

**MAINE COMMUNITY COLLEGE SYSTEM
PROCEDURES MANUAL**

GENERAL ADMINISTRATION

Sections 201.1/202.1

**SUBJECT: COLLEGE PROCEDURE FOR DISCRIMINATION, HARASSMENT,
SEXUAL HARASSMENT AND AFFIRMATIVE ACTION COMPLAINTS**

PURPOSE: To establish a procedure for each College when receiving and investigating student, employee, applicant and any other complaints regarding discrimination, harassment, sexual harassment and affirmative action

I. Introduction

This procedure does not apply to allegations that meet the Title IX definition of sexual harassment as set forth in MCCS Policy 202 section B. Such allegations are governed by MCCS Procedure 202.2.

Harassment, including sexual harassment, (hereinafter collectively called “harassment”) and discrimination (including retaliation, intimidation and coercion) on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, ancestry, genetic information, sex, religion, veteran status, sexual orientation, including gender identity or expression, familial status and disability (hereinafter called “discrimination”) are a violation of certain federal and/or state laws, as well as certain Maine Community College System (“MCCS”) and College policies. In addition, federal and/or state law require in some, and permit in other, instances the MCCS and Colleges to engage in affirmative action in its educational and employment activities.

Except as otherwise provided, this document establishes the procedure for each College in receiving and investigating complaints brought by a student, employee, applicant or any other person (hereinafter the “complainant”) that allege harassment or discrimination by a College student, employee, contractor or other agent (hereinafter the “respondent”). This procedure also applies to complaints regarding the College’s use of affirmative action which, for purposes of this procedure, shall be processed in the same manner as a complaint alleging discrimination.

II. Publication of this Procedure

This procedure must be available to all employees in a location clearly designated by the College; included in the College’s Student handbook; and posted on each College’s Web site. Notice of the College’s non-discrimination statement and contact information of the College’s Equal Opportunity Officer (EO Officer) and ADA compliance officers must also be posted in conspicuous locations on campus.

III. Reporting Discrimination and/or Harassment

A. Where to Report

Any person who believes that he or she has been discriminated against or harassed (“complainant”) must make a timely report to the College’s EO Officer as set forth herein.

If the EO Officer is the person alleged to have discriminated against or harassed, the complainant should report the complaint to the College President. The College President will then assign a person other than the EO Officer to investigate the complaint.

If the College President is the person alleged to have discriminated against or harassed, the role of the College President in this procedure will be executed by the MCCS Director of Human Resources, who may be contacted at 323 State Street, Augusta, Maine, 04330; ph: 207-629-4000, or that Director’s designee.

B. When to Report

A complainant should report their complaint as soon as possible after the first date of the alleged discrimination or harassment, and must report, if at all, not later than 300 calendar days after the last date of the alleged discrimination or harassment.

C. How to Report

A complaint may be made orally or in writing, and it must be particular. It must disclose the identity of the person(s) alleged to have engaged in discrimination or harassment (“respondent”), and the location(s), date(s) and description of the alleged acts. If a complainant discusses a complaint with an employee of the College, that employee should promptly refer the complainant to the EO Officer and inform the Officer of that employee’s knowledge of the complaint.

The College cannot take complaints “off the record.” Once the College receives such information, it has a duty to investigate and possibly take action even if, at the time of the complaint, the complainant does not want the College to do either. Unless the complainant signs a written statement specifying withdrawal of the complaint, the complainant may not be deemed to have withdrawn her or his complaint.

A report filed under this procedure will not be deemed to be a “grievance” under any applicable collective bargaining agreement. If a complainant seeks to file a collective bargaining-based grievance, the complainant must do so in addition to complying with this procedure.

D. Disability Accommodation Complaints

A person whose discrimination complaint relates to a disability accommodation must first comply with the College's ADA or Disability Services policy and procedure, and present any such concerns to the College's ADA or Disability Coordinator prior to reporting a complaint to the EO Officer.

IV. Investigation of Complaints

The following procedures apply to the investigation of discrimination and harassment complaints subject to this procedure. In some instances, the College President or MCCS Director of Human Resources may authorize a qualified person other than the EO Officer to conduct the investigation and/or act upon its findings, which person shall then assume the EO Officer's duties as designated.

A. Informal Procedure

The EO Officer will attempt to resolve a complaint of discrimination or harassment as informally as possible by seeking information and cooperation from both the complainant and respondent.

If the parties agree to use this informal procedure, such procedure will be completed within 20 working days of the EO Officer's receipt of the complaint. This timeframe may be extended by the EO Officer as the Officer deems reasonably necessary, provided that any such extension does not impose undue delay, and provided further that the EO Officer documents the dates of, and reasons for, each delay.

If either the complainant or respondent declines to use the informal procedure, or such informal procedure is not otherwise successful, the EO Officer will use the following formal procedure.

B. Formal Procedure

The formal procedure, if used, will be completed within 60 calendar days of the EO Officer receipt of a complaint under this procedure.

1. Within 10 working days of receiving the complaint

Within 10 working days of receiving the complaint, the EO Officer will:

- a. meet with the complainant to discuss the complaint;
- b. provide to the respondent that notice of the complaint as may be required by either the Student Code of Conduct or the collective bargaining agreement;
- c. begin to collect evidence and arrange interviews of witnesses; and
- d. interview the respondent.

