

**EXTERNAL ENGAGEMENT SUPPORT
& RESOURCES FOR
UNIVERSITY EMPLOYEES**



UNIVERSITY OF OREGON

External Engagement Support and Resources for University Employees

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Introduction

Social media, blogs posts, websites comments, and other forms of interactive digital communications are increasingly integral to university daily operations, pedagogical and research activities, and general means of engagement with internal and external communities. They constitute a resource that enables University of Oregon employees, including faculty members, to more fully participate and lead in a global society. Yet, as a university, we recognize that this critical arena may sometimes present challenges to the well-being and safety of our employees. With this in mind, we have identified and developed resources for support and guidance on how best to manage concerns related to the use of social media and other digital communications. This document is an adaption of the [“Faculty Support & Guidance” document by the University of Iowa](#), and similar [“Social Media Support and Resources for Penn State” document](#). Both are best practice resources modified for use at the University of Oregon.¹

The document is designed to assist university employees and the university community in general in responding to situations in which a faculty member is targeted by individuals or groups outside of the university based on the content of the employee’s service, scholarship, teaching, opinions, clinical care, etc. It addresses potential concerns in such situations and informs the colleges and departments about resources available.

The foundation for this document is the university’s unwavering support for employee and student safety, the faculty’s academic freedom, and freedom of expression. [Academic freedom](#) for faculty in teaching and research is essential to the university’s educational mission. As described in [policy](#), the university protects academic freedom, even with regard to controversial issues or ideas that may provoke disagreement from the public. Similarly, as citizens, our employees enjoy strong protection for freedom of speech. Rooted in the US Constitution, free expression is necessary for the robust intellectual exchange on which the university’s teaching and research missions are founded. Thus, the targeting of faculty for their ideas or views may not only threaten harm to those individuals, but also strikes at the university’s academic core. Through this document and other means, the university seeks to offer resources and support for employees against the intimidation, harassment, or injury that public discourse and the expression of unpopular ideas may generate.

This document is “content neutral,” meaning that it is designed to offer support for university employees across a wide spectrum of views and areas of service, expertise, and research. For example, it may be useful for faculty and non-academic employees who come under attack for their conclusions related to social issues, for employees who serve and advocate on behalf of underrepresented individuals and communities, as well as for faculty and researchers whose scientific methods are deemed controversial, such as research involving stem cells or animals.

This document focuses on threats, intimidation, or harassment against employees from outside the university. For information about policies and procedures governing harassment committed by University of Oregon employees, students, and/or third parties interacting with university employees or students on campus, please see the University of Oregon’s [Prohibited Discrimination and Retaliation Policy](#) for more information and guidance, or contact the [Office of Investigations and Civil Rights Compliance](#).

Other university policies may be applicable. Individual colleges, schools, departments and other units may also have protocols that address workplace violence or harassment.

¹ Permission for the reproduction and revision of the above-referenced documents was granted by the [University of Iowa](#) and [Penn State University](#).

Roles, Actions and Resources – An Overview

In matters of safety and security, individual employees are encouraged to consult university, college, school, and department resources before responding to an immediate situation, and to address concerns that arise in the longer term. Numerous resources are also available to support staff and officers of administration in responding, when appropriate, to attacks against employees from external sources. Awareness of relevant resources and support in advance of a crisis will help our university, colleges, and departments respond more effectively when a situation requires immediate action.

Each situation is different, and we offer advice and resources, not prescribed procedures. This section offers suggestions for individuals at various levels in the university, including:

- Individual Employee
- Unit Leadership (e.g., Department Head, Dean)
- University, College, or Department Communications Director
- Unit Executive (Dean, Vice President)

Individual Employee

Ensure your safety. Identify your primary concerns and seek assistance. You do not need to manage this experience on your own. The following suggestions may be of use in your personal safety planning.

