

1.29 Student Complaint

I. Purpose

This policy is designed to provide a mechanism by which a student may lodge a complaint regarding a service or academic encounter at the college. Through this process the college seeks to ensure the provision of a quality education and excellent support services for students. Further, the process is intended to identify opportunities to improve service and student satisfaction, as well as demonstrate compliance with federal regulations regarding the receipt, response to and tracking of student complaints.

II. Scope

This policy applies to an individual who is currently enrolled, or was enrolled at the college, within the previous semester, when the underlying facts and circumstances of the complaint first occurred, and who has not been suspended or dismissed, or otherwise is required to re-apply for admission.

Parents, relatives, employers, agents and other persons acting for, or on behalf of, a student are not able to file a complaint in a student's name.

III. General

This policy and accompanying procedures are based on the principle that the college is committed to handling student complaints in a manner which is perceived as fair, impartial, confidential and timely. This policy is the appropriate mechanism to pursue for complaints related to any aspect of college life including the delivery of academic, administrative and other support services. The effectiveness of the complaints process is regularly evaluated by those involved in it.

When a student encounters a problem on campus for which he/she seeks resolution, he/she should always first try to work the problem out through discussion with those immediately involved with, or responsible for, the service, decision or action in question. Dealing with concerns in the most direct and honest fashion should always be the first step toward resolution. The majority of problems can be resolved when a student makes an appointment with a faculty or staff member and calmly and honestly communicates their concerns. If

however, an issue or problem still exists after informal resolution is attempted, a student may initiate the formal complaint procedures provided at the college. All formal student complaints must be received in writing through student entry of the complaint details into the online complaint resolution form used by the college. Once the online form is completed, an electronic copy is sent to the Office of the Vice President, Student Affairs.

Should the Vice President, Student Affairs be the subject of the concern or complaint, or directly party to it, the complaint may be made to the President.

Complaints Addressed by Other Policies

The following matters are not treated as Student Complaints within the scope of this policy but may be directed for resolution as follows:

- Sexual misconduct, harassment, or discrimination. *1.14 Gender Based Misconduct*
- Discrimination on grounds of equal opportunity. *1.10 Equal Opportunity*
- Failure to provide adequate accommodations. *1.11 Americans with Disabilities Act*
- Matters relating to student violations of the Code of Conduct. *3.12 Student Responsibilities for Conduct*
- A grade appeal, unless unethical, illegal or improper conduct of a faculty member may be the subject of the complaint even if it occurs in the context of a grade decision or appeal. *2.11 Grade Challenges*
- Tuition appeal. *3.17 Tuition Refund Appeal*
- Matters relating to child abuse reporting. *1.21 Child Abuse Reporting*
- Grievances arising related to a student's employment at the college should be directed to the Human Resources office.
- Complaints related to processes or individuals outside of the scope of college responsibility.

Compliance

Failure to comply with this policy may result either in no action being taken with respect to a complaint or other disposition by the Vice President, Student Affairs. Where such failure also causes a violation of rules and policies regarding student or employee conduct, disciplinary action may result in accordance with the applicable rules and policies.

IV. Procedure

Complaint Submission

All formal student complaints must be received in writing within the semester of occurrence or as soon as possible thereafter. The student will provide the complaint facts and circumstances via the online complaint resolution form used by the college. The Office of the Vice President, Student Affairs will receive, and be the central repository for, all complaints registered.

Complaint Review and Resolution

Using the complaint resolution system, the following process for review and resolution will be used.

1. The Vice President, Student Affairs will direct each complaint to the appropriate divisional Vice President or to the Provost for review and resolution.
2. Complaints will be acknowledged within 5 days of receiving all information necessary to process the complaint. This acknowledgement will:
 - be in writing from the divisional Vice President reviewing the complaint
 - identify the staff member handling the complaint
 - give an estimated time frame for resolution.
3. Complaints should be addressed as expeditiously as possible, with the goal of resolving each complaint within 30 days of acknowledgment of the complaint.
4. Upon arriving at a resolution, the divisional Vice President will send resolution details in writing to the student and the Vice President, Student Affairs, giving the reasons for the decision.

Complaint Tracking

The Office of the Vice President, Student Affairs, will track each Student Complaint via a web-based data management system and maintain within that system a record of the following for not less than two (2) years after final disposition of the complaint:

- Date complaint was received.
- Students identified with the complaint.
- Copy of the complaint.
- College officials who addressed the complaint.
- Steps taken to resolve the complaint.
- Final resolution or disposition of the complaint.
- Any external actions taken by the complainant of which the Vice President, Student Affairs becomes aware.

The data tracked will be assessed and made available to regulatory agencies and accrediting bodies, including the Middle States Commission on Higher Education and the Pennsylvania Department of Education, as required in accordance with applicable laws, regulations and policies.

V. Approval: Board of Trustees April 13, 2017

VI. Responsibility: Vice President, Student Affairs