2. Within 5 working days of completing the investigation

An investigation is complete when the pertinent supervisor (e.g., Dean of Students, College President) and EO Officer determine that no additional fact finding is required. Within 5 working days of completing the investigation, the College will decide upon its response to the complaint and so inform the complainant and respondent of the nature of that response. Personnel privacy obligations may prevent the College from disclosing to the complainant the details of the specific action that the College will take.

3. Extension and Coordination of Above Timeframes

The timeframes specified above may be extended by the EO Officer as the Officer deems reasonably necessary, provided that any such extension does not impose undue delay, and provided further that the EO Officer documents the dates of, and reasons for, each delay.

In addition, this formal procedure must be applied as consistently as possible with the related procedures set forth in the MCCS Student Code of Conduct and MCCS collective bargaining agreements. When a timeframe specified in this formal procedure conflicts with a specific timeframe set forth in the Student Code of Conduct or collective bargaining agreement, the timeframe in the Code and agreements shall control, provided that such control shall not unduly delay the completion of the College's investigation under this procedure.

C. Interim Steps

While a complaint is under review, the EO Officer may recommend to the appropriate supervising authority at the College that such authority take, consistent with the applicable procedures and standards set forth in the College's Student Code of Conduct and/or any employment policy or agreement, any appropriate or necessary interim action such as removing the complainant from contact with the respondent.

D. Limit on Confidentiality

The College may need, as part of its investigation, to disclose the complainant's name, statements and allegations to certain relevant other persons, including the alleged discriminator or harasser.

V. Action Upon Findings from the Investigation

If the College determines that it will take disciplinary or other responsive action as a result of its investigation, that action will be taken without undue delay as follows.

A. Action Against a Student

To implement discipline or other action in response to complaints against a student, the College will use the MCCS Student Code of Conduct.

B. Action Against an Employee

To implement discipline or other action in response to complaints against an employee, the College will use the applicable collective bargaining agreement or other pertinent employment policy.

C. Action Against Others

To implement discipline or other action in response to complaints against a contractor or other party, the College will consult with the College President.

D. Action to Address Disability Accommodations

To address the College's provision of disability accommodation, the College will follow its pertinent ADA or Disability Services protocol.

VI. Appeals of College Response to Complaint

Any appeals from action taken under *Section V* above shall be taken pursuant to the applicable Code, collective bargaining agreement or employment policy. Only if those sources do not provide an appeal process to an affected party, then the following appeal process shall apply.

Within 10 working days of receiving the report of the investigation, a party to the complaint who is aggrieved by the decision may appeal ("appellant") to the College President (or to the MCCS Director of Human Resources if the College President is the respondent to the complaint; see *Section III.A.*). Within 10 working days of receipt of the appeal, the College President will meet with the appellant to discuss the appeal. Within 10 working days after the meeting, the College President will inform the appellant and other party(s) to the complaint of the College President's decision on the appeal. Such timeframes may be extended by the College President as the President deems reasonably necessary, provided any such extension does not impose undue delay, and provided further that the College President documents the dates of, and reasons for, each delay.

VII. External Complaint Procedures

In addition to, or in place of, filing a complaint through this procedure, a complainant has the right to file a private lawsuit or a complaint with outside agencies. For example, a complaint alleging discrimination in the College's education programs and/or activities under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (race, color, national origin), the Age Discrimination Act of 1975 (age), Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 (sex), Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (disability), and/or Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (disability) may be filed with the United States Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights, 33 Arch Street, Suite 900, Boston, MA 02110, telephone 617.289.0111, TTY/TDD 617.289.0063, fax 617.289.0150, e-mail OCR.Boston@ed.gov, internet <http://www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/index.html?src=oc>. The Federal government agency that has the responsibility for enforcing anti-discrimination laws in regard to employment is the United States Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, which may be contacted at 475 Government Center, Boston, MA 02203, telephone 617.565.3200 or 1.800.669.4000, TTY 617.565.3204 or 1.800.669.6820, fax 617.565.3196, internet <http://www.eeoc.gov/>.

The State agency in Maine that has the responsibility for enforcing anti-discrimination laws is the Maine Human Rights Commission, which may be contacted at 51 State House Station, Augusta, ME 04333-0051, telephone 207.624.6050, TTY/TDD 207.624.6064, fax 207.624.6063, internet <http://www.state.me.us/mhrc/index.shtml>.

VIII. Retaliation, Intimidation and Coercion

Retaliation, intimidation and/or coercion against any person who in good faith either files a discrimination or harassment complaint or otherwise participates in the complaint process is a violation of law and MCCS policy. Complaints alleging retaliation of any kind shall be reported immediately to the EO Officer as set forth in *Section III* of this procedure.

IX. Other Provisions

A. Communication with Disabled Persons

In implementing this procedure, the College must communicate with a complainant who has a disability in a format accessible to the complainant.

B. Record Retention

Unless otherwise directed by the MCCS Human Resources Director or MCCS General Counsel, the AA/ND College will retain a record of all information, complaints, decisions, appeals and responses handled under this procedure for at least three (3) years.

C. Interpretation of this Procedure

This Procedure intends to make as clear and consistent as practical the College's best practices in complying with state and federal laws. This procedure is not intended, and shall not be construed, to create or expand substantive or procedural rights under any law.

REFERENCES: MCCS Policies 201 and 202; MCCS Procedure 202.2

DATE ADOPTED: June 28, 2006

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December 12, 2017; August 5, 2020 (effective August 14, 2020)