



UNIVERSITY OF BRIDGEPORT

POLICY AND PROCEDURE

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| TITLE: | Discrimination, Harassment, and Retaliation Policy |
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POLICY STATEMENT:

The University of Bridgeport (hereinafter, “the University”) is committed to providing an educational and employment environment that is free from discrimination based on protected characteristics, harassment, and retaliation for engaging in protected activity. The University values and upholds the equal dignity of all members of its community and strives to balance the rights of the Parties in the resolution process during what is often a difficult time for all involved.

To ensure compliance with federal, state, and local civil rights laws and regulations, and to affirm its commitment to promoting the goals of fairness and equity in all aspects of the education program or activity, the University has developed policies and procedures that provide for prompt, fair, and impartial resolution of allegations of protected characteristic discrimination, harassment or allegations of retaliation.

This Policy covers nondiscrimination in both employment and access to educational opportunities. Therefore, any member of the University community whose acts deny, deprive, unreasonably interfere with or limit the education or employment, residential and/or social access, benefits, and/or opportunities of any member of the University community, guest, or visitor on the basis of that person’s actual or perceived protected characteristic(s), is in violation of this Policy. The University will promptly and effectively address any such discrimination of which it has Knowledge/Notice using the resolution process in the Discrimination, Harassment, and Retaliation Procedures (Appendix B).

This Policy is only applicable to alleged incidents that occur after August 1, 2024. For alleged incidents occurring prior to August 1, 2024, the policy and procedures in place at the time of the alleged incident apply.

PROCEDURE DETAILS:

The procedures described in Appendix B of this policy govern the implementation of the Discrimination, Harassment, and Retaliation Policy. When a violation of the policy occurs, students, faculty, staff, and visitors must have a clear mechanism for reporting violations. Those making the reports must be aware of how the report will be handled and those potentially in violation of the policy also must be aware of how potential violations will be handled.

This policy is subject to change. Should the Policy change, the University will apply the policy in place at the time of the alleged misconduct.

The Office of Civil Rights Compliance manages the University’s Title IX Team and acts with independence and authority free from bias and conflicts of interest. To raise any concern involving bias or conflict of interest by the Title IX and Equity Coordinator, contact the Director of Title IX and Equity Compliance at aminick@bridgeport.edu. Concerns of bias or potential conflict of interest by any other Title IX Team member should be raised with the Title IX and Equity Coordinator.

Inquiries may be made externally to:

Office for Civil Rights (OCR)
U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Avenue, SW

Washington, D.C. 20202-1100
Customer Service Hotline: 800-421-3481
Facsimile: 202-453-6012
TDD: 877-521-2172
Email: OCR@ed.gov
Web: <http://www.ed.gov/ocr>

The Connecticut Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities (CT CHRO)
450 Columbus Boulevard
Hartford, CT 06103-2835
Phone: 860-541-3400
CT Toll Free: 1-800-477-5737
Fax: 860-241-4869
TDD: 860-541-3400

U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC)
JFK Federal Building
15 New Sudbury Street, Room 475
Boston, MA 02203-0506
Phone: 1-800-669-4000
Fax: 617-565-3196
Web: <https://www.eeoc.gov/>

PUBLISH POLICY STATEMENT (CLICK ON BOX NEXT TO OPTION-SELECT ALL THAT APPLY):

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> UNIVERSITY CATALOG | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> STAFF HANDBOOK |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> FACULTY HANDBOOK | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> STUDENT HANDBOOK |

DEFINITIONS:

- **Advisor.** Any person chosen by a party, or appointed by the institution, who may accompany the party to all meetings related to the Resolution Process and advise the party on that process.
- **Office of Civil Rights Compliance.** The office with primary responsibility for overseeing and enforcing the Policy on Discrimination, Harassment, and Retaliation.
- **Appeal Decision-maker.** The person who accepts or rejects a submitted appeal request, determines whether any of the grounds for appeal are met, and directs responsive action(s), accordingly.
- **Complainant.** A student or employee who is alleged to have been subjected to conduct that could constitute discrimination, harassment, or retaliation under the Policy; or a person other than a student or employee who is alleged to have been subjected to conduct that could constitute discrimination or harassment or under the Policy and who was participating or attempting to participate in the University's education program or activity at the time of the alleged discrimination, harassment or retaliation.
- **Complaint.** An oral or written request to the University that can objectively be understood as a request for the University to investigate and make a determination about the alleged Policy violation(s).
- **Confidential Employee.**

- An employee whose communications are privileged or confidential under federal or state law. The employee’s confidential status, for purposes of this definition, is only with respect to information received while the employee is functioning within the scope of their duties to which privilege or confidentiality applies; or
 - An employee whom the University has designated as confidential under this Policy for the purpose of providing services to persons related to discrimination, harassment, or retaliation. If the employee also has a duty not associated with providing those services, the employee’s confidential status only applies with respect to information received about discrimination, harassment, or retaliation in connection with providing those services; or
 - An employee who is conducting an Institutional Review Board-approved human-subjects research study designed to gather information about discrimination, harassment, or retaliation. The employee’s confidential status only applies with respect to information received while conducting the study.
- **Day.** A business day when the University is in normal operation. All references in the Policy to days refer to business days unless specifically noted as calendar days.
 - **Decision-maker.** The person or panel who hears evidence, determines relevance, and makes the Final Determination of whether the Policy has been violated and/or assigns sanctions.
 - **Education Program or Activity.** Locations, events, or circumstances where the University exercises substantial control over the context in which the discrimination, harassment, and/or retaliation occurs and also includes any building owned or controlled by a student organization that the University officially recognizes.
 - **Employee.** A person employed by Recipient either full- or part-time, including student employees when acting within the scope of their employment.
 - **Final Determination.** A conclusion by the standard of proof that the alleged conduct did or did not violate Policy.
 - **Finding.** A conclusion by the standard of proof that the conduct did or did not occur as alleged (as in a “finding of fact”).
 - **Informal Resolution.** A resolution agreed to by the Parties and approved by the Title IX and Equity Coordinator that occurs prior to a Final Determination in the Resolution Process.
 - **Investigation Report.** The Investigator’s summary of all relevant evidence gathered during the investigation. Variations include the Draft Investigation Report and the Final Investigation Report.
 - **Investigator.** The person(s) authorized by the University to gather facts about an alleged violation of this Policy, assess relevance and credibility, synthesize the evidence, and compile this information into an Investigation Report.
 - **Knowledge.** When the University receives Notice of conduct that reasonably may constitute harassment, discrimination, or retaliation in its Education Program or Activity.
 - **Responsible Employee.** A University employee who is obligated by Policy to share Knowledge, Notice, and/or reports of discrimination, harassment, and/or retaliation with the Office of Civil Rights Compliance.¹
 - **Title IX and Equity Team.** The Director of Title IX and Equity Compliance, Title IX and Equity Coordinator, any deputy coordinators, and any member of the Resolution Process Pool.

¹ Not to be confused with those mandated by state law to report child abuse, elder abuse, and/or abuse of persons with disabilities to appropriate officials, though these responsibilities may overlap with those who have mandated reporting responsibility under this Policy.

- **Notice.** When an employee, student, or third party informs the Office of Civil Rights Compliance of the alleged occurrence of discriminatory, harassing, and/or retaliatory conduct.
- **Parties.** The Complainant(s) and Respondent(s), collectively.
- **Pregnancy or Related Conditions.** Pregnancy, childbirth, termination of pregnancy, or lactation, medical conditions related thereto, or recovery therefrom.
- **Protected Characteristic.** Any characteristic for which a person is afforded protection against discrimination and harassment by law or University Policy.
- **Relevant Evidence.** Evidence that may aid a Decision-maker in determining whether the alleged discrimination, harassment, or retaliation occurred, or in determining the credibility of the Parties or witnesses.
- **Remedies.** Typically, post-resolution actions directed to the Complainant and/or the community as mechanisms to address safety, prevent recurrence, and restore or preserve equal access to the University's Education Program and Activity.
- **Resolution Process.** The investigation and resolution of allegations of prohibited conduct under this Policy, including Informal Resolution, and/or Administrative Resolution.
- **Respondent.** A person who is alleged to have engaged in conduct that could constitute discrimination based on a protected characteristic, harassment, or retaliation for engaging in a protected activity under this Policy.
- **Sanction.** A consequence imposed on a Respondent who is found to have violated this Policy.
- **Sex.** Sex assigned at birth, sex stereotypes, sex characteristics, pregnancy or related conditions, sexual orientation, and gender identity.
- **Student.** Any person who has gained admission.
- **Title IX and Equity Coordinator.** At least one official designated by the University to ensure ultimate oversight of compliance with Title IX and the University's Title IX program. References to the Coordinator throughout the Policy may also encompass a designee of the Coordinator for specific tasks.

EXCLUSIONS:

N/A

OFFICES DIRECTLY AFFECTED BY THE POLICY:

Campus Security, Human Resources, Office of Civil Rights Compliance, Student Affairs

HISTORY: Created and Revised July 2024; Office of Civil Rights Compliance

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|---------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| EFFECTIVE DATE: | August 1, 2024 |
| RESPONSIBLE OFFICE (ONLY ONE): | Office of Civil Rights Compliance |
| REVIEW DATE: | July 2024 |

APPENDIX:

Appendix A—Discrimination, Harassment, and Retaliation Policy

Appendix B—Resolution Process for Alleged Violations of the Discrimination, Harassment, and Retaliation Policy

Appendix A—UNIVERSITY OF BRIDGEPORT DISCRIMINATION, HARASSMENT, AND RETALIATION POLICY

1) Purpose

The University of Bridgeport (hereinafter, “the University”) is committed to providing an educational and employment environment that is free from discrimination based on protected characteristics, harassment, and retaliation for engaging in protected activity.

The University values and upholds the equal dignity of all members of its community and strives to balance the rights of the Parties in the resolution process during what is often a difficult time for all involved.

To ensure compliance with federal, state, and local civil rights laws and regulations, and to affirm its commitment to promoting the goals of fairness and equity in all aspects of the education program or activity, the University has developed policies and procedures that provide for prompt, fair, and impartial resolution of allegations of protected characteristic discrimination, harassment or allegations of retaliation.

2) Notice of Nondiscrimination

The University seeks to comply with all federal, state, and local laws, regulations, and ordinances prohibiting discrimination in private post-secondary education institutions.

The University does not discriminate against any employee, applicant for employment, student, or applicant for admission on the basis of actual or perceived:

- Age (40 years and over in the employment context)
- Citizenship status
- Color
- Disability (physical or mental)
- Ethnicity
- Gender expression or identity
- Pregnancy or related conditions
- Race
- Religion
- Sex
- Sexual orientation
- Veteran or military status
- Victim/survivor of domestic violence status
- or any other protected characteristic under applicable local, state, or federal law, including protections for those opposing discrimination or participating in any grievance process within the institution, with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, and/or other human/civil rights agency.

This Policy covers nondiscrimination in both employment and access to educational opportunities. Therefore, any member of the University community whose acts deny, deprive, unreasonably interfere with or limit the education or employment, residential and/or social access, benefits, and/or opportunities of any member of the University

community, guest, or visitor on the basis of that person's actual or perceived protected characteristic(s), is in violation of this Policy.

The University will promptly and effectively address any such discrimination of which it has Knowledge/Notice using the resolution process in the Discrimination, Harassment, and Retaliation Procedures.

3) Office of Civil Rights Compliance Team Contacts

The University has appointed the Office of Civil Rights Compliance Team, comprised of the following individual(s), to coordinate the University's compliance with federal, state, and local civil rights laws and ordinances:

For discrimination and harassment allegations:

Markus Lake

Title IX and Equity Coordinator

203-576-4534

mlake@bridgeport.edu

For disability-based allegations:

Alden Minick, J.D.

Director of Title IX and Equity Compliance, ADA/504 Coordinator

860-727-6741

aminick@bridgeport.edu

Collectively, these individuals are responsible for providing comprehensive nondiscrimination education and training; coordinating the University's timely, thorough, and fair response, investigation, and resolution of all alleged prohibited conduct under this Policy; and monitoring the effectiveness of this Policy and related procedures to ensure an education and employment environment free from discrimination, harassment, and retaliation.

The University recognizes that allegations under this Policy may include multiple forms of discrimination and harassment as well as violations of other University policies; may involve various combinations of students, employees, and other members of the University community; and may require the simultaneous attention of multiple University departments. Accordingly, all University departments will share information, combine efforts, and otherwise collaborate, to the maximum extent permitted by law and consistent with other applicable University policies, to provide uniform, consistent, efficient, and effective responses to alleged discrimination, harassment, or retaliation.

4) External Contact Information

Concerns about the University's application of this Policy and compliance with certain federal civil rights laws may also be addressed to:

Office for Civil Rights (OCR)

U.S. Department of Education

400 Maryland Avenue, SW

Washington, D.C. 20202-1100

Customer Service Hotline: 800-421-3481

Facsimile: 202-453-6012

TDD: 877-521-2172

Email: OCR@ed.gov

Web: <http://www.ed.gov/ocr>

The Connecticut Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities (CT CHRO)

450 Columbus Boulevard

Hartford, CT 06103-2835

Phone: 860-541-3400

CT Toll Free: 1-800-477-5737

Fax: 860-241-4869

TDD: 860-541-3400

U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC)

JFK Federal Building

15 New Sudbury Street, Room 475

Boston, MA 02203-0506

Phone: 1-800-669-4000

Fax: 617-565-3196

Web: <https://www.eeoc.gov/>

5) Required Reporting and Confidential Employees

All University faculty and employees (including student-employees), other than those deemed Confidential Employees, are Responsible Employees and are expected to promptly report all known details of actual or suspected discrimination, harassment, and/or retaliation to appropriate officials immediately, although there are some limited exceptions. Supportive measures may be offered as the result of such disclosures without formal University action.

Complainants may want to carefully consider whether they share personally identifiable details with Responsible Employees, as those details must be shared with the University's Office of Civil Rights Compliance.

