

Liberty University Hit with Record \$14 Million Fine

The Department of Education has fined Liberty University an unprecedented \$14 million over violations of the Clery Act.

While the DOE had originally threatened a \$37.5 million fine, Liberty has taken steps toward correcting the infractions and ensuring the school is now Title IX compliant.

Some of the areas of concern include misreporting of on-campus crimes as well as failure to warn of gas leaks, bomb threats and persons “who have been credibly accused of repeated acts of sexual violence.”

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As reported by The Christian Post, “Liberty University President Dondi E. Costin, who was hired last year, told CP the university didn’t fully comply with its record-keeping and reporting obligations as the institution experienced record growth, for which he expressed regret. He said Liberty sprung into action when officials learned of its shortcomings before the Education Department got involved.

“We formed a task force to identify every deficiency and engaged outside experts to help us build the model program we now have,” Costin says. “Having invested more than \$10 million to deliver significant increases in staffing, training, infrastructure, technology and programming, I can say with absolute confidence that Liberty University now sets the pace for campus safety and security.”

Other notable universities who have been found guilty of violating the Clery Act include Penn State University, Michigan State University, Virginia Tech, UC Berkeley, Eastern

Michigan University and the University of Montana.

Until Liberty's record-setting fine, the largest amount issued to a school was Michigan State's \$4.5 million fine in 2019.

While Costin admits to Liberty's shortcomings, he alludes to the possibility that Liberty received a heftier fine and was under harsher scrutiny than other universities.

"Some might call that quibbling, but I would simply point out that it's possible to pony up to one's mistakes and be simultaneously subject to government overreach throughout the process," Costin says.

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"Based on what we know of how the department adjudicated multiple dozens of past actions, we can show the math to demonstrate the extent to which our experience was radically different than the norm. Maybe Liberty is the outlier, but I would not be surprised if this kind of treatment escalates," he adds.

This sentiment comes on the heels of the nation's largest Christian university, Grand Canyon University, being the subject of similar DOE investigations. The DOE investigation concluding that GCU had lied regarding the price of the school's doctoral programs to over 7,500 students resulting in higher than advertised program costs.

As Forbes reported, "President of GCU, Brian Mueller, who is also the CEO of GCE, suggested that the university was being unfairly targeted by the Department of Education. He particularly bemoaned the Department's unwillingness to recognize its change from a for-profit university to a non-profit for federal financial aid purposes—a decision made during the Trump administration while Betsy DeVos was

Secretary of Education. Mueller suggested that the refusal was due to some kind of animus.”{eo}

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