

UC SANTA BARBARA

THE Current

October 9, 2012

[Andrea Estrada](#)

UC Santa Barbara to Commemorate Passage of Title IX With a Two-Week Celebration

With medical, law, and other professional school enrollments split almost fifty-fifty between men and women, it's hard to imagine a time when women didn't have the same educational opportunities as their male counterparts.

Yet, in 1972, women comprised less than 14 percent of the student body in the nation's medical schools, and even less in law schools. What's more, in that same year, only 15 percent of college athletes were women. Today, that figure has nearly tripled.

The driving force behind the near equality is Title IX -- a section of the Education Amendments of 1972, which states, very simply, that "No person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance ..."

In honor of the 40th anniversary of Title IX, UC Santa Barbara is hosting "Thank You, Title IX -- Celebrating 40 Years of Gender Equity Progress at UCSB," a two-week celebration designed to highlight the legislation that has proved to be one of the most significant civil rights laws for women in American history.

The celebration begins on Monday, October 15, with a panel discussion titled "40 Years and Counting: Where Are We and Title IX Today?" The discussion will take place at 5:15 p.m. in the McCune Conference Room, 6020 Humanities and Social Sciences Building, and will feature UCSB faculty and staff members, administrators, and students discussing the impact the landmark legislation has had on their lives and careers.

"This celebration is a way of acknowledging that, without this legislation, we as a society wouldn't have made the progress we have over the last 40 years," said Anna Everett, acting associate vice chancellor of diversity, equity, and academic policy, and professor of film and media studies. "And while we've come a long way, we haven't come as far as we need to. We have a responsibility to make sure the next generation will have even better opportunities and options."

Everett is co-organizing the series of events with Ricardo Alcaíno, director and Title IX coordinator in UCSB's Office of Equal Opportunity and Sexual Harassment/Title IX Compliance.

"UC Santa Barbara is committed to following not just the letter of the Title IX law, but the spirit as well," said UCSB Chancellor Henry T. Yang. "We continue to focus our efforts on providing equal opportunities for all women in our campus community -- faculty, staff, and students."

"Title IX has been incredibly important," said Patricia Cohen, professor of history at UCSB. "I started graduate school in the late 1960's, in a class that had only four or five women, and 40 men." Although signed into law in 1972, a year passed before Title IX actually took effect, she continued. "But from 1973 on, the number of women entering graduate programs in history continued to increase. Now the field is split pretty evenly between men and women," she said.

Title IX can be traced back to a woman named Bernice Sandler, an instructor at the University of Maryland. Passed over again and again for a tenure track position, Sandler did some research and discovered that discrimination against women faculty members and female students was pervasive in American higher education. While Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibits discrimination by employers

on the basis of race, ethnicity, religion, gender, or national origin, Sandler discovered it did not apply to educational institutions.

"Moreover," noted Eileen Boris, Hull Professor and chair in the Department of Feminist Studies at UCSB, "equal pay was connected to the Fair Labor Standards Act, which did not include professional workers. So, when Bernice Sandler sought redress, she found these legal instruments wouldn't be of much help."

Enter Edith Starrett Green, a congresswoman from Oregon and a longtime proponent of women's rights. Sandler, who had compiled case after case of discrimination against women, testified before Green's Subcommittee on Higher Education, a part of the Education and Labor Committee. As a result of those subcommittee hearings, a draft of Title IX was prepared by Representative Patsy Mink of Hawaii. The legislation passed easily in both houses of Congress, and was signed into law by President Richard M. Nixon.

"One of the most important things about Title IX is that it didn't happen in isolation," said Cohen. "It's set within a moment that's jam-packed with advances for women. All sorts of barriers seemed to be falling. It brought an enormous sense of possibility and change."

"Title IX has meant that young women -- as well as young men -- no longer have to be pigeon-holed in their formative years," said Boris, "What it did was signal to the general public that it is not O.K. to treat individuals differently because of their perceived sex, no matter what their interests are."

While Title IX moved easily through Congress, it did generate a fair amount of backlash as parties that weren't favorable to feminism began to realize the significance -- and threat -- of the legislation. "Title IX really is a redistributive policy," said Cohen. "If you give seats in graduate schools to women, you don't have those same seats to give to men. And that's what was at issue for a lot of people."

Nowhere was this concept of educational equity more visible than in college sports. "The idea that people would have to accommodate women in sports to the same number as men was hard to imagine for a male sports establishment," Cohen continued.

Kathy Gregory, head coach of UCSB's women's volleyball team, has firsthand knowledge of that particular bias. "When I came to UCSB in 1975, we didn't have full

scholarships for women. They didn't exist," she said. "There weren't even some teams. Title IX opened up a whole foundation for women to be competitive, to get full scholarships, to reap the benefits of publicity, and to get into professional areas."

In 1981, Gregory recalled, she was able to offer five or six scholarships to female athletes, and, eventually, that number increased to 12. "Once UCSB made a commitment to all women's sports, everything was elevated, and it became easier to recruit quality athletes who are also great students," she said.

Because of Title IX, Gregory continued, every woman has the opportunity to attend a high-caliber academic institution and represent her school in competitive-level sports. "Those that reach the higher level then have the chance to go professional, or go to the Olympics," she said. "But all anyone wants is just that chance to compete."

Added Alcaíno, UCSB's Title IX coordinator, "an important aspect often overlooked about Title IX is that it introduced sex equity to our campus environments and into our housing." He noted a Dear Colleague Letter issued by the U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights, which states, 'Education has long been recognized as the great equalizer in America. The Department of Education and its Office for Civil Rights believe that providing all students with an educational environment free from discrimination is extremely important. The sexual harassment of students, including sexual violence, interferes with students' right to receive an education free from discrimination and, in the case of sexual violence, is a crime.'

"Our office assists in this mission by coordinating and overseeing our campus's efforts under Title IX. In addition, our office is charged with ensuring that UCSB complies with Federal Affirmative Action guidelines. That includes overseeing the equal opportunity and expected representation of women among our faculty and staff," Alcaíno said.

Other "Thank You, Title IX" events include a performance of Gioia De Cari's one-woman show, "Truth Values: One Girl's Romp Through M.I.T.'s Male Math Maze," on Saturday, October 20; a screening of the film "Patsy Mink: Ahead of the Majority," which explores the struggles and triumphs of the congresswoman who co-authored Title IX, on Monday, October 22; and a Diversity Lecture Series talk by Gwendolyn Mink, daughter of Patsy Mink, who will discuss "Title IX: How One Mother Changed the World for Her Daughter and Other Women" on Tuesday, October 23.

Related Links

[Thank You, Title IX](#)

About UC Santa Barbara

The University of California, Santa Barbara is a leading research institution that also provides a comprehensive liberal arts learning experience. Our academic community of faculty, students, and staff is characterized by a culture of interdisciplinary collaboration that is responsive to the needs of our multicultural and global society. All of this takes place within a living and learning environment like no other, as we draw inspiration from the beauty and resources of our extraordinary location at the edge of the Pacific Ocean.