- If you believe your physical safety is at risk, immediately notify the [University of Oregon Police Department \(UOPD\)](#) (541-346-2919), the police force in your home jurisdiction, or call 911.
- Notify your unit administrator and, if necessary, your college or university administration of the situation. Please also see the “Employee Safety and Support Checklist” (Appendix B) for ways in which your academic unit might be able to support you.
- Consult directly or work with your unit administrator to contact the university’s [Behavioral Evaluation and Threat Assessment \(BETA\)](#) Team via the “[Report a Concern](#)” webpage (select the green “Report a Concern” button and select “Threat of physical harm to others” concern type). That team is dedicated to the early identification, assessment, support and, in collaboration with campus partners, the management of incidents and behaviors that threaten the physical safety and well-being of the university community. BETA staff members are trained to assess these kinds of situations and assist with coordinated responses. For example, the BETA Team can coordinate with UOPD, provide tips about classroom and workplace safety, and offer other on-campus safety resources.
- Consult the [UOPD website](#) for more information regarding on-campus safety, and local community police departments regarding off-campus safety.
- If you believe the individuals targeting you know where you live (information that often is found easily online) and you are concerned about your safety in your home, please contact your local police department and work with that department and UOPD to create a safety plan for home and work.

- If you are experiencing gender-based harassment and/or harassment that is sexual in nature, consult [Office of Investigations and Civil Rights Compliance](#) to ensure that you are fully aware of your rights and resources.
- Do not delete any messages, but you may want to disengage from reading all emails in your inbox, listening to all voice messages, etc. Preserved messages may be of use in identifying the harassers and pressing any relevant charges. Create a log to document and archive all threatening emails, tweets, Facebook posts, and phone messages. Consider asking a friend to monitor social and other media on your behalf and to document and keep you apprised of any developments or threats.
- Save screenshots of harassing or threatening social media posts or digital post to preserve as evidence in case the author deletes the original post.
- Be cautious about responding to threatening emails, tweets, blog comments, etc. In most cases, it will be in your best interest to not respond. Although responding may seem like the right thing to do, it may provide harassers with additional material and serve to prolong social media harassment. The university BETA Team can help you determine whether and how to respond. If you choose not to respond, you may also want to encourage your friends and colleagues to do the same. Review “Managing Harassment” (Appendix A).
- Protect your online cyber-identity (e.g., cell phone, network access, social media).
 - The university’s Information Security Office can be of assistance. Visit the [I want to ... section of their website](#), for guidance.
- Consult your unit administrator and your dean or director for assistance in responding to the situation. For example, you may want to consider preparing a concise message to articulate your position in your own words and distribute it to colleagues as a form of reputation management. Should you get media requests related to the incident, University Communications can assist you in your decision on whether to respond and, if so, how. Email uonews@uoregon.edu to get in touch with the University Communications media relations team.
- Reach out to friends and develop a support system. The [University’s Employee Assistance Program](#) offers free confidential, short-term counseling to University of Oregon faculty and staff and their families.
- Know that you are not alone as an employee who has experienced this type of harassment. Several scholars have written about the coordinated and systemic patterns of attack against scholars, faculty members, and other higher education employees. Connect with others who have gone through similar situations to decrease your isolation and learn from their experiences. For more information, contact the Vice Provost for Academic Affairs in the Office of the Provost at vpaa@uoregon.edu

Unit Administrator

- Notify the [Behavioral Evaluation and Threat Assessment \(BETA\)](#) Team.
- Contact the employee as soon as you become aware of threatening or intimidating behavior against them. Meet with them to offer support in the initial days of the incident and review the “Employee Safety and Support Checklist” (Appendix B) to ensure the employee is aware of campus resources.
- Work with the employee to address their on-campus and off-campus safety and security concerns. Be aware that the identity of the employee may influence their individualized needs (e.g., parental status, employee/faculty rank, minoritized identity). Refer the employee to appropriate campus resources (including BETA or the Office of the Provost) or, with the employee’s consent, reach out to such resources as appropriate.
- It is possible that social media and phone intimidation and harassment will be received by multiple offices. Inform the unit administrative staff on a need-to-know basis. Ensure that unit staff members whose responsibilities may include answering harassing phone calls are supported and informed about strategies for being on the front line (e.g., a script or template response, instructions for preserving phone messages to aid future investigations). The college’s or unit’s lead communicator can help with messaging.
- Stay in communication with your dean/director/vice president’s office to ensure a coordinated response. Share details of the situation on a need-to-know basis and be mindful that all email communication may be subject to request via subpoena, public records request, or other legal process.
- Consider the well-being of the rest of the unit faculty members, staff, and students (e.g., co-authors, graduate assistants, frontline staff). Consult with the threatened employee about what and how to share information with the department. If possible, bring people together to discuss the situation, the department’s actions, and available support resources.
- Facilitate the removal of the employee’s direct contact information from department or college webpages and the university directory, in collaboration with Human Resources and the college/unit communications office, if the affected employee requests it.
- If the attacks are identity-based (e.g., harassment based on gender, race, sexual identity, country of origin), consult with the [Office of Investigations and Civil Rights Compliance](#) to counsel the employee about their options and explore additional support and resources for the employee and others in the unit who share their identity (e.g., students, colleagues, staff).
- After addressing the employee’s safety and security concerns, connecting the faculty member with others who have experienced similar attacks may be useful to contextualize the events within their broader career goals and experiences.