If a Complainant expects formal action in response to their allegations, reporting to any Responsible Employee can connect them with resources to report alleged crimes and/or Policy violations, and these employees will immediately pass Notice to the Office of Civil Rights Compliance (and/or police, if desired by the Complainant or required by law), who will act when an incident is reported to them.

The following sections describe the University's reporting options for a Complainant or third party (including parents/guardians when appropriate):

A. Confidential Employees

To enable Complainants to access support and resources without filing a Complaint, the University has designated specific employees as Confidential Resources. Those designated by the University as Confidential Resources are not required to report actual or suspected discrimination, harassment, or retaliation in a way that identifies the Parties. They will, however, provide the Complainant with the Title IX Coordinator's contact information and offer options and resources without any obligation to inform an outside agency or University official unless a Complainant has requested the information be shared.

There are three categories of Confidential Employees: 1) Those with confidentiality bestowed by law or professional ethics, such as lawyers, medical professionals, clergy, and counselors; 2) Those whom the University has specifically designated as confidential for purposes of providing support and resources to the Complainant; and 3) Those conducting human subjects research as part of a study approved by the University's Institutional Review Board (IRB). For those in category 1), above, to be able to respect confidentiality, they must be in a confidential relationship with the person reporting, such that they are within the scope of their licensure, professional ethics, or confidential role at the time of receiving the Notice. These individuals will maintain confidentiality except in extreme cases of immediacy of threat or danger or abuse of a minor, elder, or individual with a disability, or when required to disclose by law or court order.

If a Complainant would like the details of an incident to be kept confidential, the Complainant may speak with the following Confidential Employees:

Confidential Employees

- On-campus licensed professional counselors
- On-campus health service providers and staff

Designated Confidential Employees

- On-campus Victim Advocates

Employees who have confidentiality as described above, and who receive Notice within the scope of their confidential roles will timely submit anonymous statistical information for Clery Act purposes unless they believe it would be harmful to their client, patient, or parishioner.

Failure of a Responsible Employee, as described above in this section, to report an incident of discrimination, harassment, or retaliation of which they become aware is a violation of University Policy and can be subject to disciplinary action for failure to comply/failure to report. This also includes situations when a harasser is a Responsible Employee. In situations in which an employee becomes aware that their behavior may have had a harassing or discriminatory impact, the alleged employee is obligated to report their own misconduct, and failure to do so is a chargeable offense under this Policy.

A Responsible Employee who is themselves a target of harassment or other misconduct under this Policy is not required to report their own experience, though they are, of course, encouraged to do so.

In addition, Complainants may speak with individuals unaffiliated with the University without concern that the Policy will require them to disclose information to the institution without permission:

- Licensed professional counselors and other medical providers
- Local rape crisis counselors
- Domestic violence resources
- Local or state assistance agencies
- Clergy/Chaplains
- Attorneys

6) Disability-based Grievances and Complaints

Grievances related to disability status and/or provision of accommodations are addressed using the procedures in the Student Accessibility Grievance Policy or Employee Accessibility Grievance Policy. However, allegations of discrimination on the basis of an actual or perceived disability, including instances in which the provision of reasonable accommodations has a discriminatory effect, will be resolved under the procedures within this Policy.

7) **Scope**

This Policy is only applicable to alleged incidents that occur after August 1, 2024. For alleged incidents of sexual harassment occurring prior to August 1, 2024, the policy and procedures in place at the time of the alleged incident apply. Applicable versions of those policies and procedures are available from the Office of Civil Rights Compliance and at this bridgeport.edu/files/docs/policies/dhsmr-policy-2020-regulations.pdf.

This Policy applies to all faculty, employees, students, and other individuals participating in or attempting to participate in the University's program or activities, including education and employment.

This Policy prohibits all forms of discrimination on the basis of the protected characteristic(s) listed in the Notice of Nondiscrimination. The Discrimination, Harassment, and Retaliation Procedures may be applied to incidents, to patterns, and/or to the institutional culture/climate, all of which may be addressed in accordance with this Policy.

8) **Jurisdiction**

This Policy applies to the University's education programs and activities (defined as including locations, events, or circumstances in which the University exercises substantial control over both the Respondent and the context in which the conduct occurred), circumstances where the University has disciplinary authority, and to misconduct occurring within any building owned or controlled by a University-recognized student organization. A Complainant does not have to be a member of the University community to file a Complaint, at the discretion of the Office of Civil Rights Compliance.

This Policy may also apply to the effects of off-campus misconduct that limit or deny a person's access to the University's education program or activities. The University may also extend jurisdiction to off-campus and/or to online conduct when the conduct affects a substantial University interest.

A substantial University interest includes:

- 1) Any action that constitutes a criminal offense as defined by law. This includes, but is not limited to, single or repeat violations of any local, state, or federal law.
- 2) Any situation in which it is determined that the Respondent poses an immediate threat to the physical health or safety of any student, employee, or other individual participating or attempting to participate in University functions.
- 3) Any situation that significantly impinges upon the rights, property, or achievements of others, significantly breaches the peace, and/or causes social disorder.
- 4) Any situation that substantially interferes with the University's educational interests or mission.

For disciplinary action to be issued under this Policy, the Respondent must be a University faculty member, student, or employee at the time of the alleged incident. If the Respondent is unknown or is not a member of the University community, the Office of Civil Rights Compliance will offer to assist the Complainant in identifying appropriate

institutional and local resources and support options, and will implement appropriate supportive measures and/or remedial actions (e.g., trespassing a person from campus). The University can also assist in contacting local law enforcement if the individual would like to file a police report about criminal conduct.

All vendors serving the University through third-party contracts are subject to the policies and procedures of their employers and/or to these Policies and procedures to which their employer has agreed to be bound by their contracts.

When the Respondent is enrolled in or employed by another institution, the Office of Civil Rights Compliance can assist the Complainant in contacting the appropriate individual at that institution, as it may be possible to pursue action under that institution's policies.

Similarly, the Office of Civil Rights Compliance may be able to assist and support a student or employee Complainant who experiences discrimination in an externship, study abroad program, or other environment external to the University where sexual harassment or nondiscrimination policies and procedures of the facilitating or host organization may give the Complainant recourse. If there are effects of that external conduct that impact a student or employee's work or educational environment, those effects can often be addressed remedially by the Office of Civil Rights Compliance if brought to their attention.

9) Supportive Measures

The University will offer and implement appropriate and reasonable supportive measures to the Parties upon Notice of alleged discrimination, harassment, and/or retaliation. Supportive measures are non-disciplinary, non-punitive individualized services offered as appropriate and reasonably available. They are offered, without fee or charge to the Parties, to restore or preserve access to the University's education program or activity, including measures designed to protect the safety of all Parties and/or the University's educational environment and/or to deter discrimination, harassment, and/or retaliation.

The Office of Civil Rights Compliance promptly makes supportive measures available to the Parties upon receiving Notice/Knowledge or a Complaint. At the time that supportive measures are offered, if a Complaint has not been filed, the University will inform the Complainant, in writing, that they may file a Complaint with the University either at that time or in the future. The Office of Civil Rights Compliance will work with a party to ensure that their wishes are considered with respect to any planned and implemented supportive measures.

The University will maintain the confidentiality of the supportive measures, provided that confidentiality does not impair the University's ability to provide those supportive measures. The University will act to ensure as minimal an academic/occupational impact on the Parties as possible. The University will implement measures in a way that does not unreasonably burden any party.

These actions may include, but are not limited to:

- Referral to counseling, medical, and/or other healthcare services
- Referral to the Employee Assistance Program
- Referral to community-based service providers
- Education to the institutional community or community subgroup(s)
- Altering campus housing assignment(s)

- Altering work arrangements for employees or student-employees
- Safety planning
- Providing campus safety escorts
- Implementing contact limitations (no contact orders) between the Parties
- Academic support, extensions of deadlines, or other course/program-related adjustments
- Trespass, Persona Non Grata (PNG), or Be-On-the-Lookout (BOLO) orders
- Timely warnings
- Class schedule modifications, withdrawals, or leaves of absence
- Increased security and monitoring of certain areas of the campus
- Any other actions deemed appropriate by the Title IX and Equity Coordinator

Violations of no contact orders or other restrictions may be referred to appropriate student or employee conduct processes for enforcement or added as collateral misconduct allegations to an ongoing Complaint under this Policy.

The Parties are provided with a timely opportunity to seek modification or reversal of the University's decision to provide, deny, modify, or terminate supportive measures applicable to them. A request to do so should be made in writing to the Title IX and Equity Coordinator. An impartial employee other than the employee who implemented the supportive measures, who has authority to modify or reverse the decision, will determine whether to provide, deny, modify, or terminate the supportive measures if they are inconsistent with the definition of supportive measures in § 106.2 of the federal Title IX Regulations. The University will also provide the Parties with the opportunity to seek additional modification or termination of supportive measures applicable to them if circumstances change materially. The University typically renders decisions on supportive measures within seven (7) business days of receiving a request and provides a written determination to the impacted party(ies) and the Title IX and Equity Coordinator.

10) Online Harassment and Misconduct

University policies are written and interpreted broadly to include online manifestations of any of the behaviors prohibited below, when those behaviors occur in or have an effect on the University's education program and activities, or when they involve the use of University networks, technology, or equipment.

Although the University may not control websites, social media, and other venues through which harassing communications are made, when such communications are reported to the University, it will engage in a variety of means to address and mitigate the effects. These means may include use of the Resolution Process to address off-campus conduct whose effects contribute to limiting or denying a person access to The University's education program or activity.

11) Inclusion Related to Gender Identity/Expression

The University strives to ensure that all individuals are safe, included, and respected in their working and learning environments, regardless of their gender identity or expression, including intersex, nonbinary, transgender, agender, two-spirit, and gender-diverse students and employees.

Discrimination and harassment on the basis of gender identity or expression are not tolerated by the University. If a member of the University community believes they have been subjected to discrimination under this Policy, they should follow the appropriate reporting process described herein.

This Policy should be interpreted consistent with the goals of maximizing the inclusion of intersex, transgender, transitioning, agender, nonbinary, and gender-diverse students and employees, including:

- Maintaining the privacy of all individuals consistent with law
- Ensuring all students have equal access to educational programming, activities, and facilities, including restrooms and locker rooms
- Ensuring all employees have equal access to employment opportunities and work, service, or health-related facilities
- Encouraging all students and employees to respect the pronoun usage and identities of all members of the University community

The University uses a number of interventions to address concerns that are raised related to gender-based harassment or discrimination, including problem-solving, intervention, confrontation, investigation, and Policy enforcement.

12) Prohibited Conduct

Students, staff, administrators, and faculty are entitled to an employment and educational environment that is free of discrimination, harassment, and retaliation. This Policy is not meant to inhibit or prohibit educational content or discussions inside or outside of the classroom that include relevant, but controversial or sensitive subject matters protected by academic freedom.

The sections below describe the specific forms of legally prohibited discrimination, harassment, and retaliation that are also prohibited under University Policy. When speech or conduct is protected by academic freedom, it will not be considered a violation of University Policy, though supportive measures will be offered to those impacted.

All offense definitions below encompass actual and/or attempted offenses.

Any of the following offenses can be charged as or combined as pattern offenses, in which case the Notice of Investigation and Allegation (NOIA) will clearly indicate that both individual incidents and a pattern of conduct are being investigated. A pattern may exist and be charged when there is a potential substantial similarity to incidents where the proof of one could make it more likely that the other(s) occurred, and vice-versa. Patterns may exist based on target selection, similarity of offense, or other factors. Where a pattern is found, it can be the basis to enhance sanctions, accordingly.

Violation of any other University policies may constitute discrimination or harassment when motivated by actual or perceived protected characteristic(s), and the result is a limitation or denial of employment or educational access, benefits, or opportunities.

A. Discrimination

Discrimination is different treatment with respect to an individual's employment or participation in an education program or activity based, in whole or in part, upon the individual's actual or perceived protected characteristic. Discrimination also includes allegations of a failure to provide reasonable accommodations as required by law or policy, such as for disability, religion, or creed.

Discrimination can take two primary forms:

1) Disparate Treatment Discrimination:

- Any intentional differential treatment of a person or persons that is based on an individual's actual or perceived protected characteristic and that:
 - Excludes an individual from participation in;
 - Denies the individual benefits of; or
 - Otherwise adversely affects a term or condition of an individual's participation in a University program or activity.

2) Disparate Impact Discrimination:

- Disparate impact occurs when policies or practices that appear to be neutral unintentionally result in a disproportionate impact on a protected group or person that:
 - Excludes an individual from participation in;
 - Denies the individual benefits of; or
 - Otherwise adversely affects a term or condition of an individual's participation in a University program or activity.

B. Discriminatory Harassment

- unwelcome conduct on the basis of actual or perceived protected characteristic(s), that
- based on the totality of the circumstances,
- is subjectively and objectively offensive, and
- is so severe or pervasive,
- that it limits or denies a person's ability to participate in or benefit from the University's education program or activity

C. Sex-based Harassment (Applicable under Title IX, Title VII, and the Fair Housing Act)

Sex-based Harassment is a form of sex discrimination and means sexual harassment and other harassment on the basis of sex,² including sex stereotypes, sex characteristics, pregnancy or related conditions, sexual orientation, and gender identity; sexual assault, dating violence, domestic violence, and stalking.

1) Quid pro quo:

- an employee agent, or other person authorized by the University,
- to provide an aid, benefit, or service under the University's education program or activity,
- explicitly or impliedly conditioning the provision of such aid, benefit, or service,
- on a person's participation in unwelcome sexual conduct.

2) Hostile Environment Harassment:

- unwelcome sex-based conduct, that
- based on the totality of the circumstances,

² Throughout this Policy, "on the basis of sex" means conduct that is sexual in nature, or that is directed to the Complainant because of their actual or perceived sex or gender identity.

- is subjectively and objectively offensive, and
- is so severe or pervasive,
- that it limits or denies a person's ability to participate in or benefit from the University's education program or activity

The University reserves the right to address offensive conduct and/or harassment that (1) does not rise to the level of creating a hostile environment, or (2) that is of a generic nature and not based on a protected characteristic. Addressing such conduct will not result in the imposition of discipline under University Policy, but may be addressed through respectful conversation, remedial actions, education, and/or other Informal Resolution mechanisms.

