

Student Grievance Policy

The purpose of this policy is to establish a process for students to express and resolve grievances that they have with any college employee in a prompt, fair, and equitable manner. The college encourages informal resolution. This policy is only to be used to resolve serious matters that meet the definition of a “grievable action” and is only after reasonable efforts have been made to settle the dispute informally. The Student Grievance Policy relies on the good faith of all involved to achieve a reasonable resolution of grievable actions.

I. GRIEVABLE ACTIONS

A grievable action is:

- A. A violation of written college policies or procedures or a misapplication of those policies or procedures.
- B. An unfair action or failure to act, that has directly impacted the student’s experience at the college.

II. NONGRIEVABLE MATTERS

A student may not use this procedure for grievances related to the following matters:

- A. Actions of other students, which are handled under the Student Code of Conduct.
- B. Grade appeals, which are handled under the Grade Appeal Policy.
- C. Allegations of discrimination or other conduct that falls within the jurisdiction of the Sexual Misconduct or Non-Discrimination Policies.
- D. The outcomes of students disciplinary proceedings.
- E. Matters covered under other college policies that contain grievance, hearing and/or appeal procedures, such as Goucher’s FERPA policy, financial aid appeal procedures, the policy on Student Concerns about Athletic Programs and Activities and the Academic Honor Code.
- F. Matters concerning students in their capacity as employees of the College, which are resolved in accordance with applicable personnel policies through the Department of Human Resources.
- G. Billing disputes.

III. PROCEDURE

Any student alleging a grievable matter shall pursue the grievance as follows:

Step 1. Informal Discussion with College Employee

In many cases, informal actions can be taken to resolve a dispute between a student and a college employee. The student may choose to meet with the employee and make a good faith effort to resolve the dispute promptly and fairly. This discussion should be initiated within fourteen (14) working days of the grievable event or as soon thereafter as reasonably possible. Flexibility should be given or considered during times when school is not in session, during summer breaks, and if extenuating circumstances exist (e.g. medical emergencies, sabbaticals).

Step 2. Discussion with Supervisor or Center Director

If a satisfactory resolution is not reached after direct discussion with the employee, or if the student chooses not to discuss the matter informally with the employee, the student shall, within fourteen (14) working days of the informal discussion or grievable event, or as soon thereafter as reasonably possible, meet with the employee's supervisor or the individual to whom such employee reports, who will attempt to reach a resolution.

If a faculty member is the subject of a grievance, the student should ordinarily discuss the matter with the center director. At their discretion, center directors may consult with or refer the matter to the associate provost for faculty affairs.

The supervisor, center director, or associate provost for faculty affairs shall notify the faculty or staff member that a grievance has been raised by the student, provide information about the nature of the grievance, and assess any documentation from all involved parties that might help to reach a resolution. The supervisor, center director, or associate provost for faculty affairs shall attempt to reach a resolution, then summarize the results of the assessment and provide a copy of this summary in writing to the student and the employee who is the subject of the grievance. Assessment will occur and a written summary shall be provided within thirty (30) working days of the date the student initially contacts the supervisor, center director, or associate provost for faculty affairs or as soon thereafter as reasonably possible.

Step 3. Formal Grievance

If the matter is not resolved through the informal process, the student may submit a written statement of the grievance to the provost in the case of a faculty and to the Director of Human Resources in the case of a staff employee within ten (10) working days after the informal process has ended. The statement shall contain:

1. a complete narrative of the circumstances giving rise to the grievance;
2. identification of the parties involved, including names, addresses, and contact information;
3. a statement of the remedy requested. Remedies under this procedure are generally limited to restoring losses suffered by the student or making changes in college policy, practice, or procedure. Monetary damages, fines or penalties, or disciplinary action against the individual who is the subject of the grievance are not remedies available to the student under this policy.

The provost or the Director of Human Resources shall notify the appropriate vice president, dean, or other administrator that a formal grievance is pending in his or her area of responsibility. The employee shall also be notified of the grievance. Written copies of the grievance statement will be provided to the appropriate vice president, dean, or other administrator, and to the employee.