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- For faculty or on-campus advocates, discuss issues of academic freedom in regular forums (e.g., faculty meetings, student seminars), including awareness of ways external forces may attempt to silence scholars and advocates through social media attacks, and familiarize yourself with the resources available to respond when or if attacks occur.
- If you become the target of the harassment, consult with your senior leadership, and refer to the strategies recommended for employees to ensure your own safety.

Unit/Department Leadership

- Notify the [Behavioral Evaluation and Threat Assessment \(BETA\)](#) Team.
- Be cautious about responding to threatening emails, tweets, blog comments, etc. In most cases, it will be in your best interest to not respond. Although responding may seem like the right thing to do, it may provide harassers with additional material and serve to prolong social media harassment. Each situation should be evaluated on its own. Consult with University Communications and your college/school/department communications contact before responding.
- If a response is warranted, the leadership message should defend academic freedom, the importance of employee and student safety, and the development of learning environments in which difficult issues are discussed and dissected. Work with University Communications and any college/department communications staff to develop a message that emphasizes university policy and values, draws on best-practice examples from other campuses, and addresses potential concerns of multiple constituents (e.g., faculty, alumni, legislators, donors, students).
- Consider developing and/or publicizing protocols for dealing with external and internal threats and harassment. Provide training opportunities and resources for employees. For more information, see the [Prohibited Discrimination and Retaliation Policy](#) and [Office of Investigations and Civil Rights Compliance](#).
- If the issue is growing and likely to have an impact on the reputation of your unit or the university, or if the matter is likely to generate media attention, contact [University Communications](#) at 541-346-3134 to discuss a communications strategy to mitigate its impact.
- If a crisis emerges, consult with the targeted employee to share how you would like to publicly handle the crisis and discuss concerns they might have. Involve the employee's unit administrator in crisis management conversations to ensure efforts are coordinated.
- Support the unit administrator working with the targeted employee by offering your assistance and resources. See the "Employee Safety and Support Checklist" (Appendix B) to ensure the targeted employee's immediate and longer-term needs are addressed.
- Inform the dean/vice president's office staff. It is likely that social media and phone harassment will be directed at multiple offices. Informing all relevant individuals in those offices, as well as the BETA Team, will strengthen the university/college/school/department's ability to engage in a coordinated response. Ensure that dean/vice president's office staff members whose responsibilities may include answering harassing phone calls are supported and informed about strategies for being on the front line (e.g., instructions for preserving phone messages to aid future investigations).

- Consider informing other offices/staff members who may field phone calls, including University Advancement, Office of the Dean of Students, Admissions, University Career Center, etc., so they can respond with the appropriate messages.

- Depending on the nature of the attacks, be aware that students, staff, and faculty who share the identity and/or research area under attack (e.g., LGBTQIA students, if the employee’s sexual identity is under attack; students of color, if the employee’s racial/ethnic identity is the focus; international students, if the employee’s country of origin is the focus) may also be experiencing trauma because of this incident. Consult with the [Office of Investigations and Civil Rights Compliance, Division of Equity and Inclusion](#), university [Employee Assistance Program](#), the [Multicultural Center](#), [LGBT Education Support Services](#), and/or [University Counseling Services](#) as appropriate to arrange for support services for students and staff in the college/department.