3) **Sexual Assault:**³

a. **Rape:**

- Penetration, no matter how slight,
- of the vagina or anus,
- with any body part or object, or
- oral penetration by a sex organ of another person,
- without the consent of the Complainant.

b. **Fondling:**

- The touching of the private body parts of the Complainant (breasts, buttocks, groin),
- for the purpose of sexual gratification,
- without the consent of the Complainant,
- including instances where the Complainant is incapable of giving consent because of their age or because of a temporary or permanent mental incapacity.

c. **Incest:**

- Sexual intercourse,
- between persons who are related to each other,
- within the degrees wherein marriage is prohibited by Connecticut law.

d. **Statutory Rape:**

- Sexual intercourse
- with a person who is under the statutory age of consent of 16.

4) **Dating Violence:**

- Violence,⁴

³ This definition of sexual assault does not constitute a chargeable offense under the Policy. It is a description encompassing the six chargeable offenses listed below it.

⁴ For purposes of this Policy, violence is defined as intentionally or recklessly causing the Complainant physical, emotional, or psychological harm. Legitimate use of violence for self-defense is not chargeable under this Policy because the purpose is safety, not harm. Consensual use of violence, such as in kink relationships, would also not meet this definition, in most circumstances.

- on the basis of sex,
- committed by a person,
- who is in or has been in a social relationship of a romantic or intimate nature with the Complainant.
 - The existence of such a relationship shall be determined based on the Complainant's statement and with consideration of the length of the relationship, the type of relationship, and the frequency of interaction between the persons involved in the relationship. For purposes of this definition—
 - Dating violence includes, but is not limited to, sexual or physical abuse or the threat of such abuse.
 - Dating violence does not include acts covered under the definition of domestic violence.

5) Domestic Violence:

- Violence
- on the basis of sex,
- committed by a current or former spouse or intimate partner of the Complainant,
- by a person with whom the Complainant shares a child in common, or
- by a person who is cohabitating with, or has cohabitated with, the Complainant as a spouse or intimate partner, or
- by a person similarly situated to a spouse of the Complainant under the domestic or family violence laws of Connecticut, or
- by any other person against an adult or youth Complainant who is protected from that person's acts under the domestic or family violence laws of Connecticut.

6) Stalking:

- engaging in a course of conduct⁵
- on the basis of sex,
- directed at the Complainant, that
 - would cause a reasonable person⁶ to fear for the person's safety, or
 - the safety of others; or
 - suffer substantial emotional distress.⁷

D. Sexual Misconduct

⁵ For purposes of this definition, "A 'course of conduct' requires that there be more than one incident and the conduct must be directed at a specific person. Stalking can occur in person or using technology, and the duration, frequency, and intensity of the conduct should be considered. Stalking tactics can include, but are not limited to watching, following, using tracking devices, monitoring online activity, unwanted contact, property invasion or damage, hacking accounts, threats, violence, sabotage, and attacks. (Federal Register, Vol 89, No. 83, 04/29/2024, p. 33523). Merely annoying conduct, even if repeated, is a nuisance, but is not typically chargeable as stalking.

⁶ Reasonable person is an objective standard meaning a person in the Complainant's shoes (having similar characteristics/demographics to the Complainant).

⁷ In the context of stalking, a Complainant is not required to obtain medical or other professional treatment and counseling is not required to show substantial emotional distress.

7) **Sexual Exploitation:**⁸

- an individual taking non-consensual or abusive sexual advantage of another, that does not constitute Sex-based Harassment as defined above.
- for their own benefit or for the benefit of anyone other than the person being exploited.

Examples of Sexual Exploitation include, but are not limited to:

- Sexual voyeurism (such as observing or allowing others to observe a person undressing or using the bathroom or engaging in sexual acts, without the consent of the person being observed)
- Invasion of sexual privacy (e.g., doxxing)
- Knowingly making an unwelcome disclosure of (or threatening to disclose) an individual's sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression
- Taking pictures, video, or audio recording of another in a sexual act, or in any other sexually related activity when there is a reasonable expectation of privacy during the activity, without the consent of all involved in the activity; or exceeding the boundaries of consent (such as allowing another person to hide in a closet and observe sexual activity, or disseminating sexual pictures without the photographed person's consent), including the making or posting of non-consensual pornography
- Prostituting another person
- Engaging in sexual activity with another person while knowingly infected with human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) or a sexually transmitted disease (STD) or infection (STI), without informing the other person of the virus, disease, or infection
- Causing or attempting to cause the incapacitation of another person (through alcohol, drugs, or any other means) for the purpose of compromising that person's ability to give consent to sexual activity, or for the purpose of making that person vulnerable to non-consensual sexual activity
- Misappropriation of another person's identity on apps, websites, or other venues designed for dating or sexual connections (e.g., spoofing)
- Forcing a person to take an action against that person's will by threatening to show, post, or share information, video, audio, or an image that depicts the person's nudity or sexual activity
- Knowingly soliciting a minor for sexual activity
- Engaging in sex trafficking
- Knowingly creating, possessing, or disseminating child sexual abuse images or recordings
- Creating or disseminating synthetic media, including images, videos, or audio representations of individuals doing or saying sexually-related things that never happened, or placing identifiable real people in fictitious pornographic or nude situations without their consent (i.e., Deepfakes)
- Creating or disseminating images or videos of child sexual abuse material

E. **Other Prohibited Conduct**

1) **Bullying:**⁹

- repeated and/or severe aggressive behavior
- that is likely to intimidate or intentionally hurt, control, or physically or mentally diminish the Complainant,

⁸ This offense is not classified under Title IX as "Sex-based harassment," but it is included here in this Policy as a tool to address a wider range of behaviors.

⁹ For Bullying, Hazing, and Endangerment, these offenses can be applied when the conduct is on the basis of protected characteristics, but is not a form of Sex-based Harassment.

- that is not speech or conduct that is otherwise protected by the First Amendment.

2) **Endangerment:**

- threatening or causing physical harm;
- extreme verbal, emotional, or psychological abuse; or
- other conduct which threatens or endangers the health or safety of any person or damages their property.

3) **Hazing:**

- any act or action
- which does or is likely to endanger the mental or physical health or safety of any individual
- as it relates to an individual's initiation, admission into, or affiliation with any University group or organization.

For the purposes of this definition:

- It is not necessary that a person's initiation or continued membership is contingent upon participation in the activity, or that the activity was sanctioned or approved by the Student Group or Student Organization, for an allegation of hazing to be upheld.
- It shall not constitute an excuse or defense to a hazing allegation that the participants took part voluntarily, gave consent to the conduct, voluntarily assumed the risks or hardship of the activity, or that no injury was suffered or sustained.
- The actions of alumni, active, new, and/or prospective members of a Student Group or Student Organization may be considered hazing.
- Hazing is not confined to the Student Group or Student Organization with which the individual subjected to the hazing is associated.

4) **Retaliation:**

- Adverse action, including intimidation, threats, coercion, or discrimination,
- against any person,
- by the University, a student, employee, or a person authorized by the University to provide aid, benefit, or service under the University's education program or activity,
- for the purpose of interfering with any right or privilege secured by law or Policy, or
- because the person has engaged in protected activity, including reporting information, making a Complaint, testifying, assisting, or participating or refusing to participate in any manner in an investigation or Resolution Process under the Discrimination, Harassment, and Retaliation Procedures, including an Informal Resolution process, or in any other appropriate steps taken by the University to promptly and effectively end any discrimination in its education program or activity, prevent its recurrence, and remedy its effects.

The exercise of rights protected under the First Amendment does not constitute retaliation. It is also not retaliation for the University to pursue Policy violations against those who make materially false statements in bad faith in the course of a resolution under the Discrimination, Harassment, and Retaliation Policy. However, the determination of responsibility, by itself, is not sufficient to conclude that any party has made a materially false statement in bad faith.

5) **Unauthorized Disclosure:**¹⁰

- Distributing or otherwise publicizing materials created or produced during an investigation or Resolution Process except as required by law or as expressly permitted by the University; or
- publicly disclosing a party's personally identifiable information without authorization or consent.

6) **Failure to Comply/Process Interference**

- Intentional failure to comply with the reasonable directives of the Office of Civil Rights Compliance employees in the performance of their official duties, including with the terms of a no contact order
- Intentional failure to comply with emergency removal or interim suspension terms
- Intentional failure to comply with sanctions
- Intentional failure to adhere to the terms of an agreement achieved through informal resolution
- Intentional failure to comply with reporting duties as defined in this Policy
- Intentional interference with the Title IX resolution process, including but not limited to:
 - Destruction of or concealing of evidence
 - Actual or attempted solicitation of knowingly false testimony or providing false testimony or evidence
 - Intimidating or bribing a witness or party

F. Consent, Force, and Incapacitation

As used in this Policy, the following definitions and understandings apply:

1) Consent

Consent is defined as:

- knowing, and
- voluntary, and
- clear permission
- by word or action
- to engage in sexual activity.¹¹

It is the responsibility of each party to determine that the other has consented before engaging in the activity. If consent is not clearly provided prior to engaging in the activity, consent may be ratified by word or action at some point during the interaction or thereafter, but clear communication from the outset is strongly encouraged.

For consent to be valid, there must be a clear expression in words or actions that the other individual consented to that specific sexual conduct. Consent is evaluated from the perspective of what a reasonable person would conclude are mutually understandable words or actions. Reasonable reciprocation can establish consent.

¹⁰ Nothing in this section restricts the ability of the Parties to: obtain and present evidence, including by speaking to witnesses (as long as it does not constitute retaliation under this Policy), consult with their family members, confidential resources, or Advisors; or otherwise prepare for or participate in the Resolution Process.

¹¹ The state definition of consent is unambiguous, informed, and voluntary manifestation of agreement freely given without the use of force, fraud or coercion by each person who actively agrees to engage in a sexual act, which is applicable to criminal prosecutions for sex offenses in Connecticut, but may differ from the definition used by the University to address Policy violations.

Consent can also be withdrawn once given, as long as the withdrawal is reasonably and clearly communicated. If consent is withdrawn, sexual activity should cease within a reasonably immediate time.

Silence or the absence of resistance alone should not be interpreted as consent. Consent is not demonstrated by the absence of resistance. While resistance is not required or necessary, it is a clear demonstration of non-consent.

Consent to some sexual contact cannot be assumed to be consent to other sexual activity. A current or previous intimate relationship is not sufficient to constitute consent. If an individual expresses conditions on their willingness to consent (e.g., use of a condom) or limitations on the scope of their consent, those conditions and limitations must be respected. If a sexual partner's limitations are not honored, the acts not consented to can be considered acts of sexual assault.

Proof of consent or non-consent is not a burden placed on either party involved in a Complaint. Instead, the burden remains on the University to determine whether its Policy has been violated. The existence of consent is based on the totality of the circumstances evaluated from the perspective of a reasonable person in the same or similar circumstances, including the context in which the alleged misconduct occurred and any similar and previous patterns that may be evidenced.

Going beyond the boundaries of consent is prohibited. Thus, unless a sexual partner has consented to slapping, hitting, hair pulling, strangulation, or other physical roughness during otherwise consensual sex, those acts may constitute dating violence or sexual assault.¹²

2) Force

Force is the use of physical violence and/or physical imposition to gain sexual access. Sexual activity that is forced is, by definition, non-consensual, but non-consensual sexual activity is not necessarily forced. Force is conduct that, if sufficiently severe, can negate consent.

Force also includes threats, intimidation (implied threats), and coercion that is intended to overcome resistance or produce consent.

Coercion is unreasonable pressure for sexual activity. Coercive conduct, if sufficiently severe, can render a person's consent ineffective, because it is not voluntary. Coercion is evaluated based on the frequency, intensity, isolation, and duration of the pressure involved.

3) Incapacitation

Incapacitation is a state where a person is incapable of giving consent. An incapacitated person cannot make rational, reasonable decisions because they lack the capacity to give knowing/informed consent. A person cannot consent if they are unable to understand what is happening or are disoriented, helpless, asleep, or unconscious for any reason, including because of alcohol or other drug consumption.

This Policy also covers a person whose incapacity results from a temporary or permanent physical or mental health condition, involuntary physical restraint, and/or the consumption of incapacitating substances.

¹² Consent in relationships must also be considered in context. When Parties consent to BDSM (bondage, discipline, sadism, masochism) or other forms of kink, non-consent may be shown by the use of a safe word. Resistance, force, violence, or even saying "no" may be part of the kink and thus consensual.

Incapacitation is determined through consideration of all relevant indicators of a person's state and is not synonymous with intoxication, impairment, blackout, and/or being drunk.

If the Respondent neither knew nor should have known the Complainant to be physically or mentally incapacitated, the Respondent is not in violation of this Policy. "Should have known" is an objective, reasonable person standard that assumes that a reasonable person is both sober and exercising sound judgment.

13) Standard of Proof

The University uses the preponderance of the evidence standard of proof when determining whether a Policy violation occurred. This means that the University will decide whether it is more likely than not, based upon the available information at the time of the decision, that the Respondent is in violation of the alleged Policy violation(s).

14) Reports/Complaints of Discrimination, Harassment, and/or Retaliation

A Report provides notice to the University of an allegation or concern about discrimination, harassment, or retaliation and provides an opportunity for the Office of Civil Rights Compliance to provide information, resources, and supportive measures. A Complaint provides notice to the University that the Complainant would like to initiate an investigation or other appropriate resolution procedures. A Complainant or individual may initially make a report and may decide at a later time to make a Complaint. Reports or Complaints of discrimination, harassment, and/or retaliation may be made using any of the following options:

- 1) File a Complaint with, or give verbal Notice directly to, the Title IX and Equity Coordinator or to any member of the Office of Civil Rights Compliance Team. Such a Complaint may be made at any time (including during non-business hours) by using the telephone number, email address, or by mail to the office of the Title IX and Equity Coordinator or any other Office of Civil Rights Compliance Team member listed in this Policy.
- 2) Submit online Notice at https://cm.maxient.com/reportingform.php?UnivofBridgeport&layout_id=5. Anonymous Notice is accepted, but the Notice may give rise to a need to try to determine the Parties' identities. Anonymous Notice typically limits the University's ability to investigate, respond, and provide remedies, depending on what information is shared. Measures intended to protect the community or redress or mitigate harm may be enacted. It also may not be possible to provide supportive measures to Complainants who are the subject of anonymous Notice.

