

# Pregnant and Parenting Students' Rights: FAQs for Professors and Advisers

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*Pregnant and parenting students have a right to stay in college to meet their educational and career goals under Title IX. Below are answers to frequently asked questions. See [www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/pregnancy.html](http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/pregnancy.html)*

## **How Does Title IX Apply to Pregnant or Parenting Students?**

Title IX prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex – including pregnancy, parenting and all related conditions – in educational programs and activities receiving federal funding. This means students who might be, are, or have been pregnant must have the same access to programs and educational opportunities that other students have.

## **Are absences to pregnancy, and pregnancy related conditions excused?**

Yes, absences due to pregnancy or any related conditions are excused. However, depending on the length of the absence and the area of instruction (e.g. courses with lab requirements, clinical rotations, etc.), it may be not be feasible even with reasonable modifications to complete a particular course and may be academically necessary to take a leave of absence. However, when the student returns to Cameron University (CU), she must be reinstated to the status she held before the leave.

## **If a professor adjusts grades based on class attendance, can he/she lower a grade because of the classes a student misses due to pregnancy?**

Students cannot be penalized for pregnancy or related conditions. If a professor provides specific “points” or other advantages to students based on class attendance, the student must be given the opportunity to earn back the credit from classes missed due to pregnancy, so that she can be reinstated to the status she held before she took leave.

## **Does CU have to let students make up the work missed while absent?**

Yes, federal law requires professors to allow students make up the work missed while out due to pregnancy or any related conditions, including recovery from childbirth. For example, if a doctor’s note excuses the student from class for several weeks because of “bed rest” before giving birth, professors must provide the student with the appropriate assignments and information to make up all of the work required to be completed while absent. Again, depending on the nature of the academic instruction, e.g. clinical rotations, this may not be feasible and other forms of modifications may need to be made. When in doubt, consult with the Office of Student Development, Legal Counsel and/or the Title IX Office.

## **What about internships, career rotations, and other off-campus elements of a program – does the student have a right to participate in those?**

Yes, CU must allow continued participation in off-campus programs. For example, if the program provides opportunities to “work in the field” CU cannot deny participation based on pregnancy. Professors cannot require a doctor’s note for continued participation, unless it is required for all students who have a medical condition that requires treatment by a doctor.

**Classmates and even professors have made offensive comments to the student about her pregnancy. Can the student complain to CU?**

Title IX requires schools to prevent and address sex-based harassment, including harassment based on pregnancy. If a student experiences this sort of treatment at CU, she should seek help immediately from the Title IX Office (580) 581-6712. The law prohibits retaliation against the student for making a complaint or raising a concern.

**The student has a scholarship – can CU take it back if the student is pregnant?**

No, CU does not terminate or reduce athletic, merit or need-based scholarships based on pregnancy. If the student stays in school, she can keep her scholarship.

**The student wants to take a semester off. Can she keep her student status, scholarships, etc.?**

Not necessarily – it depends on the leave policy at the college. If she wants to take off more time than the doctor says is medically necessary, she will need to consult the college's non-medical leave policy.

**How does a student receive academic accommodations for coursework due to her pregnancy?**

If a student requires academic accommodations due to her pregnancy or related conditions the professor is authorized to make reasonable accommodations based on the specific academic requirements of his/her course. If the student does not agree that the accommodations are sufficient/appropriate, she may appeal to the department chair. If necessary, further appeals may be made to the Dean, and then the Vice-President of Academic Affairs.

**What if the student works for CU as a graduate assistant, in addition to being a student? Does she still have the same rights? Does she qualify for maternity leave?**

Rights as an employee are different from rights as a student. If the student works for CU, she may be eligible for family or medical leave, or may qualify for maternity leave under the particular college's policy, but that may not include leave from classes, beyond what is medically necessary.

**What if the student believes she has been discriminated against based on pregnancy related issues?**

She may file a complaint with one of the University's Title IX C0-Coordinator at (580) 581-6712 against the professor/University, and/or file a complaint with the Office for Civil Rights:

**Kansas City Office  
Office for Civil Rights  
U.S. Department of Education  
One Petticoat Lane  
1010 Walnut Street, 3rd floor, Suite 320  
Kansas City, MO 64106**

**Telephone: 816-268-0550  
FAX: 816-268-0599; TDD: 800-877-8339  
Email: [OCR.KansasCity@ed.gov](mailto:OCR.KansasCity@ed.gov)**