Michelle Lessly Blackburn

310-909-4499 | michelle.lessly@gmail.com | michellelessly.com | Oakland, CA

Professional Experience

Head of Student Success, Make School, San Francisco, CA   2019-August 2021

- Senior Leadership Team member and acted as Chief Compliance Officer responsible for ensuring compliance with regional, state, and federal laws including HEA, FERPA, Clery, Title IV, Title IX, and ADA. Responsible for IPEDS reporting.
- Conducted legislative analysis on the impact of Pell Grants, Veteran's Benefits, and middle-dollar ISA programs to develop evidence-based solutions to executive leadership for buy-in and implementation. Led to the development of the extended income-based repayment plan designed to give alumni more flexibility in paying back student loans.
- Drafted policies to support the execution of legislative changes, communicating them through memos, handbooks, and trainings. Led to the creation of quarterly audit and release cycles designed to ensure up-to-date compliance.
- Participated in various external forums to monitor regulatory changes, provide technical guidance, and develop joint solutions for compliance requirements including Title IV ad Title IX.
- Served as Accreditation Liaison Officer (ALO) leading the design and delivery of WASC/WSCUC accreditation approval process. Responsible for working with cross functional teams, faculty, and regulators to obtain and maintain state operation licensure in order to provide access to education for historically underrepresented students.
- Developed student-first, data-driven learner experience programs designed to meet the target outcome of 95% job placement rate for alumni within 1 year of graduation. Achieved and sustained NPS of 60 for multiple consecutive quarters, representing consistent student satisfaction feedback with classroom instruction and support services. Led to 86% retention rate in historically underrepresented students in tech.
- Responsible for communication with key stakeholders including Board of Directors, state regulators, venture capitalist, non-profit donors, accreditation agencies, and prospective students. This includes git repos, slide decks, promotional materials, letters, memos, website content, and executive summaries.

Area Director, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge, MA   2011-2017

- Extensive work in developing, implementing, and assessing student learning and development programs for both in-person and online delivery.
- Co-led initiative to launch proprietary microlearning MOOC focused on intrapersonal development
- Responsible for tracking local and federal higher education trends and issues. Led to my developing data-driven, beta-tested campus-wide learning initiatives designed to improve student outcomes such as student mental health, first-generation student retention, women and minorities in STEM, and substance abuse harm reduction strategies.
- Conducted legal research and wrote policy analyses on federal education policy compliance, academic development, and student success models.

Assistant Director and Adjunct Faculty, Pepperdine University, Malibu, CA   2008-2011

- Developed and implemented an evidence-based plan to increase retention and matriculation rates for undergraduate students. Led to a year-over-year 20% increase in retention and the creation of a new flagship program funded by the Office of the President.
- Oversaw 11-person team responsible for mitigating and responding risk, including tracking and conducting post-incident analyses. My restructuring policies and procedures lead to reduction in staff workload by 50%.

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Education

Doctorate in Law and Public Policy, Northeastern University, Boston, MA   2016
Research: The De-Identification of Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) Datasets to
Demonstrate Potential FERPA Compliance of MOOC Platform Providers

Masters of Education (Higher Education), Abilene Christian University, Abilene, TX   2008

Bachelor of Arts, Abilene Christian University, Abilene, TX   2005

Publications and Research

Lessly, M., & Cunningham-Brijbasi, M. (2020) Income Share Agreements (ISAs): Changing the Incentive Structure
of Financing Education. *Innovation for Transformation: Tackling Higher Education's Toughest Problems (Ed).*
Lessly, M. (2016) The de-Identification of MOOC datasets to demonstrate the potential FERPA
compliance of MOOC platform Providers. Doctoral Thesis available on ProQuest.
Lessly, M (2015) Understanding the intersection of Title IX & MOOCs. Northeastern University.
Lessly, M. (2015) Questions of compliance: Is Title IX Applicable to MOOCs. Northeastern University.
Lessly, M. (2014) Assessing FERPA Comprehension: A Qualitative Study. Northeastern University
Morris, J. & Lessly, M.(2007). Examining social Computing as it relates to first-year retention at a private 4-year
Institution. Abilene Christian University. White paper presented at the ACSD National Conference 2007
Morris, J.M. & Lessly, M. (2007). Review of the book The Christian College. A history of protestant higher
education in America. *Growth: The Journal of the Association for Christians in Student Development*, 6, 48-50.

Invited Presentations

EdTech and Higher Education, SXSW EDU, March 2020 (postponed due to COVID-19)
Can MOOCs Comply with FERPA?, NEPSA Annual Conference, April 2016
What can Student Affairs Professionals do to Turn the Tide?, ACSD National Conference, June 2012
Surviving Restructuring: Supporting Professional Staff During Change, ACUHO-I Conference, July 2011
Successful Student Leader Selection, ACUHO-I National Conference July 2011
Ethics and Student Leadership: Revised, ACUHO-I National Conference, June 2010
Ethics and Student Leadership: Revised, National Collegiate Leadership Conference, June 2010
Think Cheap: Professional Development on a Tight Budget, WACUHO-I Annual Conference, April 2009
Ethics and Student Leadership, National Collegiate Leadership Conference, February 2009
Navigating Institutional Culture: A Tri-Level Qualitative Reflection, ACSD National Conference, June 2008
Examining Social Computing as it Relates to First-Year Retention, ACSD National Conference, June 2007

Professional Affiliations

American Educational Research Association, National Association of Student Personnel Administrators
International Association of Privacy Professionals, National Center on Education and the Economy