Reporting carries no obligation to initiate a Complaint, and in most situations, the University is able to respect a Complainant's request to not initiate a resolution process. However, there may be circumstances, such as pattern behavior, allegations of severe misconduct, or a compelling threat to health and/or safety, where the University may need to initiate a resolution process. If a Complainant does not wish to file a Complaint, the University will maintain the privacy of information to the extent possible. The Complainant should not fear a loss of confidentiality by giving Notice that allows the University to discuss and/or provide supportive measures, in most circumstances.

15) Time Limits on Reporting

There is no time limitation on providing Notice/Complaints to the Office of Civil Rights Compliance. However, if the Respondent is no longer subject to the University's jurisdiction and/or significant time has passed, the ability to investigate, respond, and/or provide remedies may be more limited or impossible.

Acting on Notice/Complaints significantly impacted by the passage of time (including, but not limited to, the rescission or revision of Policy) is at the Title IX and Equity Coordinator's discretion; they may document allegations for future reference, offer supportive measures and/or remedies, and/or engage in informal or formal action, as appropriate.

16) False Allegations and Evidence

Deliberately false and/or malicious accusations under this Policy are a serious offense and will be subject to appropriate disciplinary action. This does not include allegations that are made in good faith but are ultimately shown to be erroneous or do not result in a determination of a Policy violation.

Additionally, witnesses and Parties who knowingly provide false evidence, tamper with or destroy evidence, or deliberately mislead an official conducting an investigation or resolution process can be subject to discipline under appropriate University policies.

17) Confidentiality/Privacy

The University makes every effort to preserve the Parties' privacy. The University will not share the identity of any individual who has made a Complaint of harassment, discrimination, or retaliation; any Complainant; any individual who has been reported to be the perpetrator of discrimination, harassment, or retaliation; any Respondent; or any witness, except as permitted by, or to fulfill the purposes, of applicable laws and regulations (e.g., Title IX), Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and its implementing regulations, or as required by law; including any investigation, or resolution proceeding arising under these policies and procedures.^{13,14}

Unauthorized Disclosure of Information

Parties and Advisors are prohibited from unauthorized disclosure of information obtained by the University through the Resolution Process, to the extent that information is the work product of the University (meaning it has been produced, compiled, or written by the University for purposes of its investigation and resolution of a Complaint). It is also a violation of University Policy to publicly disclose work product or a party's personally identifiable information without authorization or consent. Violation of this Policy is subject to significant sanctions.

18) Emergency Removal/Interim Actions/Leaves

The University can act to remove a student Respondent accused under this Policy from its education program or activities, partially or entirely, on an emergency basis when an individualized safety and risk analysis has determined that an imminent and serious threat to the health or safety of any student or other individual justifies removal. This risk analysis is performed by the Title IX and Equity Coordinator and may be done in conjunction with the CARE Team using its standard objective violence risk assessment procedures. Employees are subject to existing procedures for interim actions and leaves.

19) Federal Timely Warning Obligations

The University must issue timely warnings for reported incidents that pose a serious or continuing threat of bodily harm or danger to members of the University community.

¹³ 20 U.S.C. 1232g

¹⁴ 34 C.F.R. § 99

The University will ensure that a Complainant's name and other identifying information is not disclosed, while still providing enough information for community members to make safety decisions in light of the potential danger.

20) Amnesty

The University community encourages the reporting of misconduct and crimes by Complainants and witnesses. Sometimes, Complainants or witnesses are hesitant to give Notice to University officials or participate in resolution processes because they fear that they themselves may be in violation of certain policies, such as underage drinking or use of illicit drugs at the time of the incident. Respondents may hesitate to be forthcoming during the process for the same reasons.

It is in the best interests of the University community that Complainants choose to give Notice of misconduct to University officials, that witnesses come forward to share what they know, and that all Parties be forthcoming during the process.

To encourage reporting and participation in the process, the University maintains a Policy of offering Parties and witnesses amnesty from minor policy violations, such as underage alcohol consumption or the use of illicit drugs, related to the incident. Granting amnesty is a discretionary decision made by the University, and amnesty does not apply to more serious allegations, such as physical abuse of another or illicit drug distribution.

21) Preservation of Evidence

The preservation of evidence is critical to potential criminal prosecution and to obtaining restraining/protective orders, and it is particularly time sensitive. The University will inform the Complainant of the importance of preserving evidence by taking actions such as the following:

Sexual Assault

- Seek forensic medical assistance at the nearest hospital, ideally within 120 hours of the incident (sooner is better).
- Avoid urinating, showering, bathing, washing hands or face, or douching, if possible, but evidence may still be collected even if you do.
- If oral sexual contact took place, refrain from smoking, eating, drinking, or brushing teeth.
- If clothes are changed, place soiled clothes in a paper bag (plastic destroys evidence) or a secure evidence container (if provided one by law enforcement)
- Seeking medical treatment can be essential, even if it is not for the purposes of collecting forensic evidence.

Stalking/Dating Violence/Domestic Violence/Sex-Based Harassment

- Evidence in the form of text and voice messages will be lost in most cases if the Complainant changes their phone number.
 - Make a secondary recording of any voice messages and/or save the audio files to a cloud server.
 - Take screenshots and/or a video recording of any text messages or other electronic messages (e.g., Instagram, Snapchat, Facebook).
- Save copies of email and social media correspondence, including notifications related to account access alerts.

- Take timestamped photographs of any physical evidence, including notes, gifts, etc., in place when possible.
- Save copies of any messages, including those showing any request for no further contact.
- Obtain copies of call logs showing the specific phone number being used rather than a saved contact name if possible.

During the initial meeting between the Complainant and the Title IX and Equity Coordinator, the importance of taking these actions will be discussed, if timely.

22) Federal Statistical Reporting Obligations

Certain institutional officials (those deemed Campus Security Authorities) have a duty to report the following for federal statistical reporting purposes (Clery Act):

- 1) All “primary crimes,” which include criminal homicide, sexual assault, robbery, aggravated assault, burglary, motor vehicle theft, and arson
- 2) Hate crimes, which include any bias-motivated primary crime as well as any bias-motivated larceny or theft, simple assault, intimidation, or destruction/damage/vandalism of property
- 3) Violence Against Women Act (VAWA-based crimes), which include sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence, and stalking¹⁵
- 4) Arrests and referrals for disciplinary action for weapons law violations, liquor law violations, and drug law violations

All personally identifiable information is kept private, but statistical information regarding the type of incident and its general location (on- or off-campus or in the surrounding area, but no addresses are given) must be shared with the Clery Coordinator for publication in the Annual Security Report and daily campus crime log.

23) Independence and Conflicts of Interest

The Director of Title IX and Equity Compliance manages the Office of Civil Rights Compliance Team and acts with independence and authority, free from bias and conflicts of interest. The Office of Civil Rights Compliance oversees all resolutions under this Policy and these procedures. The members of the Resolution Process are vetted and trained to ensure they are not biased for or against any party in a specific Complaint, or for or against Complainants and/or Respondents, generally.

To raise any concern involving bias, conflict of interest, misconduct, or discrimination by the Title IX and Equity Coordinator or Director of Title IX and Equity Compliance, contact the Senior Director of Human Resources and Community Culture at jeawhite@bridgeport.edu. Concerns of bias, misconduct, discrimination, or a potential conflict of interest by any other Resolution Pool member should be raised with the Title IX and Equity Coordinator.

24) Revision of this Policy

This Policy succeeds previous policies addressing discrimination, harassment, sexual misconduct, and/or retaliation, though previous policies and procedures remain in force for incidents occurring before August 1, 2024. The Director of Title IX and Equity Compliance reviews and updates these policies and procedures regularly. The University

¹⁵ VAWA is the Violence Against Women Act, enacted in 1994 and codified in part at 42 U.S.C. sections 13701 through 14040.

reserves the right to make changes to this document as necessary, and once those changes are posted online, they are in effect.

If government laws or regulations change or court decisions alter the requirements in a way that impacts this document, this document will be construed to comply with the most recent government laws, regulations, or court holdings.

This document does not create legally enforceable protections beyond the protections of the background state and federal laws that frame such policies and codes, generally.

Appendix B—RESOLUTION PROCESS FOR ALLEGED VIOLATIONS THE DISCRIMINATION, HARASSMENT, AND RETALIATION POLICY (Hereinafter the “Resolution Process”)

1) Overview

The University will act on any Notice, Complaint, or Knowledge of a potential violation of the Discrimination, Harassment, and Retaliation Policy (“the Policy”) that is received by the Office of Civil Rights Compliance or any other Responsible Employee by applying the Resolution Process below.

The procedures below apply to all allegations of discrimination on the basis of an actual or perceived protected characteristic, harassment, retaliation, or Other Prohibited Conduct as involving students, staff, administrators, faculty members, or third parties.

2) Notice/Complaint

Upon receipt of Notice, a Complaint, or Knowledge of an alleged Policy violation, the Title IX and Equity Coordinator will initiate a prompt initial evaluation to determine the University’s next steps. The Title IX and Equity Coordinator will contact the Complainant/source of the Notice to offer supportive measures, provide information regarding resolution options, and determine how they wish to proceed.

3) Collateral Misconduct

Collateral misconduct is defined to include potential violations of other University policies not incorporated into the Policy on Discrimination, Harassment, and Retaliation that occur in conjunction with alleged violations of the Policy, or that arise through the course of the investigation, for which it makes sense to provide one resolution for all charges. Thus, the collateral allegations may be charged along with potential violations of the Policy, to be resolved jointly under these Procedures. In such circumstances, the Title IX and Equity Coordinator may consult with University officials who typically oversee such conduct (e.g., human resources, student conduct, academic affairs) to solicit their input as needed on what charges should be filed, but the exercise of collateral charges under these procedures is within the discretion of the Title IX and Equity Coordinator. All other allegations of misconduct unrelated to incidents covered by the Policy will typically be addressed separately through procedures described in the student, faculty, and staff handbooks.

4) Initial Evaluation

The Title IX and Equity Coordinator conducts an initial evaluation typically within seven (7) business days of receiving Notice/Complaint/Knowledge of alleged misconduct.¹⁶ The initial evaluation typically includes:

- Assessing whether the reported conduct may reasonably constitute a violation of the Policy.
 - If the conduct may not reasonably constitute a violation of the Policy, the matter is typically dismissed from this process, consistent with the dismissal provision in these procedures. It may then be referred to another process, if applicable.
- Determining whether University has jurisdiction over the reported conduct, as defined in the Policy.

¹⁶ If circumstances require, the Senior Vice President of Human Resource and Community Culture or director of Title IX and Equity Compliance will designate another person to oversee the Resolution Process should an allegation be made about the Title IX and Equity Coordinator or the Title IX and Equity Coordinator be otherwise unavailable, unable to fulfill their duties, or have a conflict of interest.

- If the conduct is not within University jurisdiction, the matter is typically dismissed from this process, consistent with the dismissal provision in these procedures. If applicable, the conduct will be referred to the appropriate University office for resolution.
- Offering and coordinating supportive measures for the Complainant.
- Offering and coordinating supportive measures for the Respondent, as applicable.
- Notifying the Complainant, or the person who reported the allegation(s), of the resolution processes, including a supportive and remedial response, an Informal Resolution option, or the Resolution Process described below.
- Determining whether the Complainant wishes to make a Complaint.
- Notifying the Respondent of the resolution processes, including a supportive and remedial response, an Informal Resolution option, or the Resolution Process described below, if a Complaint is made.

Helping a Complainant to Understand Options

If the Complainant indicates they wish to initiate a Complaint (in a manner that can reasonably be construed as reflecting intent to make a Complaint), the Title IX and Equity Coordinator will help to facilitate the Complaint, which will include:

- Working with the Complainant to determine whether the Complainant wishes to pursue one of three resolution options:
 - a supportive and remedial response, and/or
 - Informal Resolution, or
 - the Resolution Process described below.

The Title IX and Equity Coordinator will seek to abide by the wishes of the Complainant but may have to take an alternative approach depending on their analysis of the situation.

If the Complainant elects for the Resolution Process below, and the Title IX and Equity Coordinator has determined the Policy applies and that the University has jurisdiction, they will route the matter to the appropriate Resolution Process, will provide the Parties with a Notice of Investigation and Allegation(s), and will initiate an investigation consistent with these Procedures.

If any Party indicates (either verbally or in writing) that they want to pursue an Informal Resolution option, the Title IX and Equity Coordinator will assess whether the matter is suitable for Informal Resolution and refer the matter, accordingly.

If the Complainant indicates (either verbally or in writing) that they do not want any action taken, no Resolution Process will be initiated (unless deemed necessary by the Title IX and Equity Coordinator), though the Complainant can elect to initiate one later, if desired.

Title IX and Equity Coordinator Authority to Initiate a Complaint

If the Complainant does not wish to file a Complaint, the Title IX and Equity Coordinator, who has ultimate discretion as to whether a Complaint is initiated, will offer supportive measures and determine whether to initiate a Complaint themselves. To make this determination, the Title IX and Equity Coordinator will evaluate that request to determine if there is a serious and imminent threat to someone's safety or if the University cannot ensure equal access without

initiating a Complaint. The Title IX and Equity Coordinator will consider the following non-exhaustive factors to determine whether to file a Complaint:

- The Complainant's request not to proceed with initiation of a Complaint;
- The Complainant's reasonable safety concerns regarding initiation of a Complaint;
- The risk that additional acts of discrimination would occur if a Complaint is not initiated;
- The severity of the alleged discrimination, including whether the discrimination, if established, would require the removal of a Respondent from campus or imposition of another disciplinary sanction to end the discrimination and prevent its recurrence;
- The age and relationship of the Parties, including whether the Respondent is a University employee;
- The scope of the alleged discrimination, including information suggesting a pattern, ongoing discrimination, or discrimination alleged to have impacted multiple individuals;
- The availability of evidence to assist a Decision-maker in determining whether discrimination occurred;
- Whether the University could end the alleged discrimination and prevent its recurrence without initiating its resolution process.