Communications Director

- Notify the [Behavioral Evaluation and Threat Assessment \(BETA\)](#) Team.
- Inform the dean/vice president if you become aware that an employee’s name is in a social media post that may contain a threat or intimidating/harassing content. Keep the dean/vice president informed of ongoing mentions throughout the crisis management process.
- In close consultation with University Communications, provide support for the employee being targeted, including tips on if and how they should respond, managing their professional and personal reputation, and reviewing “Managing Harassment” (Appendix A). Discuss all media inquiries with University Communications by emailing uonews@uoregon.edu.
- Work with the dean/vice president’s office and campus spokespeople to coordinate information sharing on a need-to-know basis and to coordinate a consistent message (e.g., phone scripts for frontline staff answering aggressive callers).
- Consult with faculty, staff, and administrators about the potential impact of speaking with the media. Have staff and administrators refer media inquiries to University Communications by emailing uonews@uoregon.edu and encourage employees to do the same.
- Provide assistance to the unit executive by crafting a leadership message that prioritizes employee and student safety, defends academic freedom, emphasizes university values, and addresses potential concerns of multiple constituents (e.g., faculty, alumni, legislators, donors, students). The Office of the Provost’s [Academic Freedom Statement](#) is a useful resource.

Central Administration

Office of the Provost

- Notify the [Behavioral Evaluation and Threat Assessment \(BETA\)](#) Team.
- Establish open communication with the affected employee’s dean/vice president and request situation updates as needed.
- Reach out to the targeted employee, reiterating the university’s commitment to personal safety and academic freedom as appropriate, and encourage the employee to consult with their college or unit administrator for support and assistance.
- Provide tools and training administrators can use when developing immediate and longer-term response plans.

- In consultation with the Office of the President and University Communications, issue a statement (as appropriate) affirming the importance of employee and student safety, [academic freedom](#) for faculty, free speech, and committing to the safety and well-being of the employee. The statement should emphasize the university's mission and values rather than comment on the employee's service, research, scholarship, etc.

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Office of the President

- Maintain consistent communication with the Office of the Provost and work together, as appropriate, to issue a statement asserting the importance of free speech, academic freedom, and the safety of university employees.

Office of Investigations and Civil Rights Compliance

- Provide guidance and consultation to targeted individuals and units regarding issues of discrimination and harassment related to the situation.
- Investigate specific allegations of discrimination and harassment related to the situation and determine appropriate steps to address such actions in collaboration with other units.
- Provide resources and support to individuals and units as needed.
- Establish consistent communication with Office of the Provost and consult on issuing a statement of support, as appropriate.

Division of Equity and Inclusion

- Provide resources and support to the individual employee and department when the attack is focused on the employee's identity and/or diversity-related service, research, scholarship, or teaching.
- Coordinate or provide student support services, especially for students whose identities and/or interests are similar to the targeted employee.
- Establish consistent communication with Office of the Provost and consult on issuing a statement of support, as appropriate.

University Human Resources

- Provide support and assistance to the individual employees, college/department administration, and the broader unit via collaboration with the Office of the Provost, BETA Team, the Office of Investigations and Civil Rights Compliance, and Employee Assistance Program.

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Resources

The following offices are available to assist during crisis management and also to provide longer-term guidance and programs.

[Behavioral Evaluation and Threat Assessment \(BETA\) Team](#)

[Campus Safety](#)

[Resources](#)

[Victim and Survivor](#)

[Resources](#)

[Employee Assistance Program \(EAP\)](#) – The University of Oregon contracts with Canopy to provide a comprehensive employee assistance program for eligible employees, their dependents, and eligible household members. The services are available at no cost. More information about the program is available from Human Resources, 541-346-3159. Call 1-800-433-2320 to schedule an appointment.

[University of Oregon Police Department \(UOPD\)](#) and [Community Service Officers](#)

[Human Resources](#)— Your human resources representative can assist you with finding resources as well as knowing the laws and university policies about workplace violence.

[Multicultural Center](#)

[Women’s Center](#)

[Lyllie Reynolds-Parker Black Cultural Center](#)

[LGBT Education Support Services](#)

[United States Department of Labor](#) — Guidelines for preventing workplace violence.

