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March 30, 2020

Four “Day One” Guideposts to High-Integrity Results in Higher Ed Investigations



When administrators of colleges and universities first learn of misconduct, abuse, or neglect allegations within their communities—especially those involving wrongdoing committed by beloved mentors or authority figures within the institution—it is critical that the institution react swiftly and thoughtfully by conducting appropriately-scaled, rigorous, and credible investigations.

Such investigations are primarily focused on establishing what factually transpired. But, it is equally paramount to ensure that college and university communities have confidence in the integrity of the actions taken by their institutions—both to address past harm and to ensure proper remediation and future security. In this article, we have identified four guideposts designed to help colleges and universities steer themselves, and their communities, through such moments of crisis. Although it is impossible to create a one-size-fits-all approach appropriate for any given situation, our experience leading sensitive and highly scrutinized independent investigations at colleges and universities across the country may be instructive in implementing several key principles that can be adapted to a variety of institutional crises.

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