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The College strives to make its campuses inclusive and a safe and welcoming learning environment for all members of the College community. Pursuant to multiple federal and state laws and administrative regulations and pursuant to College policy, the College prohibits discrimination in its activities, services and programs based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, pregnancy, disability, genetic information, age, political affiliation or veterans' status.

## I. DEFINITIONS

The following definitions shall apply to this Procedure and shall be collectively referred to herein as "Unlawful Discrimination".

The definitions are not intended to operate as speech codes, promote content and viewpoint discrimination or suppress minority viewpoints in the academic setting. Indeed, just because a person's speech or expression is deemed offensive by others does not mean it constitutes discrimination or harassment.

In applying these definitions, College administrators shall view the speech or expression in its context and totality and shall apply the following standard: the alleged victim subjectively views the conduct as discrimination or harassment and that the conduct is objectively severe or pervasive enough that a reasonable person would agree that the conduct is discriminatory or harassing.

- A. **Discrimination:** any act or failure to act that unreasonably differentiates treatment of others based solely on their Protected Status and is sufficiently serious, based on the perspective of a reasonable person, to unreasonably interfere with or limit the ability of that individual to participate in, access or benefit from the College's programs and activities. Discrimination may be intentional or unintentional.
- B. **Harassment:** a type of Discrimination that happens when verbal, physical, electronic or other behavior based on a person's Protected Status interferes with a person's participation in the College's programs and activities and it either creates an environment that a reasonable person would find hostile, intimidated or abusive or where submitting to or rejecting the conduct is used as the basis for decisions that affect the person's participation in the College's programs and activities.

Harassment may include but is not limited to: threatening or intimidating conduct directed at another because of the individual's Protected Status; ethnic slurs, negative stereotypes and hostile acts based on an individual's Protected Status.

- C. **Protected Status:** race, color, national origin, religion, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, pregnancy, disability, genetic information, age, political affiliation or veterans' status.

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<sup>1</sup> If you make revisions to these Procedures, make sure to make the same to Procedure 5.3.4.2

- D. Standard of Evidence** - the College uses the preponderance of the evidence as the standard for proof of whether a violation occurred. In the student due process hearing and employee grievance process, legal terms like “guilt, “innocence” and “burden of proof” are not applicable. Student and employee due process hearings are conducted to take into account the totality of all evidence available from all relevant sources. The College will find the alleged Perpetrator either “responsible” or “not responsible” for violating these Procedures.

## **II. STATEMENTS OF PROHIBITION**

### **A. Prohibition of Retaliation.**

The College strictly prohibits punishing students or employees for asserting their rights to be free from Unlawful Discrimination. Retaliation against any person participating in connection with a complaint of Unlawful Discrimination is strictly prohibited. Reports of retaliation will be addressed through this procedure and/or other applicable College procedures. Retaliation includes, but is not limited to, any form of intimidation, punitive actions from authority figures or peers, reprisal (acts of vengeance) or harassment. Retaliation is a serious violation and should be reported immediately. The College will take appropriate disciplinary action against any employee or student found to have retaliated against another.

### **B. Prohibition of Providing False Information.**

Any individual who knowingly files a false report or complaint, who knowingly provides false information to College officials, or who intentionally misleads College officials involved in the investigation or resolution of a complaint may be subject to disciplinary action including, but not limited to expulsion or employment termination. The College recognizes that an allegation made in good faith will not be considered false even if the evidence does not confirm the allegation(s) of Unlawful Discrimination.

## **III. REQUESTING ACCOMMODATIONS**

### **A. Students.**

Students with disabilities wishing to make a request for reasonable accommodations, auxiliary communication aids or services, or materials in alternative accessible formats should contact the College’s Dean of Student Services located at Student Services Center room 111-F. Information provided by students is voluntary and strict confidentiality is maintained. All requests for accommodations will be considered following the appropriate federal and state laws.

The College will also provide reasonable accommodation of a student’s religious beliefs/practices provided such expression/practice does not create a hostile

environment for other students and employees and/or the accommodation does not cause an undue hardship for the College.

**B. Employees.**

Employees with disabilities wishing to make a request for reasonable accommodations, auxiliary communication aids or services, or materials in alternative accessible formats should contact the College's Office of Human Resources located at Jernigan Building room 103. Information provided by employees is voluntary and strict confidentiality is maintained.

The College will also provide reasonable accommodation of an employee's religious beliefs/practices provided such expression/practice does not create a hostile environment for other employees and students and/or the accommodation does not cause an undue hardship for the College.

**IV. REPORTING OPTIONS**

**A. Student Complaints.**

Any student wishing to make a report relating to Unlawful Discrimination may do so by reporting the concern to the College's Dean of Student Services located at Students Services Center room 111-F.

