**MEMORANDUM**

**TO:** Committee on Academic Programs

Committee on Faculty Affairs

**FROM:** Steering Committee

**RE:** Grade Appeal/Student Complaint Policies

**DATE:** May 7, 2012

**Background:**

Currently, the college has a “Complaint Appeals by Students (undergraduate)” policy <http://www.tcnj.edu/~academic/policy/undergradcomplaint.html> and a “Complaint Appeals by Students (graduate)” policy <http://www.tcnj.edu/~academic/policy/graduatecomplaint.html>. Both were developed through governance in 1999. Although not specifically designated as grade appeal policies, these are used largely for that purpose, especially since there are other policies and laws for dealing with discrimination and harassment.

**Charge:**

Therefore, Steering asks CAP to do the following:

* To create a policy that is specifically for grade appeals.
* To consider whether a single grade appeal policy can serve both undergraduate and graduate students or whether two policies are needed.

In carrying out this work, CAP may choose to draw upon the existing Complaint Appeals by Students policy or may want to begin its work afresh.

In light of the work that the Steering Committee is asking CAP to carry out, it also asks CFA to do the following, especially in conjunction with the work it currently is doing in developing a Faculty Behavior policy:

* To consider whether there should be a specific student complaint appeal apart from a grade appeal process, current discrimination policies, or the Faculty Behavior policy being developed.
* To consider how a complaint process (not addressing grades) could be incorporated into a Faculty Behavior policy.

**Timeline:**

Steering asks that CAP and CFA make their recommendations to Steering during spring semester 2013 and in doing so indicate how it has used the three-step governance process described below.

**The Three-Step Process**

**Step #1 -- Identifying and reporting the problem:** When a Standing Committee or Program Council receives a charge from the Steering Committee, the issue will be communicated to the campus community by posting to the Governance website ([www.tcnj.edu/~steering](http://www.tcnj.edu/~steering)). The charge should be set out clearly and should indicate the difficulties or uncertainties that need to be addressed through new or revised policy, procedure, or program. The charge should be broadly stated and should include a context such as existing policy or practice. Charges may include solution parameters but should not recommend any specific solutions. Clearly stated charges will lead to better recommendations.

**Step #2 -- Preparing a preliminary recommendation:** Once the campus community has received the charge, committees can begin to collect data needed to make a preliminary recommendation. Committees should receive input from affected individuals and all relevant stakeholder groups prior to making a preliminary recommendation. For issues that have broad implications or that affect a large number of individuals, initial testimony should be solicited from the campus community at large. For some issues, sufficient initial testimony may come from input through committee membership or solicitation from targeted constituent groups. When, in the best judgment of the committee, adequate clarity of the principles contributing to the problem are known, a preliminary recommendation should be drafted and disseminated to the campus community through regular updates and the Governance website. At this point, committees typically receive input or testimony through committee membership, formal testimony, and open comment from affected individuals and all stakeholder groups. Committees must be proactive in inviting stakeholder groups (including Student Government, Staff Senate and Faculty Senate) to provide formal testimony. In cases where testimony results in significant and substantive changes to the preliminary recommendation, the new recommendation will be considered to be in step #2.

**Step #3 -- Making a Final Recommendation:** Committees must use sound judgment to give the campus adequate time to review the preliminary recommendation before making their final recommendation. Again, committees are expected to be proactive in soliciting feedback on the preliminary recommendation. If a full calendar year has passed since the formal announcement of the preliminary recommendation, the committee must resubmit a preliminary recommendation to the campus community. When, in the best judgment of the committee, the campus community has responded to the proposed resolution of the issue, the committee shall send its final recommendation (with documentation) to the Steering Committee. That final recommendation should include a suggested implementation date. Accompanying the final recommendation shall be a report of how testimony was gathered, the nature of that testimony, and how the Committee responded to that testimony, including a description of how the preliminary recommendation evolved as a result of testimony.

**Testimony:** The presenting of testimony, prior to both the preliminary and final recommendations, is central to the concept of shared governance. All stakeholder groups will have an opportunity to provide input into governance issues through direct membership as well as invited testimony. Individuals appointed or elected to the governance system are expected to take a broad institutional perspective relative to issues being considered. In contrast, invited testimony will reflect the stakeholder perspective on the issue being considered. Committees are expected to be proactive in inviting stakeholder groups to provide testimony at both steps # 2 and #3 of the process. Committees need to identify stakeholder groups that are interested in each particular issue and invite their testimony at scheduled Committee meetings or hearings. Committees should report in their transmittal memos which groups were targeted as stakeholders, how testimony was invited, the form of the testimony (written, oral, etc.), and the substantive content of the testimony.