If deemed necessary, the Title IX and Equity Coordinator may consult with appropriate University employees, and/or conduct a violence risk assessment to aid their determination whether to initiate a Complaint.

When the Title IX and Equity Coordinator initiates a Complaint, they do not become the Complainant. The Complainant is the person who experienced the alleged conduct that could constitute a violation of this Policy.

5) Dismissal

The University **may** dismiss a Complaint if, at any time during the investigation or Resolution Process, one or more of the following grounds are met:

- 1) The University is unable to identify the Respondent after taking reasonable steps to do so
- 2) The University no longer enrolls or employs the Respondent
- 3) A Complainant voluntarily withdraws any or all of the allegations in the Complaint, and the Title IX and Equity Coordinator declines to initiate a Complaint
- 4) The University determines the conduct alleged in the Complaint would not constitute a Policy violation, if proven

A Decision-maker can recommend dismissal to the Title IX and Equity Coordinator, if they believe the grounds are met. A Complainant who decides to withdraw a Complaint may later request to reinstate or refile it.

Upon any dismissal, the University will promptly send the Complainant written notification of the dismissal and the rationale for doing so. If the dismissal occurs after the Respondent has been made aware of the allegations, the University will also notify the Respondent of the dismissal.

This dismissal decision is appealable by any party.

6) Appeal of Dismissal

The Complainant may appeal a dismissal of their Complaint. The Respondent may also appeal the dismissal of the Complaint if dismissal occurs after the Respondent has been made aware of the allegations. All dismissal appeal requests must be filed within three (3) business days of the notification of the dismissal.

The Title IX and Equity Coordinator will notify the Parties of any appeal of the dismissal. If, however, the Complainant appeals, but the Respondent was not notified of the Complaint, the Title IX and Equity Coordinator must then provide the Respondent with a NOIA and will notify the Respondent of the Complainant's appeal with an opportunity to respond.

Throughout the dismissal appeal process, the University will:

- Implement dismissal appeal procedures equally for the Parties;
- Assign a trained Dismissal Appeal Officer who did not take part in an investigation of the allegations or dismissal of the Complaint;
- Provide the Parties a reasonable and equal opportunity to make a statement in support of, or challenging, the dismissal; and
- Notify the Parties of the result of the appeal and the rationale for the result.

The grounds for dismissal appeals are limited to:

- 1) Procedural irregularity that would change the outcome;
- 2) New evidence that would change the outcome and that was not reasonably available when the dismissal was decided;
- 3) The Title IX and Equity Coordinator, Investigator, or Decision-maker had a conflict of interest or bias for or against complainants or respondents generally or the individual Complainant or Respondent that would change the outcome.

Upon receipt of a dismissal appeal in writing from one or more Parties, the Title IX and Equity Coordinator will share the petition with the other party and provide three (3) business days for other Parties to respond to the request. The appeal should specify at least one of the grounds above and provide any reasons or supporting evidence for why the ground is met. This appeal will be provided in writing to the other Parties, and the Title IX and Equity Coordinator, who will be invited to respond in writing. At the conclusion of the response period, the Title IX and Equity Coordinator will forward the appeal, as well as any response provided by the other Parties to the Dismissal Appeal Officer for consideration.

If the Request for Appeal does not provide information that meets the grounds in this Policy, the request will be denied by the Dismissal Appeal Officer, and the Parties, their Advisors, and the Title IX and Equity Coordinator will be notified in writing of the denial and the rationale.

If any of the asserted grounds in the appeal satisfy the grounds described in this Policy, then the Dismissal Appeal Officer will notify all Parties and their Advisors, and the Title IX and Equity Coordinator, of their decision and rationale in writing. The effect will be to reinstate the Complaint.

In most cases, appeals are confined to a review of the written documentation or record of the original determination and pertinent documentation regarding the specific appeal grounds. The Dismissal Appeal Officer has seven (7) business days to review and decide on the appeal, though extensions can be granted at the discretion of the Title IX and Equity Coordinator, and the Parties will be notified of any extension.

Appeal decisions are deferential to the original determination, making changes only if there is a compelling justification to do so.

The Dismissal Appeal Officer may consult with the Title IX and Equity Coordinator, Director of Title IX and Equity Compliance, and/or legal counsel on questions of procedure or rationale for clarification, if needed. The Title IX and Equity Coordinator will maintain documentation of all such consultation.

7) Emergency Removal/Interim Suspension of a Student

The University may emergency remove a student accused of Sex Discrimination or Sex-based Harassment upon receipt of Notice/Knowledge, a Complaint, or at any time during the resolution process. Prior to an emergency removal, University will conduct an individualized risk assessment and may remove the student if that assessment determines that an imminent and serious threat to the health or safety of a Complainant or any students, employees, or other persons arising from the allegations of sex discrimination justifies such action. Students accused of other forms of discrimination (not sex) are subject to interim suspension, which can be imposed for safety reasons.

When an emergency removal or interim suspension is imposed, wholly or partially, the affected student will be notified of the action, which will include a written rationale, and the option to challenge the emergency removal or interim suspension within two (2) business days of the notification. Upon receipt of a challenge, the Title IX and Equity Coordinator will meet with the student (and their Advisor, if desired) as soon as reasonably possible thereafter to allow them to show cause why the removal/action should not be implemented or should be modified.

This meeting is not a hearing on the merits of the allegation(s), but rather is an administrative process intended to determine solely whether the emergency removal or interim suspension is appropriate, should be modified, or lifted. When this meeting is not requested within two (2) business days, objections to the emergency removal or interim suspension will be deemed waived. A student can later request a meeting to show why they are no longer an imminent and serious threat because conditions related to imminence or seriousness have changed. A Complainant and their Advisor may be permitted to participate in this meeting if the Title IX and Equity Coordinator determines it is equitable to do so.

The Respondent may provide information, including expert reports, witness statements, communications, or other documentation for consideration prior to or during the meeting. When applicable, a Complainant may provide information to the Title IX and Equity Coordinator for review.

An emergency removal or interim suspension may be affirmed, modified, or lifted as a result of a requested review or as new information becomes available. The Title IX and Equity Coordinator will communicate the final decision in writing, typically within three (3) business days of the review meeting.

8) Counter-Complaints

The University is obligated to ensure that the resolution process is not abused for retaliatory purposes. Although the University permits the filing of Counter-Complaints, the Title IX and Equity Coordinator will use an initial evaluation, described above, to assess whether the allegations in the Counter-Complaint are made in good faith. When Counter-Complaints are not made in good faith, they will not be permitted. They will be considered potentially retaliatory and may constitute a violation of the Policy.

Counter-Complaints determined to have been reported in good faith will be processed using the Resolution Process below. At the Title IX and Equity Coordinator's discretion, investigation of such claims may take place concurrently or after resolution of the underlying initial Complaint.

9) Advisors in the Resolution Process

A. Who Can Serve as an Advisor?

The Parties may each have an Advisor (friend, mentor, family member, attorney, or any other individual a party chooses) present with them for all meetings and interviews within the Resolution Process, including intake. The Parties may select whomever they wish to serve as their Advisor as long as the Advisor is eligible and available.¹⁷

The Title IX and Equity Coordinator will offer to assign a trained Advisor to any party if the party chooses. If the Parties choose an Advisor from the pool available from the University, the University will have trained the Advisor and familiarized them with the University's Resolution Process.

The university cannot guarantee equal Advisory rights, meaning that if one party selects an Advisor who is an attorney, but the other party does not, or cannot afford an attorney, the University is not obligated to provide an attorney to advise that party.

A party may elect to change Advisors during the process and is not obligated to use the same Advisor throughout. Parties are expected to provide the Title IX and Equity Coordinator with timely notification if they change Advisors. If a party changes Advisors, consent to share information with the previous Advisor is assumed to be terminated, and a release for the new Advisor must be submitted.

The University may permit Parties to have more than one Advisor, or an Advisor and a support person, upon special request to the Title IX and Equity Coordinator. The decision to grant this request is at the Title IX and Equity Coordinator's sole discretion and will be granted equitably to all Parties.

Advisors appointed by the institution cannot be confidential employees, and although they will not be asked to disclose details of their interactions with their advisees to institutional officials or Decision-makers absent an emergency, they are still reminded of their Responsible Employee responsibilities.

B. Advisor's Role in the Resolution Process

Advisors should help the Parties to prepare for each meeting and are expected to advise ethically, with integrity, and in good faith. Advisors may not provide testimony or speak on behalf of their advisee unless given specific permission to do so.

The Parties are expected to ask and respond to questions on their own behalf throughout the Resolution Process. Although the Advisor generally may not speak on behalf of their advisee, the Advisor may consult with their advisee,

¹⁷ "Available" means the party cannot insist on an Advisor who simply doesn't have inclination, time, or availability. Also, the Advisor cannot have institutionally conflicting roles, such as being an administrator who has an active role in the matter, or a supervisor who must monitor and implement sanctions. Additionally, choosing an Advisor who is also a witness in the process creates potential for bias and conflicts of interest. A party who chooses an Advisor who is also a witness can anticipate that issues of potential bias will be explored by the Decision-maker(s).

either privately as needed, or by conferring or passing notes during any Resolution Process meeting or interview. For longer or more involved discussions, the Parties and their Advisors should ask for breaks to allow for private consultation.

C. Records Shared with Advisors

Advisors are entitled to the same opportunity as their advisee to access relevant evidence, and/or the same written investigation report that accurately summarizes this evidence.

Advisors are expected to maintain the confidentiality of the records the University shares with them. Advisors may not disclose any University work product or evidence the University obtained solely through the Resolution Process for any purpose not explicitly authorized by University.

Accordingly, Advisors will be asked to sign a document depicting rules for the investigation and resolution procedures. The University may decline to share materials with any Advisor who has not executed the document. The University may restrict the role of any Advisor who does not respect the sensitive nature of the process or who fails to abide by the University's confidentiality expectations.

D. Advisor Expectations

The University generally expects an Advisor to adjust their schedule to allow them to attend University meetings/interviews when planned, but the University may change scheduled meetings/interviews to accommodate an Advisor's inability to attend, if doing so does not cause an unreasonable delay.

The University may also make reasonable provisions to allow an Advisor who cannot be present in person to attend a meeting/interview by telephone, video conferencing, or other similar technologies.

All Advisors are subject to the same University policies and procedures, whether they are attorneys or not, and whether they are selected by a party or appointed by the University. Advisors are expected to advise their advisees without disrupting proceedings.

E. Advisor Policy Violations

Any Advisor who oversteps their role as defined by the Policy, who shares information or evidence in a manner inconsistent with the Policy, or who refuses to comply with the University's established rules of decorum, will be warned. If the Advisor continues to disrupt or otherwise fails to respect the limits of the Advisor role, the meeting/interview may be ended, or other appropriate measures implemented, including the University requiring the party to use a different Advisor or providing a different University-appointed Advisor. Subsequently, the Title IX and Equity Coordinator will determine how to address the Advisor's non-compliance and future role.

10) Resolution Option Overview

This Resolution Process, consisting of Informal Resolution ,or Administrative Resolution, is the University's chosen approach to addressing all forms of discrimination on the basis of protected characteristics, harassment, and retaliation. The process considers the Parties' preferences but is ultimately determined at the Title IX and Equity Coordinator's discretion.

Resolution proceedings are confidential. All individuals present at any time during the Resolution Process are expected to maintain the confidentiality of the proceedings in accordance with University Policy.

A. Informal Resolution

To initiate Informal Resolution, a Complainant or Respondent may make such a request to the Title IX and Equity Coordinator at any time prior to a final determination, or the Title IX and Equity Coordinator may offer the option to the Parties, in writing. The University will obtain voluntary, written confirmation that all Parties wish to resolve the matter through Informal Resolution before proceeding and will not pressure the Parties to participate in Informal Resolution.

Before initiation of an Informal Resolution process, University will provide the Parties with a NOIA that explains:

- The allegations;
- The requirements of the Informal Resolution process;
- That, prior to agreeing to a resolution, any party has the right to withdraw from the Informal Resolution process and to initiate or resume the University's Resolution Process;
- That the Parties' agreement to a resolution at the conclusion of the Informal Resolution process will preclude the Parties from initiating or resuming the resolution process arising from the same allegations;
- The potential terms that may be requested or offered in an Informal Resolution agreement, including notification that an Informal Resolution agreement is binding only on the Parties; and
- What information the University will maintain, and whether and how it could disclose such information for use in its Resolution Process.

University offers four categories of Informal Resolution:

- 1) **Supportive Resolution.** When the Title IX and Equity Coordinator can resolve the matter informally by providing supportive measures (only) designed to remedy the situation.
- 2) **Educational Conversation.** When the Title IX and Equity Coordinator can resolve the matter informally by having a conversation with the Respondent to discuss the Complainant's concerns and institutional expectations or can accompany the Complainant in their desire to confront the conduct.
- 3) **Accepted Responsibility.** When the Respondent is willing to accept responsibility for violating Policy and is willing to agree to actions that will be enforced similarly to sanctions, and the Complainant(s) and University are agreeable to the resolution terms.
- 4) **Alternative Resolution.** When the Parties agree to resolve the matter through an alternative resolution mechanism (which could include, but is not limited to, mediation, shuttle negotiation, restorative practices, etc.), as described below.

The individual facilitating an Informal Resolution must be trained and cannot be the Investigator, Decision-maker, or Appeal Decision-maker.

It is not necessary to pursue Informal Resolution first in order to pursue an Administrative Resolution Process. Any party participating in Informal Resolution can withdraw from the Informal Resolution Process at any time and initiate or resume the Administrative Resolution Process.

The Parties may agree, as a condition of engaging in Informal Resolution, on what statements made or evidence shared during the Informal Resolution process will not be considered in the Administrative Resolution Process, should Informal Resolution not be successful, unless agreed to by all Parties.

