting conduct does not mean that OCRI will address the behavior through its formal or informal complaint processes. Except in limited circumstances where there is a sufficient risk to the larger campus community based on the nature of the reported conduct, the person alleging they were subjected to discrimination or harassment controls whether OCRI initiates its formal or informal complaint processes. If a person alleged to have been subjected to discrimination wishes to file a complaint, OCRI will investigate the complaint if the conduct alleged, if substantiated, would violate a policy that OCRI enforces. Investigations are initiated based on allegations, not evidence, and the opening of an allegation does not mean that OCRI has made any determination of wrongdoing.

In some cases, reported conduct may not violate a policy OCRI enforces, even if substantiated, but may violate other rules that protect the rights of students, employees, and others to focus and learn on campus. In those cases, OCRI works closely with other departments, including the Office of the Dean of Students, Human Resources, and the Office of Safety and Security, to assist the appropriate authority in addressing an alleged violation of University policy or rule.

In other cases, reported speech could be objectionable, offensive, and even distressing if substantiated, but might not violate a University policy or rule because of, for instance, principles of free speech. Even in those cases, if speech negatively impacts a person's ability to access the University's benefits and services, OCRI can assist the impacted party with supportive measures and other resources to help address that impact.

Importantly, OCRI is also available to help inform members of the University community of the expectations, protections, and supports in our community with respect to discrimination, harassment, and related speech. One of our most valuable resources for individuals and groups is training, when we meet with individuals and groups to discuss in plain language the policies we enforce, how those policies interplay with other University policies and rules, and our processes and supports. Requests for training or other information from OCRI can be made through OCRI's email address at [OCRI@uidaho.edu](mailto:OCRI@uidaho.edu) or on OCRI's [website](#). You also can [call or email us](#) if you have questions about relevant rights or responsibilities.

The following external agencies may also be able to provide you with information or receive complaints, depending on the nature of an alleged violation:

**Office for Civil Rights**

Seattle Office

Phone: 206-607-1600

Email: [OCR.Seattle@ed.gov](mailto:OCR.Seattle@ed.gov)

Website: <http://www.ed.gov/ocr>

**Idaho Human Rights Commission**

Phone: 208-334-287

Toll Free: 888-249-7025

Email: [inquiry@ihrc.idaho.gov](mailto:inquiry@ihrc.idaho.gov)

Website: <https://humanrights.idaho.gov/>

**Equal Employment Opportunity Commission**

Seattle Field Office

Phone: 800-669-4000

TTY: 800-669-6820

ASL Video Phone: 844-234-5122

Website: <https://www.eeoc.gov/field-office/seattle/charge>

We at OCRI hope that you will contact us if we may be of any assistance in understanding the information in this letter. Please do not hesitate to contact us or file a complaint with our office if conduct or speech based on a protected status is impacting your ability to access the University's benefits or services.

Sincerely,



Jackie Gharapour Wernz

Acting Director

Office of Civil Rights and Investigations

Email: [jwernz@uidaho.edu](mailto:jwernz@uidaho.edu)

Phone: 208-885-4285