[University Central Administration](#)

University Communications
1239 University of Oregon
Eugene, OR 97403
Johnson Hall, Room 10
541-346-3134
uonews@uoregon.edu

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Office of General Counsel
University of Oregon
1226 University of Oregon
Eugene, OR 97403
541-346-3082
<mailto:gcounsel@uoregon.edu>

Employee Assistance Program, Canopy
<https://hr.uoregon.edu/er/general-information/employee-assistance-program>

Office of the Provost
1258 University of Oregon
Eugene, OR 97403
541-346-3081
OtP@uoregon.edu

Office of Investigations
and Civil Rights
Compliance

677 E. 12th Ave., Suite
452
Eugene, OR 97403
541-346-3123
<https://investigations.uoregon.edu/>

Information Security Office
1216 University of Oregon
Eugene, OR 97403
541-346-5837
infosec@uoregon.edu<https://infosec.uoregon.edu>

Appendix A: Managing Harassment*

According to a [2017 survey by the Pew Research Center](#), 41 percent of adults report being the subject of harassing behavior online, and 66 percent have witnessed harassing behavior directed at others. Responding to online harassment can be challenging, even scary, if the harassment becomes threatening. The university's Office of the Provost and University Communications recommend the following options:

- 1. Ignore them.** The goal of social media agitators (commonly referred to as trolls) is to elicit a response. The good news is that even the most persistent trolls typically move on if you ignore them long enough.
- 2. Block them.** Several social media platforms allow you to selectively prevent others from following you, seeing your posts, or commenting on your content. Please note that when you block someone, they are typically notified of the block and may choose to criticize you on their own channels.
- 3. Respond.** If someone is sharing misinformation about you or your work, consider sharing a brief response to correct the falsehoods. This will likely result in additional posts from the harassing party, but it does give you a platform to set the record straight. It's highly recommended that you consult with University Communications in determining whether to respond and the best avenue for doing so. For instance, responding to Twitter attacks with a reply on Twitter may not be the best strategy.
- 4. Record and report.** If you feel at all threatened, contact the proper authorities and keep a record of the hostile or threatening posts. Take and save screenshots in case you need to file a police report or take legal action.

*Managing Harassment, <https://osc.uiowa.edu/managing-harassment>, retrieved from University of Iowa (November 17, 2021) and modified for use by the Office of the Provost, University of Oregon.

Appendix B: Employee Safety and Support Checklist for Unit Administrators

This checklist helps unit administrators and other administrators to address possible concerns and provide resources in the immediate and longer-term aftermath of a crisis in which employees are targeted for their ideas or views. The unit administrator and/or their designee may use this checklist when meeting with the employee to gather information and create a safety plan. It may be useful to capture as much information as possible during these interactions in order to limit the number of times the employee has to retell the story. If it is not possible for the unit executive or designee to engage in this type of meeting, please refer the employee to the dean/vice president's office for follow-up.

What is the nature of the harassment? When did it begin? How has it changed since it began?

In what environment(s) is the harassment occurring? (check all that apply)

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Email | <input type="checkbox"/> Voice messages left on campus phones |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Social media | <input type="checkbox"/> On-campus stalking |
| <input type="checkbox"/> classroom | <input type="checkbox"/> Via media requests |
| <input type="checkbox"/> office | <input type="checkbox"/> Harassment of family members/children |
| <input type="checkbox"/> home | <input type="checkbox"/> Other |

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Is the harasser someone who is known or been identified? If so, please provide that information.

What is the employee's greatest concern?

Resources and Referrals

Depending on the type and location of the threat, and the identity of the employee, offer unit support to implement the following, as directed by the employee:

Actions	Resource/s
<p><input type="checkbox"/> Engage with the Behavioral Evaluation and Threat Assessment (BETA) Team about on-campus safety resources. The BETA Team is available to do an initial assessment over the phone or in person with administrators or individual employees.</p>	<p>Behavioral Evaluation and Threat Assessment Team https://betateam.uoregon.edu/</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> Report harassing social media content to the social media platform. If the content is in violation of the platform’s terms of service, it will be deleted and the author may be disciplined (e.g., suspended, banned) Document and screenshot all offending content before reporting it to the platform so that the content is archived.</p>	<p>Each platform has various ways to report violations of their terms.</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> A representative of the University of Oregon Police Department serves as a member of the BETA Team and can also be contacted directly to arrange for safety planning and/or to investigate violent threats.</p>	<p>University of Oregon Police Department https://police.uoregon.edu/</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> If needed and if feasible, arrange for relocation of the employee’s classroom(s) and/or office, including technology (e.g., computer, printer, internet). Remove the new room numbers from public listings (e.g., directory).</p>	<p>Unit Administratio n</p>
	<p>Office of Investigations and Civil Rights Compliance</p>

