



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
OFFICE FOR CIVIL RIGHTS

50 BEALE STREET, SUITE 7200
SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94105

REGION IX
CALIFORNIA

August 9, 2016

Maria Klawe
President
Harvey Mudd College
Office of the President
Shanahan Center for Teaching and Learning
320 E. Foothill Blvd.
Claremont, CA 91711

(In reply, please refer to case no. 09-16-2238.)

Dear President Klawe:

The Office for Civil Rights (OCR) of the U.S. Department of Education (Department) is discontinuing its investigation of the above-referenced complaint filed against Harvey Mudd College (College) as of the date of this letter. The complaint alleges that the College is discriminating, on the basis of disability, because certain pages on its website are not accessible to persons with disabilities. These webpages include the:

- Disability Resources Page at <https://www.hmc.edu/student-life/disability-resources/>
- Orientation Adventure Page at <https://www.hmc.edu/student-life/orientation/orientation-adventures/>
- Student Handbook Page at <https://www.hmc.edu/student-life/student-handbook/>
- President Maria Klawe's Video Page at <https://www.hmc.edu/about-hmc/president-klawe/maria-klawe-videos/>

OCR accepted the complaint for resolution under the authority of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Section 504). Section 504 and that statute's implementing regulations at 34 CFR Part 104 prohibit discrimination on the basis of disability in programs and activities of recipients of federal financial assistance. As a recipient of federal financial assistance from this Department, the College is required to comply with these federal civil rights laws.

Access to College websites is covered by Section 504. The requirement for the College to provide equal opportunities and equal treatment and make modifications to avoid disability-based discrimination, are part of the general non-discrimination requirements of Section 504. See 34 CFR 104.4 (prohibiting recipients of federal financial assistance from excluding qualified persons with disabilities from programs, services, and activities). In particular, the College is required to provide reasonable accommodations or modifications so that persons with disabilities can acquire the same information, engage in the same interactions, and enjoy the same programs, services, and activities as non-disabled persons with substantially equivalent ease of use. Stated

differently, all College programs, services, and activities—whether in a “brick and mortar,” on-line, or other “virtual” context—must be operated in a manner that complies with Section 504. OCR’s evaluation of the allegation to date indicates that there may be barriers on the College’s website that deny persons with disabilities access to programs, services, and activities offered on its website and may impede the College’s communications with persons with disabilities.

In accordance with Section 302 of OCR’s *Case Processing Manual* a complaint may be resolved at any time when, before the conclusion of an investigation, the institution expresses an interest in resolving the complaint. In such a case, the provisions of an agreement to resolve the complaint must be aligned with the complaint allegation or any information obtained during the discontinued investigation and be consistent with applicable regulations. Here, the College requested to resolve the complaint prior to the conclusion of OCR’s investigation. Subsequent discussions with the College resulted in the College signing the enclosed Resolution Agreement (agreement) which, when fully implemented, is intended to resolve the issues raised by this complaint.

The actions the College will take under the agreement include:

- notice on its website to persons with disabilities about how to request access to on-line information or functionality that is currently inaccessible, and information instructing people how to file a formal grievance with the College through the procedural requirements of the Section 504 implementing regulations;
- policies and procedures to ensure that all new, newly-added, or modified on-line content and functionality will be accessible to persons with disabilities;
- an audit of all website content and functionality;
- a corrective action plan to address all inaccessible content and functionality identified during the audit; and,
- annual website accessibility training to appropriate personnel.

OCR considers that the enclosed agreement, when fully implemented by the College, is intended to resolve the issues raised by the complaint. OCR will monitor the College’s implementation of the agreement, and when OCR concludes the College has fully implemented the terms of the agreement and is in compliance with Section 504 and its implementing regulation with respect to this issue, OCR will terminate its monitoring and close the case. If the College fails to implement the agreement, OCR may resume the investigation.

This concludes OCR’s investigation of the complaint and should not be interpreted to address the College’s compliance with any other regulatory provision or to address any issues other than those addressed in this letter. OCR is closing the investigation of this complaint as of the date of this letter, and notifying the Complainant concurrently.

This letter sets forth OCR’s determination in an individual OCR case. This letter is not a formal statement of OCR policy and should not be relied upon, cited, or construed as such. OCR’s formal policy statements are approved by a duly authorized OCR official and made available to the public. The Complainant may have the right to file a private suit in federal court whether or not OCR finds a violation.

Please be advised that the College may not harass, coerce, intimidate, or discriminate against any individual because he or she has filed a complaint or participated in the complaint resolution process. If this happens, the Complainant may file another complaint alleging such treatment.

Under the Freedom of Information Act, it may be necessary to release this document and related records upon request. In the event that OCR receives such a request, it will seek to protect, to the extent provided by law, personal information that, if released, could reasonably be expected to constitute an unwarranted invasion of privacy.

Thank you for the assistance the College extended to OCR in resolving this complaint. If you have any questions, please contact Naghmeh Ordikhani by telephone at 415-486-5588, or by email at naghmeh.ordikhani@ed.gov.

Sincerely,

/S/

Kendra Fox-Davis
Team Leader

Enclosure: Resolution Agreement

cc: Stuart Rudnick, Musick, Peeler & Garret LLP (Counsel for the College)