If an investigation is already underway, the Title IX and Equity Coordinator has discretion to determine if an investigation will be paused, if it will be limited, or if it will continue during the Informal Resolution process.

Categories of Informal Resolution

i. Supportive Resolution

The Administrator will meet with the Complainant to determine reasonable supportive measures that are designed to restore or preserve the Complainant's access to the University's education program and activity. Such measures can be modified as the Complainant's needs evolve over time or circumstances change. If the Respondent has received the NOIA, the Administrator may also provide reasonable supportive measures for the Respondent as deemed appropriate. This option is available when the Complainant does not want to engage the other resolution options, and the Administrator does not initiate a Complaint.

ii. Educational Conversation

The Complainant(s) may request that the Title IX and Equity Coordinator address their allegations by meeting (with or without the Complainant) with the Respondent(s) to discuss concerning behavior and institutional policies and expectations. Such a conversation is non-disciplinary and non-punitive. Respondent(s) are not required to attend such meetings, nor are they compelled to provide any information if they attend. The conversation will be documented as the Informal Resolution for the matter, if it takes place. In light of this conversation, or the Respondent's decision not to attend, the Title IX and Equity Coordinator may also implement remedial actions to ensure that policies and expectations are clear and to minimize the risk of recurrence of any behaviors that may not align with Policy.

iii. Accepted Responsibility¹⁸

The Respondent may accept responsibility for any or all of the alleged Policy violations at any point during the Resolution Process. If the Respondent indicates an intent to accept responsibility for **all** alleged Policy violations, the ongoing process will be paused, and the Title IX and Equity Coordinator will determine whether Informal Resolution is an option.

¹⁸ Section 19 below, there is a description of a process to waive the decision-making step of the Resolution Process if a Respondent decides to admit to violating the charged Policies. That section and this one are similar, but there are meaningful differences. In this section, the Parties must agree to the resolution, and the Respondent in essence self-sanctions as part of the Informal Resolution by agreeing to voluntarily comply with whatever the terms are to which the Parties agree. Section 19, in contrast, is unilateral. Neither the Complainant nor the Title IX and Equity Coordinator determine eligibility. It is simply a waiver of steps in the process by the Respondent, who can admit violations and accept sanctions assigned by the Decision-maker, if they choose to. No Complainant approval is sought or needed. Under Section 19, the outcome involves sanctioning imposed by the University, rather than an agreement to self-sanction, as outlined in this section.

If Informal Resolution is available, the Title IX and Equity Coordinator will determine whether all Parties and the University are able to agree on responsibility, restrictions, sanctions, restorative measures, and/or remedies. If so, the Title IX and Equity Coordinator implements the accepted finding that the Respondent is in violation of University Policy, implements agreed-upon restrictions and remedies, and determines the appropriate responses in coordination with other appropriate administrator(s), as necessary.

This resolution is not subject to appeal once all Parties indicate their written agreement to all resolution terms. When the Parties cannot agree on all terms of resolution, the Resolution Process will either continue or resume.

When a resolution is reached, the appropriate sanction(s) or responsive actions are promptly implemented to effectively stop the harassment or discrimination, prevent its recurrence, and remedy the effects of the discriminatory conduct, both on the Complainant and the community.

iv. Alternative Resolution

The institution offers a variety of Alternative Resolution mechanisms to best meet the specific needs of the Parties and the nature of the allegations. Alternative Resolution may involve agreement to pursue individual or community remedies, including targeted or broad-based educational programming or training; supported direct conversation or interaction with the Respondent(s); indirect action by the Title IX and Equity Coordinator or other appropriate University officials; and other forms of resolution that can be tailored to the needs of the Parties. Some Alternative Resolution mechanisms will result in an agreed-upon outcome, while others are resolved through dialogue. All Parties must consent to the use of an Alternative Resolution approach, and the Parties may, but are not required to, have direct or indirect contact during an Alternative Resolution process.

The Title IX and Equity Coordinator may consider the following factors to assess whether Alternative Resolution is appropriate, or which form of Alternative Resolution may be most successful for the Parties:

- The Parties' amenability to Alternative Resolution
- Likelihood of potential resolution, considering any power dynamics between the Parties
- The nature and severity of the alleged misconduct
- The Parties' motivation to participate
- Civility of the Parties
- Results of a violence risk assessment/ongoing risk analysis
- Respondent's disciplinary history
- Whether an emergency removal or other interim action is needed
- Skill of the Alternative Resolution facilitator with this type of Complaint
- Complaint complexity
- Emotional investment/capability of the Parties
- Rationality of the Parties
- Goals of the Parties
- Adequate resources to invest in Alternative Resolution (e.g., time, staff, etc.)

The Title IX and Equity Coordinator has the authority to determine whether Alternative Resolution is available or successful, to facilitate a resolution that is acceptable to all Parties, and/or to accept the Parties' proposed resolution, usually through their Advisors.

Parties do not have the authority to stipulate restrictions or obligations for individuals or groups that are not involved in the Alternative Resolution process. The Title IX and Equity coordinator will determine whether additional individual or community remedies are necessary to meet the institution's compliance obligations in addition to the Alternative Resolution.

The Title IX and Equity Coordinator maintains records of any resolution that is reached and will provide notification to the Parties of what information is maintained. Failure to abide by the resolution agreement may result in appropriate responsive/disciplinary actions (e.g., dissolution of the Agreement and resumption of the Resolution Process, referral to the conduct process for failure to comply, application of the enforcement terms of the Agreement, etc.). The results of Complaints resolved by Alternative Resolution are not appealable.

If an Informal Resolution option is not available or selected, the University will initiate or continue an investigation and subsequent Resolution Process to determine whether the Policy has been violated.

B. Administrative Resolution Process

11) Resolution Process Pool

The Resolution Process relies on a variety of administrators to carry out the process.¹⁹ These individuals can serve as Advisors to Parties, Decision-makers, Appeal Decision-makers, Informal Resolution Facilitators, and/or any other for which they are trained and the Title IX and Equity Coordinator assigns. These individuals are trained annually and act impartially and independently throughout these processes.

12) Notice of Investigation and Allegations

Prior to an investigation, the Title IX and Equity Coordinator will provide the Parties with a detailed written NOIA. Amendments and updates to the NOIA may be made as the investigation progresses and more information becomes available regarding the addition or dismissal of various allegations. For climate/culture investigations that do not have an identifiable Respondent, the NOIA will be sent to the department/office/program head for the area/program being investigated.

The NOIA typically includes:

- A meaningful summary of all allegations
- The identity of the involved Parties (if known)
- The precise misconduct being alleged
- The date and location of the alleged incident(s) (if known)
- The specific policies/offenses implicated
- A description of, link to, or copy of the applicable procedures

¹⁹ External, trained third-party neutral professionals may also be used to serve in these roles.

- A statement that the Parties are entitled to an equal opportunity to access the relevant and not otherwise impermissible evidence
- The name(s) of the Investigator(s), along with a process to inform the Title IX and Equity Coordinator, in advance of the interview process, of any conflict of interest that the Investigator(s) may have
- A statement that the University presumes the Respondent is not responsible for the reported misconduct unless and until the evidence supports a different determination
- A statement that determinations of responsibility are made at the conclusion of the process and that the Parties will be given an opportunity during the review and comment period to inspect and review all relevant evidence
- A statement that retaliation is prohibited
- Information about the confidentiality of the process, including that the Parties and their Advisors (if applicable) may not share University work product obtained through the Resolution Process
- A statement that the Parties may have an Advisor of their choice who may accompany them through all steps of the Resolution Process
- A statement informing the Parties that the University's Policy prohibits knowingly making false statements, including knowingly submitting false information during the Resolution Process
- Detail on how a party may request disability accommodations during the Resolution Process
- A link to the University's VAWA Brochure
- An instruction to preserve any evidence that is directly related to the allegations

Notification will be made in writing and may be delivered by one or more of the following methods: in person, mailed to the local or permanent address(es) of the Parties as indicated in official University records, or emailed to the Parties' University-issued email or designated accounts. Once mailed, emailed, and/or received in person, the notification will be presumptively delivered.

13) Resolution Timeline

The University will make a good faith effort to complete the Resolution Process within sixty to ninety (60-90) business days, including any appeals, which can be extended as necessary for appropriate cause by the Title IX and Equity Coordinator. The Parties will receive regular updates on the progress of the Resolution Process, as well as notification and a rationale for any extensions or delays, and an estimate of how much additional time will be needed to complete the process.

Investigations are completed expeditiously, normally within sixty (60) business days, though some investigations may take longer, depending on issues such as the nature, extent, and complexity of the allegations, witness availability, law enforcement involvement, and other factors.

If a party or witness chooses not to participate in the Resolution Process or becomes unresponsive, the University reserves the right to continue it without their participation to ensure a prompt resolution. Non-participatory or unresponsive Parties retain the rights outlined in this Policy and the opportunity to participate in the Resolution Process.

The University may undertake a short delay in its investigation (several days to a few weeks) if circumstances require. Such circumstances include but are not limited to a request from law enforcement to delay the investigation temporarily, the need for language assistance, the absence of Parties and/or witnesses, and/or health conditions.

The University will promptly resume its Resolution Process as soon as feasible. During such a delay, the University will implement and maintain supportive measures for the Parties as deemed appropriate.

University action(s) or processes are not typically altered or precluded on the grounds that civil or criminal charges involving the underlying incident(s) have been filed or that criminal charges have been dismissed or reduced.

The University will make a good faith effort to complete the Resolution Process as promptly as circumstances permit and will communicate regularly with the Parties to update them on the progress and timing of the process.

14) Ensuring Impartiality

Any individual materially involved in the administration of the Resolution Process, including the Title IX and Equity Coordinator, Investigator(s), and Decision-maker(s), may neither have nor demonstrate a conflict of interest or bias for a party generally, or for a specific Complainant or Respondent.

The Title IX and Equity Coordinator will vet the assigned Investigator(s), Decision-maker(s), and Appeals officers for impartiality by ensuring there are no actual or apparent conflicts of interest or disqualifying biases. At any time during the Resolution Process, the Parties may raise a concern regarding bias or conflict of interest, and the Title IX and Equity Coordinator will determine whether the concern is reasonable and supportable. If so, another Pool member will be assigned, and the impact of the bias or conflict, if any, will be remedied. If the source of the conflict of interest or bias is the Title IX and Equity Coordinator, concerns should be raised with the Director of Title IX and Equity Compliance.

The Resolution Process involves an objective evaluation of all available relevant and not otherwise impermissible evidence, including evidence that supports that the Respondent engaged in a Policy violation and evidence that supports that the Respondent did not engage in a Policy violation. Credibility determinations may not be based solely on an individual's status or participation as a Complainant, Respondent, or witness. All Parties have a full and fair opportunity, through the investigation process, to suggest witnesses and questions, to provide evidence, and to receive a written investigation report that accurately summarizes this evidence.

15) Investigator Appointment

Once an investigation is initiated, the Title IX and Equity Coordinator appoints an Investigator(s) to conduct it. These Investigators may be members of the Resolution Process Pool, or any other properly trained Investigator, whether internal or external to the University's community.

16) Witness Role and Participation in the Investigation

Employees (not including Complainant and Respondent) are required to cooperate with and participate in the University's investigation and Resolution Process. Student witnesses and witnesses from outside the University community cannot be required to participate but are encouraged to cooperate with University investigations and to share what they know about a Complaint.

Interviews may be conducted in person, via online video platforms (e.g., Zoom, Microsoft Teams, FaceTime, WebEx, etc.), or, in limited circumstances, by telephone. The University will take appropriate steps to ensure the security/privacy of remote interviews.

Parties and witnesses may also provide written statements in lieu of interviews or choose to respond to written questions, if deemed appropriate by the Investigator(s), though not preferred.

17) Interview Recording

It is standard practice for Investigators to create record of all interviews pertaining to the Resolution Process (other than Informal Resolution meetings). The Parties may review copies of their own interviews, upon request. No unauthorized audio or video recording of any kind is permitted during investigation meetings.

All interviews are recorded. The recording and/or transcript of those meetings will be provided to the Parties for their review, after which the Parties may pose additional questions to each other. Those subsequent meetings or interviews are also recorded and/or transcribed and shared with the Parties.

18) Evidentiary Considerations

The Investigator(s) and the Decision-maker(s) will only consider evidence that is deemed relevant and not otherwise impermissible.

Relevant evidence is that which may aid in determining whether the allegation occurred, or whether the behavior constitutes a violation of Policy.

Impermissible evidence is defined as evidence that relates to the Complainant's sexual interests or prior sexual conduct, unless 1) evidence about the Complainant's prior sexual conduct is offered to prove that someone other than the Respondent committed the alleged conduct, or 2) is evidence about specific incidents of the Complainant's prior sexual conduct with the Respondent that is offered to prove consent.

The fact of prior consensual sexual conduct between the Complainant and Respondent does not by itself demonstrate or imply the Complainant's consent or preclude a determination that sex-based harassment occurred.

Previous disciplinary action of any kind involving the Respondent may not be considered unless there is an allegation of a pattern of misconduct. Such information may also be considered in determining an appropriate sanction upon a determination of responsibility. Barring a pattern allegation, this information is only considered at the sanction stage of the process and is not shared until then.

Within the limitations stated above, the investigation and determination can consider character evidence, if offered, but that evidence is unlikely to be relevant unless it is fact evidence or relates to a pattern of conduct.

19) Respondent Admits Responsibility

At any point in the proceedings, if a Respondent elects to admit to the charged violations and waive further process, the Decision-maker is authorized to accept that admission, adopt it as their finding/final determination, and administer sanctions. This would also waive all rights to appeal for the Respondent. If the Respondent rejects the finding/final determination/sanctions, or does not admit to all conduct charged, the Resolution Process continues to its conclusion.

20) Investigation

All investigations are adequate, thorough, reliable, impartial, prompt, and fair. They involve interviews with all relevant Parties and witnesses, obtaining relevant evidence, and identifying sources of expert information, as necessary.