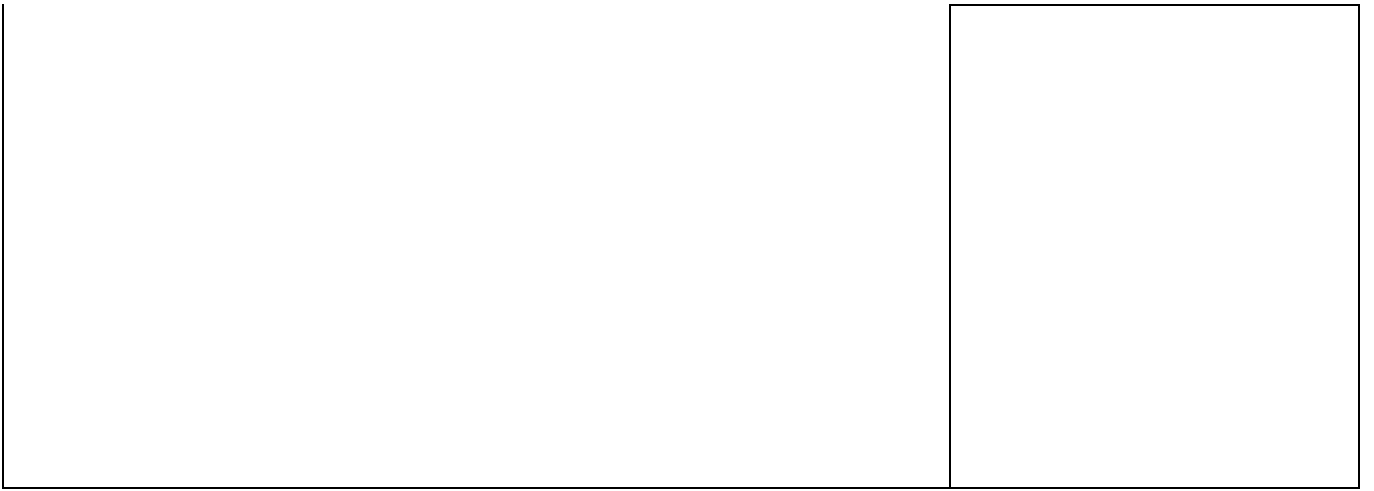
- ❑ If the threats are based on race, ethnicity, country of origin, sex, gender, or other protected categories, consult the Office of Investigations and Civil Rights Compliance

<https://investigations.uoregon.edu/>

- ❑ Engage with the Information Security Office (ISO) about cybersecurity and online disruptive behaviors. The ISO can help provide guidance on how to handle online threats and on security and privacy practices that can help enhance your online experience.

<https://infosec.uoregon.edu/report-incident>

<p><input type="checkbox"/> Refer media inquiries to University Communications. Reporters may call for a comment or interview. Deciding whether to talk with the press is a personal decision for employees; however, consulting with media experts can assist in the decision-making process. Media training may be available.</p>	<p>University Communications</p> <p>https://communications.uoregon.edu/</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> Provide information about relevant policies that address specific concerns expressed by the employee.</p>	<p>Office of the Provost; Human Resources</p> <p>https://provost.uoregon.edu/</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> Support employees who feel their social identity is a component of the attack (e.g., race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, country of origin). Provide resources and support for others in the department (e.g., students, staff, faculty) who share the employee’s identity and who may also feel threatened.</p>	<p>Division of Equity and Inclusion https://inclusion.uoregon.edu/</p> <p>Office of Investigations and Civil Rights Compliance https://investigations.uoregon.edu/</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> Provide information about available campus resources such as stress management and counseling services.</p>	<p>Employee Assistance Program</p> <p>https://hr.uoregon.edu/er/general-information/employee-assistance-program</p>



December 15, 2022

Acknowledgements

The following units contributed to and reviewed this document:

Office of the President
Office of the Provost
Division of Equity and Inclusion
University of Oregon Police Department
Office of Investigations and Civil Rights Compliance
Behavioral Evaluative and Threat Assessment Team
Office of the General Counsel
University Communications
Human Resources