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# Feds: Title IX Has Failed to Close Gender Participation Gap



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Despite more women attending college than men, and women's collegiate athletics enjoying unprecedented popularity, Title IX has failed to close a persistent gap in sports participation between women and men.

As reported by [Inside Higher Education](#), participation rates for women in college athletics continue to lag behind those of their male peers



Source: Jeffrey Lin, Unsplash

despite the fact that more women enroll in higher education, a new report from the U.S. Government Accountability Office found.

Per the GAO report, women made up 56 percent of the undergraduate population during the 2021-22 academic year, but only 42 percent of the student-athletes. Under Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, colleges that receive federal funding are required to offer athletic participation opportunities for men and women that are proportionate to their enrollment numbers.

The Education Department's Office for Civil Rights enforces Title IX, but the GAO review found that oversight is lacking and recommended several steps for the agency to improve its enforcement efforts, Katherine Knott of *IHE* reported.

"Among other findings, GAO found that OCR doesn't systemically use institutions' publicly reported athletic participation rates to inform its oversight. And the agency rarely opens investigations into colleges' compliance with the Title IX athletics provisions, relying on complaints to identify potential issues," Knott wrote. "Additionally, the review cited long delays in OCR's communications with colleges that are under monitoring following the resolution of investigations. One college had to wait almost seven years to hear back from OCR about its proposed methodology to assess whether it was complying with Title IX. The institution had been required to draft such a proposal after reaching an agreement with OCR to resolve an investigation into disparities in resources and funding between its softball and baseball teams."

According to Knott's reporting, Representative Bobby Scott, a Virginia Democrat who requested the GAO report, said in a statement that he looked forward to improved enforcement from OCR to address the inequities.

"Every student who wants to play a sport in college should have a fair and equal opportunity to do so," Scott said. "Regrettably, today's GAO report confirms that while female college enrollment numbers outpace male enrollment, opportunities for female athletes significantly lag behind their male counterparts. We should be doing all we can to close this gap."



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