After an interview, Parties and witnesses will be asked to verify the accuracy of the recording, transcript, or summary of their interview. They may submit changes, edits, or clarifications. If the Parties or witnesses do not respond within the time period designated for verification, objections to the accuracy of the recording, transcript, or summary will be deemed to have been waived, and no changes will be permitted.

The University may consolidate Complaints against more than one Respondent, or by more than one Complainant against one or more Respondents, when the allegations arise from the same facts or circumstances or implicate a pattern, collusion, and/or other shared or similar actions.

The Investigator(s) typically take(s) the following steps, if not already completed and not necessarily in this order:

- Determine the identity and contact information of the Complainant.
- Identify all policies implicated by the alleged misconduct and notify the Complainant and Respondent of all specific policies implicated.
- Assist the Title IX and Equity Coordinator, if needed, with conducting a prompt initial evaluation to determine if the allegations indicate a potential Policy violation.
- Work with the Title IX and Equity Coordinator, as necessary, to prepare the initial Notice of Investigation and Allegations (NOIA). The NOIA may be amended with any additional or dismissed allegations.
- Commence a thorough, reliable, and impartial investigation by identifying issues and developing a strategic investigation plan, including a witness list, evidence list, and intended investigation timeframe.
- When participation of a party is expected, provide that party with written notification of the date, time, and location of the meeting, as well as the expected participants and purpose.
- Interview the Complainant and the Respondent and conduct follow-up interviews with each, as necessary.
- Interview all available, relevant witnesses and conduct follow-up interviews as necessary.
- Provide each interviewed party and witness an opportunity to review and verify the Investigator's summary notes (or transcript or recording) of the relevant evidence/testimony from their respective interviews and meetings.
- Allow each party the opportunity to suggest witnesses and questions they wish the Investigator(s) to ask of another party and/or witnesses. Document in the investigation report which questions were asked, with a rationale for any changes or omissions.
- Where possible, complete the investigation promptly and without unreasonable deviation from the intended timeline.
- Provide the Parties with regular status updates throughout the investigation.
- Prior to the conclusion of the investigation, provide the Parties and their respective Advisors with a list of witnesses whose information will be used to render a finding.
- Ask the Parties to provide a list of questions they would like asked of the other party or any witnesses. The Investigator will ask those questions deemed relevant, and for any question deemed not relevant, will provide a rationale for not asking the question.
- Write a draft investigation report that gathers, assesses, and synthesizes the evidence, accurately summarizes the investigation, and party and witness interviews, and provides all relevant evidence.
- Provide the Parties and their respective Advisors an electronic copy of the draft investigation report as well as an opportunity to inspect and review all relevant evidence obtained as part of the investigation for a

review and comment period of ten (10) business days so that each party may meaningfully respond to the evidence. The Parties may elect to waive all or part of the review period.

- The Investigator may share the investigation report with the Title IX and Equity Coordinator and/or legal counsel for their review and feedback.

21) Administrative Resolution Process

The Administrative Resolution Process is used for all Complaints of discrimination on the basis of protected characteristics, harassment, retaliation, and Other Prohibited Behaviors (as defined in the Policy) or when Informal Resolution is either not elected or is unsuccessful.

The Administrative Resolution Process consists of a hand-off of the investigation report and all relevant evidence to the Decision-maker to make a finding and determine sanctions (if applicable).

At the discretion of Title IX and Equity Coordinator, the assigned Decision-maker will be an individual or a panel drawn from the Resolution Process Pool, or other trained individuals either internal or external to the institution.²⁰ Once the Decision-maker receives and reviews the file, they can recommend dismissal to the Title IX and Equity Coordinator, if they believe the grounds for dismissal are met.

The Administrative Resolution Process typically takes approximately thirty (30) business days to complete, beginning with the Decision-maker's receipt of the Draft Investigation Report. The Parties will be updated regularly on the timing and any significant deviation from this typical timeline.

Investigator-led Questioning Meetings

- The Title IX and Equity Coordinator provides the Draft Investigation Report to the Decision-maker and the Parties simultaneously for review. The Decision-maker can then provide the Investigator with a list of relevant questions to ask the Parties or any witnesses.
 - To the extent credibility is in dispute and relevant to one or more of the allegations, the questions provided by the Decision-maker may also explore credibility.
- The Investigator will also ask each of the Parties to provide a proposed list of questions to ask the other Parties and any witnesses.
 - To the extent credibility is in dispute and relevant to one or more of the allegations, questions proposed by the Parties may also explore credibility.
 - All party questions must be posed during this phase of the process and cannot be posed later unless authorized by the Decision-maker.
 - The Investigator will share all party-proposed questions with the Decision-maker, who will finalize the list with the Investigator to ensure all questions are both relevant and permissible.
- The Investigator will then hold individual meetings with the Parties and witnesses to ask the questions posed by the Decision-maker, as well as the questions proposed by the Parties that have been deemed relevant and not duplicative, including questions intended to assess credibility. These meetings will be recorded and transcribed.
 - For any question deemed not relevant or duplicative, the Investigator will provide a rationale for not asking the question, either during the recorded meeting, or in writing (typically as an Appendix to the report).

²⁰ The choice of a single Decision-maker or panel should generally be consistent for the same types of Complaints, and not vary Complaint-by-Complaint.

- Typically, within three (3) business days of the last of these meetings, the recordings or transcripts of them will be provided to the Parties for their review. The Parties will then have five (5) business days to review these recordings or transcripts and propose follow-up questions to be asked by the Investigator.
- The Investigator will review the proposed questions with the Decision-maker, to determine relevance and permissibility. If deemed necessary, the Investigator will then meet individually with the Parties or witnesses for whom there are relevant, and not duplicative, follow-up questions. These follow-up meetings will also be recorded, and the Parties will receive the recordings or transcripts of these meetings. This final round of questioning is the last such round permitted, unless leave is granted to extend, by the Decision-maker.
- The Investigator will then incorporate any new, relevant evidence and information obtained through the Parties' review of the Draft Investigation Report, the questioning, and follow-up meetings into a Final Investigation Report.
- The Investigator will also respond in writing (typically within the Final Investigation Report) to the relevant elements of the Parties' responses to the Draft Investigation Report and incorporate relevant elements of the Parties' written responses, additional relevant evidence, and any necessary revisions into the Final Investigation Report.
- The Investigator will then share the investigation report with the Title IX and Equity Coordinator and/or legal counsel for their review and feedback.
- The Final Investigation Report and investigation file will then be provided to the Title IX and Equity Coordinator.

The Decision-maker's Determination

- The Title IX and Equity Coordinator will provide the Decision-maker with the Final Investigation Report and investigation file, including the evidence and information obtained through the Investigator-led Questioning meetings.
- The Decision-maker will review the FIR, all appendices, and the investigation file.
- If the record is incomplete, the Decision-maker may direct a re-opening of the investigation, or may direct or conduct any additional inquiry necessary, including informally meeting with the Parties or any witnesses, if needed.
- Upon reviewing the relevant evidence, the Decision-maker may also choose to pose additional questions:
 - To the extent credibility is in dispute and relevant to one or more of the allegations, the Decision-maker may meet individually with the Parties and witnesses to question them in order to assess their credibility. These meetings will be recorded and shared with the Parties.
 - At their discretion, the Decision-maker may also meet with any party or witness to ask additional relevant questions that will aid the Decision-maker in making their findings. These meetings will be recorded and shared with the Parties.
- The Decision-maker will then apply the preponderance of the evidence standard to make a determination on each of the allegations and, if applicable, any attendant sanctions.
- **Timeline.** The Decision-maker's determination process typically takes approximately ten (10) business days, but this timeframe can vary based on a number of factors and variables, The Parties will be notified of any delays.
- **Impact Statements.** Prior to a determination, the Title IX and Equity Coordinator will also provide the Parties an opportunity to submit a written impact and/or mitigation statement. The Title IX and Equity Coordinator will review these statements upon receipt to determine whether there are any immediate needs, issues, or concerns, but will otherwise hold them until after the Decision-maker has made determinations on the allegations. If there are any findings of a Policy violation, the Decision-maker will request the Impact Statements from the Title IX and Equity Coordinator and review them prior to determining sanctions. They will also be exchanged between the Parties at that time.

- If it is later determined that a party or witness intentionally provided false or misleading information, that action could be grounds for re-opening a Resolution Process at any time, and/or referring that information to another process for resolution.

22) Sanctions

Sanctions are implemented in collaboration with the Student Conduct Officer (student or student group Respondents) or the Director of Human Resources (employee Respondents). Factors considered by the Decision-maker when determining sanctions and responsive actions may include, but are not limited to:

- The nature, severity of, and circumstances surrounding the violation(s)
- The Respondent's disciplinary history
- The need for sanctions/responsive actions to bring an end to the discrimination, harassment, and/or retaliation
- The need for sanctions/responsive actions to prevent the future recurrence of discrimination, harassment, and/or retaliation
- The need to remedy the effects of the discrimination, harassment, and/or retaliation on the Complainant and the community
- The impact on the Parties
- Any other information deemed relevant by the Decision-maker(s)

The sanctions will be implemented as soon as it is feasible once a determination is final, either upon the outcome of any appeal or the expiration of the window to appeal, without an appeal being requested.

The sanctions described in this Policy are not exclusive of, and may be in addition to, other actions taken, or sanctions imposed, by external authorities.

A. **Student Sanctions**

The following are the common sanctions that may be imposed upon students singly or in combination:

- *Deferred Suspension:* The student's behavior warrants suspension, but due to mitigating circumstances, the student is allowed to mature and/or the student had demonstrably learned from the experience. Any further violations of University rules or regulations will result in automatic suspension or expulsion. The student may not represent the University in any extra-curricular activity, run for, or hold office in any student group or organization.
- *Deferred Loss of Housing:* The student's behavior warrants removal from housing, but due to mitigating circumstances, the student is allowed to mature and/or the student has demonstrably learned from the experience. Any further violations of University rules or regulations will result in automatic removal from on campus housing.
- *Disciplinary Probation:* A written reprimand for violation of specified regulations. Probation extends for a designated period of time and includes the likelihood of more severe disciplinary sanctions if the student violates any institutional policies during the probationary period. Periodic meetings with the Title IX and Equity Coordinator, Student Conduct Officer, or their designee may be required throughout the probationary period.

- *Disciplinary Warning*: A written notice to the student for a current or prior violation of institutional policy. Minor violations may also include some penalty, work experience, or other sanction(s).
- *Dismissal*: Separation from the University for an indefinite period of time for a minimum of two years. The Director of Title IX and Equity Compliance, or their designee, in their sole discretion, may permit readmission if the student satisfied all readmission criteria and obtains clearance to their satisfaction. Readmission will not be considered until after two years from the date of dismissal. This sanction may be noted as a Disciplinary Dismissal on the student's official academic transcript.
- *Expulsion*: Permanent separation of the student from the University. The student is barred from all University premises. Clearance to return may be granted only by the President or Provost. This sanction may be noted as a Disciplinary Expulsion on the student's official academic transcript.
- *Fines*: Fines established and published before the disciplinary incident may be imposed.
- *Interim Suspension*: The Title IX and Equity Coordinator, or their designee, may suspend a student for an interim period pending disciplinary proceedings or medical evaluation. Such interim suspension may become effective immediately without prior notice whenever there is evidence that such action is necessary for the safety of the University community or the student.
- *Loss of Privileges*: Denial of specified privileges for a designated period of time. This may include, without limitation, having guests, visiting other parts of campus, attendance of certain campus activities, etc.
- *Other Sanctions*: Other sanctions may be imposed as determined by the University, including, without limitation, anger or stress management training, sexual harassment sensitivity training, restitution, work/research assignment or project, community service, or other restrictions. For any substance-abuse discipline, the student may be required to receive counseling (on or off campus) or complete an online educational program related to alcohol and/or substance abuse prevention.
- *Residence Hall Separation or Relocation*: The student may be barred from the residence halls or a specific residence hall, either temporarily or permanently. If temporarily, the student must fulfill any and all conditions to be eligible to return to the residence halls after the determined period of time. Conditions for admission may be specified. Student may not run or hold an office in any hall group or organization.
- *Restitution*: Compensation for loss, damage, or injury. This may take the form of appropriate service and/or monetary or material replacement.
- *Revocation of Admission and/or Degree*: Admission to or a degree awarded from the University may be revoked for fraud, misrepresentation, or other violation of University policies in obtaining the degree, or for other serious violations committed by a student prior to graduation. This sanction may be noted on the student's official academic transcript.
- *Suspension*: Separation from the University for a maximum of two years. The Director of Title IX and Equity Compliance or their designee, in their sole discretion, may permit readmission if the student satisfies all readmission criteria and obtains clearance to their satisfaction. This sanction may be noted as a Disciplinary Suspension on the student's official academic transcript.
- *Withholding Degree*: The University may withhold awarding a degree otherwise earned until the completion of a process set forth in these policies, including the completion of all sanctions imposed, if any.

B. Student Group and Organization Sanctions

The following are the common sanctions that may be imposed upon student organizations singly or in combination:

- *Warning*: A formal statement that the conduct was unacceptable and a warning that further violation of any University Policy, procedure, or directive will result in more severe sanctions/responsive actions.
- *Probation*: An official sanction for violation of institutional Policy, providing for more severe disciplinary sanctions in the event that the group or organization is found in violation of any institutional Policy, procedure, or directive within a specified period of time. Terms of the probation will be articulated and may include denial of specified social and event privileges, denial of University funds, ineligibility for honors and awards, restrictions on new member recruitment, no-contact orders, and/or other measures deemed appropriate.
- *Suspension*: Termination of student group or organization recognition and/or institutional support for a definite period of time not to exceed two years and/or until specific criteria are met. During the suspension period, a student group or organization may not conduct any formal or informal business or participate in University-related activities, whether they occur on- or off-campus. Re-recognition is possible but not guaranteed and will only be considered after the end of the suspension period and based on meeting all re-recognition criteria and obtaining clearance from the University.
- *Expulsion*: Permanent termination of student group organization recognition and revocation of the privilege to congregate and conduct business on campus as an organization for any reason.
- *Loss of Privileges*: Restricted from accessing specific University privileges for a specified period of time.
- *Other Actions*: In addition to or in place of the above sanctions, the University may assign any other sanctions as deemed appropriate.