Step 4. Investigation of Grievance

The provost or the Director of Human Resources will gather any material deemed necessary for review and will meet with all parties directly related to the grievance, in order to gather facts and information needed to make a fair and equitable decision. The student and the individual against whom a grievance is filed may be advised or accompanied by another member of the college community at any stage of the grievance procedure, except that practicing attorneys may not participate in any meetings as a representative of any party.

This stage of the grievance procedure shall be completed within twenty-one (21) working days after the provost or the Director of Human Resources receives the grievance, or as soon thereafter as reasonably possible.

Step 5. Grievance Decision

Within seven (7) working days after completion of the investigation, the provost or the Director of Human Resources shall issue a written finding as to whether the employee has violated a college policy or has otherwise acted (or failed to act) in a manner that resulted in unfair treatment of the student, and, if so, what remedies should be made available to the student as described in Step 3(c). A copy of the decision will be sent to the vice president or dean in the appropriate administrative area, as well as to the student and the employee.

The decision of the provost or the Director of Human Resources shall be final. No appeals will be considered.

IV. GRIEVANCES AGAINST CERTAIN ADMINISTRATORS

If any member of the president's senior staff (including a vice president, associate vice president, or general counsel) is the subject of a grievance under this policy, either the grievant or the recipient of the grievance shall inform the President, who will oversee the grievance process, which shall be carried out, to the extent practicable, in accordance with the procedures referenced in this policy.

If the subject of a grievance is the president, either the grievant or the recipient of the grievance shall inform the Chair of the Audit Committee of the Board of Trustees, who will oversee the grievance process, which shall be carried out, to the extent practicable, in accordance with the procedures referenced in this policy.

A confidential report will be made to the Chair of the Board of Trustees at the conclusion of every grievance against the President or senior staff member conducted under this policy. Such report may be shared with the Board of Trustees, or any members thereof, at the Chair's discretion.

V. DISCIPLINARY ACTION

Although disciplinary action against the employee is not a remedy available to a student who files a grievance under this policy, the college reserves the right to impose discipline on its employees as a result of determinations made through the grievance process. Any such discipline will be imposed only after a final decision has been issued.

If the employee is a staff member, the employee's supervisor, in consultation with the Director of Human Resources, shall determine whether disciplinary sanctions should be imposed. If the employee is a faculty member, the provost shall determine whether disciplinary sanctions should be imposed.

The imposition of disciplinary sanctions may not be appealed by the employee under this policy. Faculty members may grieve the imposition of disciplinary sanctions under the faculty grievance procedure in the Faculty Legislation.

VI. CONFIDENTIALITY

All parties to the proceedings held or actions taken under this policy shall maintain the confidentiality of the proceedings and all written reports to the extent reasonably possible. Original records, documents, and reports shall be maintained in the office of the provost or the Department of Human Resources, and a duplicate copy shall be maintained in the office of the general counsel.

VII. NON-RETALIATION

No person against whom a grievance is filed or any other person shall intimidate, threaten, coerce, or discriminate against any individual for filing a grievance under this policy. Complaints of such retaliation or interference may be filed and processed under this procedure.

VIII. TIME GUIDELINES

If the college is not in session during part of these proceedings, or in instances where additional time may be required because of the complexity of the case, unavailability of the parties or witnesses, or other extenuating circumstances, any of the time periods specified herein may be extended by the provost or the Director of Human Resources, at the request of any party or individual involved in the grievance procedure. If a period is extended, the student and the person against whom the grievance has been filed will be so informed.

IX. MISUSE OF POLICY

The purpose of this policy is to provide a mechanism to address legitimate student complaints and grievances. Any student member of the college community is encouraged to use the procedures provided in this policy, not only for the benefit and protection of that individual but ultimately of the entire college community. However, fabricated grievances undermine the purpose and effectiveness of this policy. Accordingly, persons who knowingly fabricate grievances may be subject to disciplinary action.

Allegations of fabricated grievances must be reported within ninety (90) days of the date the grievance was brought. Such allegations may be reported to the administrator handling the grievance, who shall investigate the allegations and take any appropriate action. The fact that a grievance may not result in a finding that an employee has violated a college policy or has otherwise acted in a manner resulting in unfair treatment of a student is not alone evidence that the grievance was fabricated.