MEMORANDUM

TO: Committee on Academic Programs

FROM: Steering Committee

RE: Grade Appeal Policies

DATE: October 21, 2013

Background:

Currently, the college has a "Student Complaint Appeal - Undergraduate" policy http://policies.tcnj.edu/policies/digest.php?docId=8642 and a "Student Complaint Appeal – Graduate" policy http://policies.tcnj.edu/policies/digest.php?docId=8682. 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.

On May 7, 2012, Steering charged CAP and CFA jointly with revisiting these policies. It charged CAP with creating a policy specifically for grade appeals, and asked CFA to consider whether there should be a "student complaint appeal" policy apart from a grade appeal policy.

In October, 2013, the chairs of both CAP and CFA explained to Steering that they saw no reason for this charge to be framed as a joint charge, since there is no need to develop a grade appeal policy and a "student complaint appeal" policy at the same moment. Furthermore, the chair of CFA explained that a process for handling student complaints on issues aside from grades will necessarily be included in the Professional Behavior policy it is currently working on.

At its October 16, 2013 meeting, the Steering Committee also noted that the concept of a "complaint appeal" policy is inherently contradictory, since a student can *appeal* a grade but cannot *appeal* a complaint.

Steering has dropped the "student complaint appeal" charge to CFA. Below we reproduce the charge to CAP as given on May 7, 2012.

Charge:

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 Student Complaint Appeal policy or may want to begin its work afresh.

Testimony
Steering recommends that, in formulating a preliminary recommendation, CAP should solicit testimony from faculty, students, and staff; it may do so through consulting the executive boards of Faculty Senate, Staff Senate, and Student Government. In addition, it should consult the director of Graduate Studies.

Timeline:
Steering asks that CAP complete a preliminary recommendation by the end of the 2013-14 academic year.

TCNJ Governance Processes

Step #1 -- **Identifying and reporting the problem:** When a Standing Committee receives a charge from the Steering Committee, the first responsibility is to clearly articulate and report the problem to the campus community. The problem may have been set out clearly in the charge received from the Steering Committee, or it may be necessary for the Standing Committee to frame a problem statement. The problem statement should indicate the difficulties or uncertainties that need to be addressed through new or revised policy, procedure, or program. The problem statement should be broadly stated and should include a context such as existing policy or practice. Problem statements may include solution parameters but should not suggest any specific solutions. Clearly stated problems will lead to better recommendations.

Step #2 -- **Preparing a preliminary recommendation:** Once the campus community has received the problem statement, 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 receiving 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.

To see the Steering Committee's guidelines for gathering testimony and making a final recommendation, see the "Governance Toolbox" at
http://academicaffairs.pages.tcnj.edu/college-governance/a-governance-toolbox/