For Unlawful Discrimination incidents between students and employees, the Dean of Student Services will work in partnership with the Executive Director of Human Resources to investigate and resolve the allegations.

**B. Employee Complaints.**

Any employee wishing to make a report related to Unlawful Discrimination may do so by reporting the concern to the College's Executive Director of Human Resources located at Jernigan Building Room 103.

**V. INITIAL INVESTIGATION**

As these Procedures apply to both students and employees as either the Complainant or the Respondent, the administrator receiving the incident report will determine if the case should be handled by: 1) the Dean of Student Services, or designee (student/student); 2) the Executive Director of Human Resources, or designee (employee/employee); or 3) both (student/employee). For incidents involving students and employees, the College will utilize the process for both the student investigation and the employee investigation sections as applicable.

**A. Student Investigation.**

1. Students filing complaints (“Complainants”) are urged to do so in writing as soon as possible but no later than thirty (30) days after disclosure or discovery of the facts giving rise to the complaint. Complaints submitted after the thirty (30) day period will still be investigated; however, Complainants should recognize that delays in reporting may significantly impair the ability of College officials to investigate and respond to such complaints. The Dean shall fully investigate any complaints and will, as needed and if the complaint also involves an employee, collaborate with the College’s Executive Director of Human Resources. During the course of the investigation, the Dean may consult with other relevant College administrators and the College Attorney.
2. During the investigation, and if applicable to the complaint<sup>2</sup>, the Dean shall meet with the Complainant and the alleged Perpetrator (“Respondent”) separately and give each party an equal opportunity to provide evidence, including informing the Dean of any potential witnesses. Both parties will be given access to any information provided by the other in accordance with any federal or state confidentiality laws.
3. During the investigation process, the Dean may implement temporary measures in order to facilitate an efficient and thorough investigation process as well as to protect the rights of all parties involved. The temporary actions include but are not limited to: reassignment of class schedules; temporary suspension from campus (but be allowed to complete coursework); or the directives that include no contact between the involved parties.
4. A confidential file regarding the complaint shall be maintained by the Dean. To the extent possible, the College will keep all information relating to the complaint and investigations confidential; however, to maintain compliance with the Clery Act, both parties will be informed of the outcome of any institutional proceedings under these Procedures.
5. The Dean shall make every effort to conclude the investigation as soon as possible but no later than thirty (30) calendar days. If the nature of the investigation requires additional time, the Dean may have an additional ten (10) calendar days to complete the investigation. The Dean shall notify the parties of this extension.
6. The parties to an investigation will be notified of available counseling services and their options of changing academic situations and other interim measures.

**B. Employee Investigations.**

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<sup>2</sup> The Complainant’s complaint need not necessarily be against a specific individual but could concern an action, policy, procedure or decision by the College that the individual believes constitutes Unlawful Discrimination.

1. Employees filing complaints (“Complainants”) are urged to do so in writing as soon as possible but no later than thirty (30) days after disclosure or discovery of the facts giving rise to the complaint. Complaints submitted after the thirty (30) day period will still be investigated; however, Complainants should recognize that delays in reporting may significantly impair the ability of College officials to investigate and respond to such complaints. The Executive Director of Human Resources or designee shall fully investigate any complaints. During the course of the investigation, the Executive Director of Human Resources may consult with other relevant College administrators and the College Attorney.
2. During the investigation, and if applicable to the complaint, the Executive Director of Human Resources shall meet with the Complainant and the alleged Perpetrator (“Respondent”) separately and give each party an equal opportunity to provide evidence, including informing the Executive Director of Human Resources of any potential witnesses. Both parties will be given access to any information provided by the other in accordance with any federal or state confidentiality laws.
3. During the investigation process, the Executive Director of Human Resources may implement temporary measures in order to facilitate an efficient and thorough investigation process as well as to protect the rights of all parties involved. The Executive Director of Human Resources may suspend an employee with pay pending an investigation if such action is in the College’s best interest.
4. A confidential file regarding the complaint shall be maintained by the Executive Director of Human Resources. To the extent possible, the College will keep all information relating to the complaint and investigations confidential; however, to maintain compliance with the Clery Act, both parties will be informed of the outcome of any institutional proceedings under these Procedures.
5. The Executive Director of Human Resources shall make every effort to conclude the investigation as soon as possible but no later than thirty (30) calendar days. If the nature of the investigation requires additional time, the Executive Director of Human Resources may have an additional ten (10) calendar days to complete the investigation and shall notify the parties of this extension.
6. The parties to an investigation will be notified of available counseling services and other interim measures.
7. If the Executive Director of Human Resources is named as a Respondent in the Complaint, the President may assign another College administrator to investigate the Complaint. If the President is named as a Respondent in the

Complaint, the Chair of the Board of Trustees may appoint a third-party to investigate the Complaint.

