

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF
ILLINOIS

Angela K. Sheets v. Greenville University

Sheets v. Greenville University · No. 3:23-cv-3754-MAB · Decided March 6, 2026

SUMMARY

The United States District Court for the Southern District of Illinois addresses Greenville University’s Rule 12(b)(6) motion to dismiss Angela K. Sheets’s claims under Title VII and Title IX. The court dismisses the Title IX retaliation claim concerning assistant-coach assignments as preempted by Title VII, while permitting the Title IX retaliation claim concerning the university’s athletic-complex plan to proceed; the excerpt does not include the complete disposition of all claims.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the Southern District of Illinois
WRITING FOR THE COURT	Mark A. Beatty
JURISDICTION	United States District Court for the Southern District of Illinois
DECIDED	March 6, 2026
DOCKET	3:23-cv-3754-MAB
DISPOSITION	other
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Plaintiff filed a Second Amended Complaint asserting Title IX retaliation and Title VII sex-discrimination claims. Defendant moved to dismiss under Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 12(b)(6). The court granted the motion as to Count I and denied it as to Counts II and III.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	On a Rule 12(b)(6) motion, the court accepts well-pleaded factual allegations as true, draws permissible inferences in the plaintiff’s favor, and determines whether the complaint states a facially plausible claim for relief. A complaint must provide fair notice and raise the plaintiff’s right to relief above the speculative level.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	unpublished district court memorandum and order; persuasive but not binding beyond the case
PARTIES	Angela K. Sheets v. Greenville University

TOPICS

motions to dismiss

retaliation

employment discrimination

title vii

civil procedure

PRACTICE AREAS

civil procedure

employment law

civil rights

employment discrimination

title vii

retaliation

title ix

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether Sheets's Title IX retaliation claim based on her opposition to Greenville's assistant-coach allocation policy was preempted by Title VII because it concerned alleged employment discrimination against Sheets rather than discrimination against student athletes.
2. Whether Sheets adequately pleaded a Title IX retaliation claim based on her opposition to an athletic-complex plan allegedly discriminating against female student athletes.
3. Whether Sheets adequately pleaded a Title VII sex-discrimination claim based on her termination.

HOLDINGS

1. Count I was preempted by Title VII because the alleged protected activity concerned discrimination in Sheets's own employment, specifically the allocation of assistant coaches to head coaches, and did not allege opposition to discrimination against female student athletes.
2. Count III adequately pleaded Title IX retaliation and was not preempted by Title VII. Sheets plausibly alleged protected activity, a materially adverse action, and a but-for causal connection between her opposition to sex-based discrimination against female student athletes and her termination.
3. Count II adequately pleaded a Title VII sex-discrimination claim. At the motion-to-dismiss stage, Sheets was required to provide fair notice and plausibly allege that Greenville took a specific adverse employment action against her because of her sex; she was not required to plead a full similarly situated comparator showing or rebut potential nondiscriminatory reasons.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“Specifically, to prevail on a Title IX retaliation claim, Plaintiff will need to show that: (1) she engaged in protected activity under Title IX, (2) Greenville took a materially adverse action against her; and (3) there was a but-for causal connection between the two.” (Discussion I.b)

“Defendant Greenville University’s Motion to Dismiss is GRANTED in part and DENIED in part (Doc. 43). Specifically, Greenville’s Motion to Dismiss is GRANTED as to Count I and that claim is DISMISSED with prejudice. Conversely, Greenville’s Motion to Dismiss is DENIED as to Counts II and III and this action will proceed on those claims.” (Conclusion)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Angela Sheets, a female softball coach at Greenville University, alleged that she received less assistant-coach support than male head coaches and was terminated after opposing an athletic-complex plan that allegedly favored men's sports and lacked comparable facilities for women. She alleged that Greenville investigated her based on player reviews, failed to follow its Title IX procedures, and terminated her without explaining the

reasons. She was replaced by a male coach who allegedly received greater coaching support. The court accepted these allegations as true for purposes of the motion to dismiss.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Sheets filed the original complaint on November 21, 2023, and later filed a First Amended Complaint after receiving an EEOC right-to-sue letter. The court previously dismissed the First Amended Complaint without prejudice and granted leave to amend. Sheets filed the Second Amended Complaint, and Greenville moved to dismiss. The court dismissed Count I with prejudice but allowed the Title VII claim in Count II and the Title IX retaliation claim in Count III to proceed.

DISPOSITION

other

CASES CITED

- *Dix v. Edelman Financial Services, LLC*, 978 F.3d 507, 512-13 (7th Cir. 2020)
- *Camasta v. Jos. A. Bank Clothiers, Inc.*, 761 F.3d 732, 736 (7th Cir. 2014)
- *Bell Atlantic Corp. v. Twombly*, 550 U.S. 544, 555 (2007)
- *Ashcroft v. Iqbal*, 556 U.S. 662, 678-79 (2009)
- *Waid v. Merrill Area Public School*, 91 F.3d 857, 861 (7th Cir. 1996)
- *Fitzgerald v. Barnstable School Committee*, 555 U.S. 246 (2009)
- *Agbefe v. Board of Education of City of Chicago*, 538 F. Supp. 3d 833, 840-41 (N.D. Ill. 2021)
- *Brown v. Illinois Department of Human Services*, 717 F. App'x 623, 625-26 (7th Cir. 2018)
- *Joseph v. Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia*, 121 F.4th 855, 864, 869 (11th Cir. 2024)
- *Cieslik v. Board of Education of City of Chicago*, 2021 WL 1172575, at *5-*6 (N.D. Ill. Mar. 29, 2021)
- *Burton v. Board of Regents of University of Wisconsin System*, 851 F.3d 690, 695 (7th Cir. 2017)
- *Jackson v. Birmingham Board of Education*, 544 U.S. 167, 173-74, 179-80 (2005)
- *Doe v. Columbia College Chicago*, 933 F.3d 849, 857 (7th Cir. 2019)
- *Conviser v. DePaul University*, 532 F. Supp. 3d 581, 595-96 (N.D. Ill. 2021)
- *Lesiv v. Illinois Central Railroad Co.*, 39 F.4th 903, 915-16 (7th Cir. 2022)
- *Sinha v. Bradley University*, 995 F.3d 568, 573-74 (7th Cir. 2021)
- *Johnson v. Koppers, Inc.*, 726 F.3d 910, 914 (7th Cir. 2013)
- *Roberts v. Columbia College Chicago*, 821 F.3d 855, 865 (7th Cir. 2016)
- *Staub v. Proctor Hospital*, 562 U.S. 411, 416 (2011)
- *O'Leary v. Accretive Health, Inc.*, 657 F.3d 625, 631 (7th Cir. 2011)
- *Bryant v. Gardner*, 587 F. Supp. 2d 951, 964-65 (N.D. Ill. 2008)
- *Abrego v. Wilkie*, 907 F.3d 1004, 1012 (7th Cir. 2018)
- *E.E.O.C. v. Concentra Health Services, Inc.*, 496 F.3d 773, 776, 779-80 (7th Cir. 2007)

- Tamayo v. Blagojevich, 526 F.3d 1074, 1081, 1086 (7th Cir. 2008)
- Vega v. Chicago Park District, 958 F. Supp. 2d 943, 953 (N.D. Ill. 2013)
- Davis v. Metropolitan Pier & Exposition Authority, 2012 WL 2576356, at *7 (N.D. Ill. July 3, 2012)
- Doe v. Columbia College Chicago, 299 F. Supp. 3d 939, 950, 960 (N.D. Ill. 2017), aff'd, 933 F.3d 849 (7th Cir. 2019)

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