C. Employee Sanctions/Responsive/Corrective Actions

Responsive actions for an employee who has engaged in harassment, discrimination, and/or retaliation include:

- *Verbal or Written Warning*
- *Performance Improvement Plan*
- *Enhanced Supervision, Observation, or Review*
- *Required Training or Education*
- *Probation*
- *Denial of Pay Increase/Pay Grade*
- *Loss of Oversight or Supervisory Responsibility*
- *Demotion*
- *Transfer*
- *Reassignment*
- *Assignment to New Supervisor*
- *Restriction of Stipends, Research, and/or Professional Development Resources*
- *Suspension/Administrative Leave with Pay*
- *Suspension/Administrative Leave without Pay*
- *Termination*
- *Other Actions*: In addition to or in place of the above sanctions/responsive actions, the University may assign any other responsive actions as deemed appropriate.

23) Notice of Outcome

Within ten (10) business days of the conclusion of the Resolution Process, the Title IX and Equity Coordinator provides the Parties with a written outcome notification. The outcome notification will specify the finding for each alleged Policy violation, any applicable sanctions that the University is permitted to share pursuant to state or federal law, and a detailed rationale, written by the Decision-maker, supporting the findings to the extent the University is permitted to share under federal or state law.

The notification will also detail the Parties' equal rights to appeal, the grounds for appeal, the steps to take to request an appeal, and when the determination is considered final if neither party appeals.

The Title IX and Equity Coordinator will provide the Parties with the outcome notification simultaneously, or without significant time delay between notifications. The written outcome notification may be delivered by one or more of the following methods: in person, mailed to the local or permanent address of the Parties as indicated in official University records, or emailed to the Parties' University-issued or designated email account. Once mailed, emailed, and/or received in person, the outcome notification is presumptively delivered.

24) Withdrawal or Resignation Before Complaint Resolution

A. Students

Should a student Respondent decide not to participate in the Resolution Process, the process proceeds absent their participation to a reasonable resolution. If a student Respondent withdraws from the University, the Resolution Process may continue, or Title IX and Equity Coordinator may exercise their discretion to dismiss the Complaint. If the Complaint is dismissed, the University will still provide reasonable supportive or remedial measures as deemed necessary to address safety and/or remedy any ongoing effects of the alleged harassment, discrimination, and/or retaliation.

Regardless of whether the Complaint is dismissed or pursued to completion of the Resolution Process, the University will continue to address and remedy any systemic issues or concerns that may have contributed to the alleged violation(s), and any ongoing effects of the alleged discrimination, harassment, and/or retaliation.

When a student withdraws or leaves while the process is pending, the student may not return to the University in any capacity until the Complaint is resolved and any sanctions imposed are satisfied. If the student indicates they will not return, the Title IX and Equity Coordinator has discretion to dismiss the Complaint. The Registrar and Office of Admissions will be notified, accordingly.

If the student Respondent takes a leave for a specified period of time (e.g., one semester or term), the Resolution Process may continue remotely. If found in violation, that student is not permitted to return to the University unless and until all sanctions, if any, have been satisfied.

B. Employees

Should an employee Respondent decide not to participate in the Resolution Process, the process proceeds absent their participation to a reasonable resolution. If an employee Respondent withdraws from the University with unresolved allegations pending, the Resolution Process may continue, or Title IX and Equity Coordinator may

exercise their discretion to dismiss the Complaint. If the Complaint is dismissed, the University may still provide reasonable supportive or remedial measures as deemed necessary to address safety and/or remedy any ongoing effects of the alleged discrimination, harassment, and/or retaliation.

When an employee resigns and the Complaint is dismissed, the employee may not return to the University in any capacity. Human resources, the registrar, and admissions will be notified, accordingly, and a note will be placed in the employee's file that they resigned with allegations pending and are not eligible for academic admission or rehire with the University. The records retained by the Title IX and Equity Coordinator will reflect that status.

25) Appeal of the Determination

The Title IX and Equity Coordinator will designate a three-member Appeal Panel, or a single Appeal Decision-maker chosen from the Pool, or other trained internal or external individuals, to hear the appeal. No Appeal Decision-maker will have been previously involved in the Resolution Process for the Complaint, including in any supportive measure or dismissal appeal that may have been heard earlier in the process.

A. Appeal Grounds

Appeals are limited to the following grounds:

- 1) A procedural irregularity that would change the outcome
- 2) New evidence that would change the outcome and that was not reasonably available at the time the determination regarding responsibility or dismissal was made
- 3) The Title IX and Equity Coordinator, Investigator(s), or Decision-maker(s) had a conflict of interest or bias for or against Complainants or Respondents generally or the specific Complainant or Respondent that would change the outcome
- 4) The final determination by the Decision-maker is substantially contrary to the weight of the evidence in the record (applicable to sanctions of suspension, expulsion, or termination, only)
- 5) The sanctions fall outside the range of sanctions designated for this offense, considering the cumulative conduct/disciplinary record of the Respondent (applicable to sanctions of suspension, expulsion, or termination, only)

B. Request for Appeal

Any party may submit a written request for appeal ("Request for Appeal") to the Title IX and Equity Coordinator within five (5) business days of the delivery of the Notice of Outcome.

The Request for Appeal will be forwarded to the Appeal Decision-maker for consideration to determine if the request meets the grounds for appeal (a Review for Standing). This is not a review of the merits of the appeal, but solely a determination as to whether the request could reasonably be construed to meet the grounds and is timely filed.

If the Request for Appeal does not provide information that meets the grounds in this Policy, the request will be denied by the Appeal Decision-maker, and the Parties and their Advisors will be simultaneously notified in writing of the denial and the rationale.

If any of the grounds in the Request for Appeal meet the grounds in this Policy, then the Appeal Decision-maker will notify all Parties and their Advisors, the Title IX and Equity Coordinator, and, when appropriate, the Investigator(s) and/or the original Decision-maker.

All other Parties and their Advisors, the Title IX and Equity Coordinator, and, when appropriate, the Investigator(s) and/or the Decision-maker will be provided a copy of the Request for Appeal with the approved grounds and then be given five (5) business days to submit a response to the portion of the appeal that was approved and involves them. The Appeal Decision-maker will forward all responses, if any, to all Parties for review and comment.

The non-appealing party (if any) may also choose to appeal at this time. If so, that Request for Appeal will be reviewed by the Appeal Decision-maker to determine if it meets the grounds in this Policy and will either be approved or denied. If approved, it will be forwarded to the party who initially requested an appeal, the Title IX and Equity Coordinator, and the Investigator(s) and/or original Decision-maker, as necessary, who will submit their responses, if any, within five (5) business days. Any such responses will be circulated for review and comment by all Parties. If denied, the Parties will be notified accordingly, in writing.

No party may submit any new Requests for Appeal after this time period. The Appeal Decision-maker will collect any additional information needed and all documentation regarding the approved appeal grounds, and the subsequent responses will be shared with the Appeal Decision-maker, who will promptly render a decision.

C. Appeal Determination Process

In most cases, appeals are confined to a review of the written documentation or record of the original determination and pertinent documentation regarding the specific appeal grounds. The Appeals Decision-maker will deliberate as soon as is practicable and discuss the merits of the appeal.

Appeal decisions are to be deferential to the original determination, making changes to the finding only when there is clear error and to the sanction(s)/responsive action(s) only if there is a compelling justification to do so. All decisions are made by applying the preponderance of the evidence standard.

An appeal is not an opportunity for the Appeal Decision-makers to substitute their judgment for that of the original Decision-maker merely because they disagree with the finding and/or sanction(s).

The Appeal Decision-maker may consult with the Title IX and Equity Coordinator and/or legal counsel on questions of procedure or rationale, for clarification, if needed. The Title IX and Equity Coordinator will maintain documentation of all such consultation.

D. Appeal Outcome

An appeal may be granted or denied. Appeals that are granted should normally be remanded (or partially remanded) to the original Investigator(s) and/or Decision-maker with corrective instructions for reconsideration. In rare circumstances where an error cannot be cured by the original Investigator(s) and/or Decision-maker or the Title IX and Equity Coordinator (as in cases of bias), the Appeal Decision-maker may order a new investigation and/or a new determination with new Pool members serving in the Investigator and Decision-maker roles.

A Notice of Appeal Outcome letter will be sent to all Parties simultaneously, or without significant time delay between notifications. The Appeal Outcome will specify the finding on each ground for appeal, any specific instructions for

remand or reconsideration, any sanction(s) that may result which the University is permitted to share according to federal or state law, and the rationale supporting the essential findings to the extent the University is permitted to share under federal or state law.

Written notification may be delivered by one or more of the following methods: in person, mailed to the local or permanent address of the Parties as indicated in official institutional records, or emailed to the Parties' University-issued email or otherwise approved account. Once mailed, emailed, and/or received in person, the Appeal Outcome will be presumptively delivered.

Once an appeal is decided, the outcome is final and constitutes the Final Determination; further appeals are not permitted, even if a decision or sanction is changed on remand (except in the case of a new determination). When appeals result in no change to the finding or sanction, that decision is final. When an appeal results in a new finding or sanction, that finding or sanction can be appealed one final time on the grounds listed above and in accordance with these procedures.

If a remand results in a new determination that is different from the appealed determination, that new determination can be appealed, once, on any of the five available appeal grounds.

E. Sanction Status During the Appeal

Any sanctions imposed as a result of the determination are stayed (i.e., not implemented) during the appeal process, and supportive measures may be maintained or reinstated until the appeal determination is made.

If any of the sanctions are to be implemented immediately post-determination, but pre-appeal, then the emergency removal procedures (detailed above) for a "show cause" meeting on the justification for doing so must be permitted within two (2) business days of implementation.

26) Long-Term Remedies/Other Actions

Following the conclusion of the Resolution Process, and in addition to any sanctions implemented or Informal Resolution terms, the Title IX and Equity Coordinator or Decision-maker may implement additional long-term remedies or actions with respect to the Parties and/or the University community that are intended to stop the discrimination, harassment, and/or retaliation, remedy the effects, and prevent recurrence.

These remedies/actions may include, but are not limited to:

- Referral to counseling and health services
- Referral to the Employee Assistance Program
- Course and registration adjustments, such as retroactive withdrawals
- Education to the individual and/or the community
- Permanent alteration of housing assignments
- Permanent alteration of work arrangements for employees
- Provision of campus safety escorts
- Climate surveys
- Policy modification and/or training

- Provision of transportation assistance
- Implementation of long-term contact limitations between the Parties
- Implementation of adjustments to academic deadlines, course schedules, etc.

At the discretion of the Title IX and Equity Coordinator, certain long-term supportive measures may also be provided to the Parties even if no Policy violation is found.

When no Policy violation is found, the Title IX and Equity Coordinator will address any remedies the University owes the Respondent to ensure no effective denial of educational access.

The University will maintain the confidentiality of any long-term remedies/actions/measures, provided confidentiality does not impair the University's ability to provide these services.

27) Failure to Comply with Sanctions, Responsive Actions, and/or Informal Resolution Terms

All Respondents are expected to comply with the assigned sanctions, responsive actions, corrective actions, and/or Informal Resolution terms within the timeframe specified by the final Decision-maker(s), including the Appeal Decision-maker or the Informal Resolution agreement.

Failure to abide by the sanction(s)/action(s) imposed by the date specified, whether by refusal, neglect, or any other reason, may result in additional sanction(s)/action(s), including suspension, expulsion, and/or termination from the University.

Supervisors are expected to enforce the completion of sanctions/responsive actions for their employees.

A suspension imposed for non-compliance with sanctions will only be lifted when compliance is achieved to the Title IX and Equity Coordinator's satisfaction.

28) Recordkeeping

For a period of at least seven (7) years following the conclusion of the Resolution Process, University will maintain records of:

- 1) Each discrimination, harassment, and retaliation resolution process, including any Final Determination regarding responsibility or appeal, and any audio or audiovisual recording or transcript required under federal regulation
- 2) Any disciplinary sanctions imposed on the Respondent
- 3) Any supportive measures provided to the Parties and any remedies provided to the Complainant or the community designed to restore or preserve equal access to the University's education program or activity
- 4) Any appeal and the result therefrom
- 5) Any Informal Resolution and the result therefrom
- 6) All materials used to provide training to the Title IX and Equity Coordinator and designees, Investigators, Decision-makers, Appeal Decision-makers, Informal Resolution Facilitator, and any person who is responsible for implementing the University's Resolution Process, or who has the authority to modify or terminate supportive measures. The University will make these training materials available for review upon request.

- 7) All materials used to train all employees consistent with the requirements in the Title IX Regulations.

The University will also maintain any and all records in accordance with state and federal laws.

29) Accommodations and Support During the Resolution Process

Disability Accommodations

The University is committed to providing reasonable accommodations and support to qualified students, employees, or others with disabilities to ensure equal access to the University's Resolution Process.

Anyone needing such accommodations or support should contact the Title IX and Equity Coordinator, who will work with disability support colleagues as appropriate to review the request and, in consultation with the person requesting the accommodation, determine which accommodations are appropriate and necessary for full process participation.

Other Support

The University will also address reasonable requests for support for the Parties and witnesses, including:

- Language services/Interpreters
- Access and training regarding use of technology throughout the Resolution Process
- Other support as deemed reasonable and necessary to facilitate participation in the Resolution Process

30) Revision of these Procedures

These procedures succeed any previous procedures addressing discrimination, harassment, and retaliation for incidents occurring on or after August 1, 2024. The Office of Civil Rights Compliance will regularly review and update these procedures. The University reserves the right to make changes to this document as necessary, and once those changes are posted online, they are in effect.

If governing laws or regulations change, or court decisions alter, the requirements in a way that impacts this document, this document will be construed to comply with the most recent governing laws or regulations or court holdings.

This document does not create legally enforceable protections beyond the protections of the background state and federal laws that frame such policies and codes, generally.

These procedures are effective August 1, 2024.