## **VI. RECOMMENDATION AND APPEAL**

### **A. Students.**

1. After the investigation is complete, the Dean will put forward a recommendation of finding, based on the Standard of Evidence, and sanction(s) to both the Complainant and Respondent. If the recommendation is accepted by both parties involved, the recommendation and sanction(s) will become effective. The Dean will submit to each party a final outcome letter that will include, but not be limited to, the following:
  - a. Determination if the Respondent is responsible or not responsible for violating these Procedures;
  - b. Sanction;
  - c. Whether monitoring of academic schedules is needed between the parties to ensure that the individuals involved are not in classes together (the Dean will assist in this process).
  - d. Short-term College counseling services available to each party.
  
2. If the Dean's recommendations are not accepted by either the Complainant or the Respondent, either or both parties may appeal and request a formal hearing. If the Dean recommends sanctions that they cannot impose (i.e., expulsion), the matter shall automatically be set for a hearing. The Vice President of Instruction and Student Services will preside over the hearing as the Presiding Officer. The process for the hearing is outlined below:
  - a. Prior to the hearing, the Complainant and the Respondent have the right to review all evidence, including written statements by the Respondent, the Complainant, or witnesses. Strict rules of evidence do not apply. The Standard of Evidence shall apply for the hearing.
  - b. Written notice including the date, time, and location of the hearing will be sent to all parties.
  - c. At the hearing, all pertinent parties have a right to speak and be questioned by the Presiding Officer. Cross-examination between parties is not permitted. The College will provide options for questioning without confrontation. Each phase of the hearing will be heard by both parties in separate rooms by use of a speaker phone.
  - d. The Complainant and the Respondent are allowed to be accompanied by an advocate. The advocate may not present on behalf of either party unless otherwise instructed to do so by the Presiding Officer. If the Complainant or the Respondent chooses to have an advocate who is an attorney, notification must be provided to the Presiding Officer at least three (3) College business days prior

to the hearing date. In this case, the College Attorney will also be present.

- e. Both parties have a right to a written notice of the hearing outcome.

**B. Employees.**

1. After the investigation is complete, the Executive Director of Human Resources will put forward a recommendation of finding, based on the Standard of Evidence, and sanctions to both the Complainant and Respondent. If the recommendation is accepted by both parties involved, the recommendation and sanctions will become effective. A final outcome letter will be submitted to the Complainant and Respondent that may include, but not be limited to, the following:
  - a. Determination if the Respondent is responsible, not responsible, or if the decision is deemed inconclusive, or shared responsibility.
  - b. Sanction, if appropriate.
  - c. Monitoring of academic schedules or workplace schedule if needed.
  - d. Short-term counseling services will be offered to each party.
  
2. If the Executive Director of Human Resources' recommendations are not accepted by either the Complainant or the Respondent, either or both parties may appeal to the Vice President of Administration & Fiscal Services. If the Executive Director of Human Resources recommends sanctions that they cannot impose (i.e., termination) the matter will automatically be forwarded to the President for consideration. The process for the appeal is outlined below:
  - a. Each party shall have the right to meet with the President separately. Prior to the meeting with the President, the Complainant and the Respondent have the right to review all evidence, including written statements by the Respondent, the Complainant, or witnesses.
  - b. Written notice including the date, time, and location of the meeting will be sent to all parties.
  - c. At the meeting with the President, each party shall have a right to speak and be questioned by the President and present any written evidence to the President.
  - d. The Complainant and the Respondent are allowed to be accompanied by an advocate. The advocate may not present on behalf of either party unless otherwise instructed to do so by the President. If the Complainant or the Respondent chooses to have an advocate who is an attorney, notification must be provided to the President at least three (3) College business days prior to the hearing date. In this case, the College Attorney will also be present.
  - e. The President will review the evidence provided by each party and shall consider the statements of the parties. The President's

determination will be based on the Standard of Evidence. Both parties have a right to a written notice of the President's decision.

If the President is named as a Respondent in the original Complaint, the Executive Director of Human Resources will inform the Chair of the Board of Trustees, who will assign another person to consider the appeal.

**C. Sanctioning.**

The following sanctions may be imposed for those who have violated these Procedures.

1. Students.
  - a. Verbal or Written Warning
  - b. Probation
  - c. Administrative withdrawal from a course without refund
  - d. Required Counseling
  - e. No Contact Directive
  - f. Suspension
  - g. Expulsion (President must impose)
  - h. Other consequences deemed appropriate
  
2. Employees.
  - a. Verbal or Written Warning
  - b. Performance Improvement Plan
  - c. Required Counseling
  - d. Required Training or Education
  - e. Demotion (President may impose)
  - f. Suspend with or without Pay (President must impose)
  - g. Termination (President must impose)
  - h. Other consequences deemed appropriate to the specific violation

Adopted: 1-4-2024