

## STUDENT GRIEVANCE POLICY AND PROCEDURES

### I. Purpose and Scope

The purpose of this policy is to establish a Governors State University policy and procedures for student grievances in order to ensure due process and respect for individuals' rights. This grievance policy may be invoked in order to bring resolution to disputes. This policy applies to students admitted or enrolled at Governors State University.

### II. Definitions

- A. For the purpose of this policy, working days shall mean Monday through Friday
- B. When classes are in session refers to the officially defined fall and spring semesters and summer term.

### III. Circumstances Surrounding Grievances

University students are members of the academic community at Governors State University. As members of the academic community, students are entitled to all the rights and protections enjoyed by all members of society. Students are also subject to obligations by virtue of membership in the university community. As student members of the university community, students have a right to request an explanation, reconsideration, and review of a faculty member's and/or administrator's professional judgment related to decisions rendered in academic and non-academic grievances.

Accrediting groups for the various academic majors at Governors State University have different standards and requirements regarding grievances which supersede the university's grievance policy and procedures. The student is responsible for contacting the Division/Department Chair or Dean's Office in the college where the issue related to filing the grievance took place.

Section IV of this policy is applicable to student grievances regarding academic issues, such as faculty and/or administrator's professional judgment related to the issuance of final grades, academic advising, and other academic related matters.

Section V of this policy is applicable to student complaints regarding discrimination, harassment, or other unfair treatment related to non-academic issues.

### IV. Academic Grievances

#### A. Informal Resolution

1. Prior to filing a grievance, the student must seek informal resolution of the issue with the faculty member or administrator directly involved in the issue/incident of concern.

2. The student must seek this informal resolution within fifteen working days (when classes are in session) of the occurrence of the issue. If, after reasonable efforts, a satisfactory solution is not reached, the student may file a written grievance with the appropriate division/department chair.

#### B. Filing a Grievance

1. To file an official academic grievance, the student must submit a written statement to the division/department chair of the collegial unit in which the course(s) is offered.
2. The division/department chair must receive the written grievance statement within thirty calendar days of the event which led to the grievance.
3. The written grievance must state the reasons for the grievance and the remedy that is sought.

#### C. Request for Extension of Filing a Grievance

1. The student may request a one-time extension of the thirty day time period in which a grievance must be filed.
2. This request must be in writing to the division/department chairperson prior to the end of the thirty-day period with reasons and requested time for extension.

#### D. Determination of Grievances

1. Determination if the Grievance is an Issue of Substance
  - a. Upon receipt of the grievance, the division/department chair has seven working days (when classes are in session) to determine if the grievance is an issue of substance.
  - b. Within seven working days (when classes are in session) after receiving the grievance and upon determination it represents an issue of substance covered by the context of the procedures, the division/department chair shall refer the grievance to the chair of the College Grievance Committee.
  - c. The grievance chair shall attempt to find a mutually satisfying solution by working with both the student and the faculty/administrator involved within seven working days (when classes are in session) of receiving the grievance.
  - d. If the grievance chair is unable to mediate a satisfactory solution, he/she shall request in writing that the faculty/administrator involved submit a written response to the student's grievance.
  - e. The response is to be received by the grievance chair within seven working days of the request (when classes are in session).
  - f. The grievance chair shall convene the student grievance committee within ten working days (when classes are in session) of receiving a written response from the faculty/ administrator involved.
2. Determination Grievance is Not an Issue of Substance
  - a. If within seven working days (when classes are in session) after receiving the grievance, the division/department chair decides that the grievance does not represent an issue of substance covered by these procedures, he/she shall so inform the student in writing with reasons.
  - b. The student may appeal (except in cases in which the provost or designee has rendered the decision) the division/department chair's decision of no

- substance to the dean/director in writing within ten working days (when classes are in session) of receipt of the division/department chair's decision.
- c. The decision of the dean/director shall be submitted in writing within ten working days (when classes are in session) to the provost (or designee), the chairperson, and the student.
  - d. The student may appeal the dean/director's decision to the provost (or designee) in writing within ten working days (when classes are in session) of receipt of the college dean/director's decision.
  - e. The decision of the provost (or designee) shall be provided in writing within ten working days (when classes are in session) and is final and binding.

#### E. Composition and Election of College Grievance Committee Members

1. Grievance committee faculty members must agree to serve and be elected by the college faculty at the start of the academic year.
2. Grievance committee student members shall be appointed by each college as needed.
3. The College Grievance Committee shall have four tenured faculty members from the two divisions or at least two of the departments, as defined by the college structure, and two students. In the event that there are not four tenured faculty members available to serve from that college, faculty from another college may be elected. There should be four faculty alternates and two student alternates in case a quorum cannot be achieved, or if a member of the committee must be excused. The committee should elect the chair.
4. The term of the members shall be one academic year. Members may be re-elected for subsequent years.

#### F. College Grievance Committee/Grievance Hearing Guidelines

1. Responsibility for establishing the validity of the grievance shall be upon the student.
2. The hearing will be conducted by the chair of the grievance committee.
3. The student or faculty member may have one advisor of his/her choice present during the hearing. However, the advisor shall not participate in the grievance hearing in any way, including, but not limited to asking or responding to questions, making arguments, or presenting witnesses or evidence, and may only advise the grievant or faculty member. If the advisor who will attend the hearing is an attorney, the grievant must notify the chair and dean of that fact a minimum of five calendar days prior to the hearing. The hearing shall be closed, except when both parties agree that it should be open.
4. The grievance chair shall keep a written record of the hearing, which shall include:
  - a. The names of those present;
  - b. A copy of any evidence (records, written testimony, duplicated materials, etc.) that is introduced; and
  - c. A record of the final recommendation of the committee and its rationale.
5. The hearing shall be conducted so that all parties to the dispute have an opportunity to present their views and to rebut those of others.
6. Both grievant and respondent must have the opportunity to address the committee.

