

CAP's Final Recommendation on Student Complaints Policy

TO: Steering Committee

From: Committee on Academic Programs

RE: Final Recommendation on Student Complaints Policy

Date: May 15, 2017

Background:

In April 2017 CAP received a charge from the Steering Committee to review existing student complaint policies in order to develop a single revised policy for graduate and undergraduate academic complaints. This policy would articulate the procedure by which students may pursue academic complaints other than grade complaints, complaints of discrimination, and academic integrity appeals. CAP was charged with soliciting testimony after a preliminary recommendation was prepared.

Testimony:

CAP prepared a preliminary recommendation on the Student Complaints Policy. This recommendation was forwarded to Academic Leaders in Fall 2016. In April 2016 an open forum was held to solicit testimony on the recommendation. In addition, testimony was received in the Faculty Senate and Staff Senate meetings on April 19. The preliminary recommendation was emailed to the campus community and student government, and email testimony was received from faculty, staff, and students.

Final Recommendation:

After discussion and revision following testimony received, CAP approves the attached Student Complaints Policy.

Final Recommendation on Student Complaint Policy

I. INTRODUCTION

This document outlines the procedure students should follow for complaints. This procedure should not be used for complaints about areas for which there is a separate complaint policy, such as academic integrity appeals, grade appeals, or complaints involving discrimination or sexual harassment. Students who are uncertain about which complaint procedure to use should ask their department chair.

II. DEFINITIONS

N/A

III. POLICY

(For complaints/appeals not involving academic integrity appeals, grade appeals or discrimination or sexual harassment. Also see [Discrimination Complaints Procedure](#), [Title IX policy](#), and [Grade Appeals](#) policy)

Students having a complaint shall follow the steps below. If either party is not satisfied with the decision at any step, a written appeal may be made at the next step. In the case that the student cannot contact a faculty or staff member, the student should contact the chairperson of the department or director of the relevant office or program.

1. Clarification and potential resolution of the issue: A student should begin by discussing the issue with an appropriate faculty member or College staff person. In many cases, this may be the student's academic advisor. If the student is unsure where to direct the complaint, the student may consult with the chair of the department or assistant dean of the school most closely associated with the issue. If the issue is resolved through discussion, no further action is necessary. Step 1 should happen as soon as possible, but no later than thirty days after the issue occurred.
2. Formal complaint: If the issue is not resolved at Step 1, the student may articulate a

formal complaint in writing via email to the faculty or staff member most closely associated with the issue. Appropriate documentation must be submitted as necessary to support the complaint. The faculty or staff person receiving the complaint will issue a written decision to the student within thirty calendar days. If the student does not receive a written response within thirty calendar days, the student should follow the procedure outlined in Step 3.

3. **Appeal to the Chair or Director:** Upon receipt of the decision in Step 2, the student may appeal the decision to the chairperson of the department or director of the relevant office or program. The appeal must be in written form and include appropriate documentation to support appeal of the previous decision. A student who wishes to file a written appeal must inform the department chair or director within a period of fifteen calendar days after receiving the decision at Step 2. It is the responsibility of the student to submit a written statement outlining the basis and grounds of the complaint, and supporting documentation must be included as necessary to support the appeal. The chair or director may choose to review the appeal, refer it to a designee or committee within the department or, if it is about an issue outside the department, refer it to the appropriate administrator. A review would include contacting appropriate individuals, as necessary. The Chair or Director must respond to the appealing party within thirty calendar days.
4. **Appeal to the Dean's Office:** Upon receipt of the decision in step 3, either party may appeal the decision to the office of the dean of the student's school. The dean or dean's designee will determine whether to consider the appeal or to refer it to another office. It is the responsibility of the appealing party to file a written appeal with appropriate documentation within thirty calendar days after receiving the decision at Step 3. The office reviewing the appeal must respond to the appealing party within thirty calendar days.
5. **Appeal to the Provost:** Either party may appeal the decision at step 4 to the Office of Academic Affairs (the Provost or a provost-level designee). An appeal at this level may only be made 1) on the grounds that the decision did not follow established College policy or 2) if new information is available. Neither party may appeal a decision made at Step 4 simply because of dissatisfaction with the decision. A party who has grounds for an appeal to the Provost must submit this appeal in writing within thirty calendar days after receiving the decision in Step 4 and must specifically outline either how appropriate College policies were not followed or that new information is available. The Office of Academic Affairs has the authority to decide if the appeal has merit, in which case it may choose to review the matter further and then present a final decision regarding the case in question. The decision of the

Office of Academic Affairs is final and not subject to appeal. If the Office of Academic Affairs denies the basis of the appeal, then the decision at Step 4 is final.

Students with complaints should begin the complaint process as soon as possible but no later than thirty days after an issue occurs.

Records of formal complaints from Step 3 or higher will be kept for a period of five years in the department, school, or administrative office where the complaint is resolved.