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California State University

It Has Not Provided Adequate Oversight of the Safety of Employees and Students Who Work With Hazardous Materials

Background

With nearly 480,000 students enrolled and 49,000 employees in its 23 campuses located throughout the State, the California State University (CSU) system is overseen by the Chancellor's Office while each campus is overseen by a president. All CSU campuses purchase hazardous materials for both instructional and research purposes. Laboratory, classroom, and stockroom settings within the campuses potentially expose students and employees to hazardous materials and waste. We examined the extent to which the Chancellor's Office and four selected campuses comply with and enforce laws designed to ensure the health and safety of individuals in and around laboratory settings.

Our Key Recommendations

To more effectively monitor campus health and safety, the Chancellor's Office should do the following:

- Establish a uniform health and safety reporting mechanism and ensure campuses comply with the annual reporting requirements including timeliness of inspections of safeguards.
- Form a systemwide joint committee and ensure the committee meets and fulfills its responsibilities.

The campuses should:

- Ensure joint committees meet and fulfill their responsibilities, record meeting minutes, and provide information to the systemwide joint committee.
- Increase oversight of chemical safety and chemical plans, and annually evaluate chemical plans.

Key Findings

- The Chancellor's Office has not provided effective leadership to ensure that its campuses address health and safety concerns related to the presence of hazardous materials.
 - » Although it has required campuses to submit annual health and safety reports since 2009, it has not established guidelines on what information the campuses should report, and has not ensured campuses submit the reports—four campuses have yet to submit one report.
 - » It has not increased its oversight of the campuses' health and safety programs nor has it addressed deficiencies in a number of areas that its auditor has identified over two decades.
- Neither the Chancellor's Office nor the four campuses we reviewed ensured that they had joint committees to discuss safety concerns.
- The four campuses we reviewed did not provide the oversight and training needed to ensure the safety of employees and students.
 - » Although all campuses developed chemical plans, they did not consistently conduct required annual reviews of the plans.
 - » None of the campuses ensured that employees received the required safety training or that students were adequately prepared to safely participate in laboratory courses.
 - » Three of the campuses neglected to adequately monitor the proper working conditions of key safety equipment.
 - » Some campuses did not consistently complete annual inspections of key ventilation equipment in science buildings.

Some Campuses Did Not Always Complete Inspections and Flushes Monthly