#### G. Recommendation(s) of the Grievance Committee

1. The committee shall make no final recommendation and no testimony heard unless a majority of voting members are present.
2. All final recommendations shall require the agreement of a simple majority of voting members present at the hearing.
3. The final recommendation of the collegial Grievance Committee shall include:
  - a. A statement concerning the validity of the alleged grievance;
  - b. A recommendation for resolving the grievance.
4. Recommendations of the collegial Grievance Committee concerning both the finding relevant to the dispute and the suggested remedy shall be submitted to the division/department chair.

#### H. Division/Department Chair's Role Following Committee's Recommendation

1. The division/department chair may affirm, reverse, or ask the committee to reconsider its recommendations.
2. The division/department chair may also request further information from the principals in the dispute in rendering a decision.
3. The division/department chair will render a written decision to the grievant within ten working days (when classes are in session) of receipt of final documentation from the Grievance Committee

#### I. Appeal of the Division/Department Chair's Decision

1. If the decision by the division/department chair is unsatisfactory to the grievant, the grievant may request a review by the dean.
2. The grievant's request must be made in writing within ten working days (when classes are in session) of receipt of the division/department chair's decision.
3. The dean will submit a written decision within ten working days (when classes are in session) of receipt of the request to the grievant and the chairperson. (If the respondent is a division/department chair, the collegial dean will assume the functions of the division/department chair stated above. In this instance, appeals to the decisions of the dean shall be made to the provost or designee.)
4. The student may appeal this decision to the provost in writing no later than ten working days (when classes are in session) of receipt of the college dean's decision.
5. The decision of the provost (or designee) shall be provided in writing within ten working days (when classes are in session) and is final and binding.
6. If the respondent is a dean, the provost or designee will assume the functions of the division/department chair specified in the preceding section H. 1 through 3 above. In this instance, the University Academic Grievance Committee assumes the role of the collegial grievance committee.
7. Recommendations from the University Academic Grievance Committee are submitted directly to the provost/or designee whose decision is final and binding.

### **V. Nonacademic Grievances:**

#### A. Discrimination and Sexual Harassment

1. Discrimination complaints based on race, color, national origin, religion, gender, ancestry, age, sexual orientation, marital status, disability, citizenship, unfavorable discharge from military service, or veteran status, may be filed with the Director of Human Resources.
2. Sexual Harassment in higher education (in accordance with the Illinois Human Rights Act) means any unwelcome sexual advances or requests for sexual favors made by a higher education representative to a student, or any conduct of a sexual nature exhibited by a higher education representative toward a student, when such conduct has the purpose of creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive educational environment. Students may file a complaint in accordance with Policy 52, "Anti-Discrimination and Harassment Policy and Compliance Procedures." A copy of Policy 52 is available on the Provost's website.

#### B. Other Non-academic Issues/Complaints

Regarding other non-academic issues/complaints not covered above, students may file a written complaint with the Dean of Students or his/her designee.

1. Filing a Complaint: To file a complaint the student must submit a written statement to the Dean of Students or his/her designee within thirty calendar days of the date of occurrence. The written complaint must state the reasons for the grievance and the remedy that is sought.
2. Request for Extension of Filing a Grievance: The student may request an extension of the thirty day time period in which a complaint must be filed. This request, with rationale, must be in writing to the division/department chairperson prior to the end of the thirty day period.
3. Determination of Complaints:
  - a. Upon receipt of the complaint, the Dean of Students or his/her designee has seven working days to determine if the grievance has substance.
  - b. Determination that the Complaint has No Substance:
    - i. If within seven working days (when classes are in session) after receiving the grievance, the Dean of Students or his/her designee decides that the complaint does not have substance covered by these procedures, he/she shall so inform the student in writing with reasons.
    - ii. The decision of the Dean of Students or his/her designee shall be submitted in writing to the provost (or designee) and the student by certified mail (return receipt requested).
    - iii. The student may appeal the Dean of Students or his/her designee's decision to the provost (or designee) in writing within ten working days (when classes are in session) of receipt of the dean's decision.
    - iv. The decision of the provost (or designee) shall be provided in writing within ten working days (when classes are in session) and is final and binding.
  - c. Determination that the Complaint has Substance:
    - i. Within seven working days (when classes are in session) after receiving the complaint and upon determining it has substance Dean of Students or his/her designee shall attempt to find a mutually satisfying solution by working with the student within ten working days (when classes are in session) of receiving the grievance.

- ii. If the Dean of Students or his/her designee is unable to mediate a satisfactory solution, he/she shall review the facts and make a decision regarding the student's complaint.
- iii. The decision of the Dean of Students or his/her designee shall be submitted in writing within seven days of the request (when classes are in session) to the provost (or designee) and the student.
- iv. The student may appeal the Dean of Students or his/her designee's decision to the provost (or designee) in writing within ten working days (when classes are in session) of receipt of the dean's decision.
- v. . The decision of the provost (or designee) shall be provided in writing within ten working days (when classes are in session) and is final and binding.

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