

Non-Discrimination Policy and Procedures	BOT Approved: 6/17/2015 Revised: 6/30/2015 Revised: 1/13/2016 Revised: 6/30/2016 Revised: 10/6/2016 Revised: 7/1/2017 Revised: 7/12/2018 Revised: 1/9/2019 Revised: 7/1/2019 Revised: 7/1/2020 Revised: 7/1/2021 Revised: 7/1/2023
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Table of Contents

I.	Philosophy, Purpose, and Scope.....	1
II.	Definitions for the Purpose of this Policy and Procedures	2
III.	Training, Education, and Prevention	4
IV.	Responsible Senior Leader and Responsible Office.....	5
V.	Entities Affected by this Policy and Procedures.....	5
VI.	Procedures.....	5
VII.	Related Policies and Procedures.....	10

To report a claim of Discrimination, Harassment, or Retaliation,
please contact: The Vice President for Talent and Culture

Non-Discrimination Policy and Procedures

I. Philosophy, Purpose, and Scope

Frederick Community College (“FCC” or the “College”) is committed to the principles of equal opportunity and strictly prohibits discrimination against any person on the basis of age, ancestry, citizenship status, color, creed, ethnicity, gender identity and expression, genetic information, marital status, mental or physical disability, national origin, race, religious affiliation, sex, sexual orientation, pregnancy (including childbirth, lactation and related medical conditions or veteran status in its activities, admissions, educational programs, and employment.

All members of the College community are expected to abide by this non-discrimination policy and to comply with Title VI and Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Age Discrimination in Employment Act of 1967, (ADEA), Sections 503 and 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA), and amendments, as well as applicable Maryland law. Those persons found in violation of this policy may be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including separation from employment or expulsion, in addition to the penalties imposed under federal, state, or local law.

The College has discrimination complaint procedures, including a Hate-Bias Incident Response Protocol, which apply to all members of the College community where alleged violations of this non-discrimination policy are investigated. The College will attempt to respect the confidentiality of the complainant, the respondent, and witnesses, to the extent possible consistent with College legal obligations, the necessity to investigate allegations of misconduct, and to take corrective action when discrimination has occurred.

The College also prohibits any person from engaging in retaliation against any person who exercises in good faith their own rights under College policy or other law to complain of alleged discrimination, or who participates in or assists others in any investigation charge or proceeding related to alleged discrimination. All students and employees are expected to cooperate in the investigation of complaints of discrimination. Making knowingly false statements in such a proceeding, or intentionally failing to disclose material information, whether as a complainant, a respondent, or a witness, is serious misconduct that could subject the individual to disciplinary action.

Equal Opportunity in Employment and Education

Frederick Community College is an equal opportunity employer and complies with all applicable federal and state laws and regulations regarding nondiscrimination. All qualified applicants will receive consideration for employment. Frederick Community College is committed to a policy of equal opportunity for all persons and does not discriminate on the basis of age, ancestry, citizenship status, color, creed, ethnicity, gender identity and expression, genetic information, marital status, mental or physical disability, national origin, race, religious affiliation, sex, sexual orientation, or veteran status in its activities, admissions, educational programs, and employment. The College reports annually to the Maryland Higher Education Commission on its progress in achieving the goals of its Cultural Diversity Plan.

It is the responsibility of the entire College community to ensure an academic and work culture that values equal opportunity in employment and access to programs.

Non-Discrimination Policy and Procedures

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)

It is the policy of Frederick Community College to provide equal access and opportunity to its programs, employment, facilities, and educational programs in compliance with federal and state law, including the American with Disabilities Act (ADA) as amended and Sections 503 and 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and amendments, as well as Title 20 of the State Government Article of the Annotated Code of Maryland.

Students seeking accommodations should contact Disability Access Services. Employees seeking accommodations should contact the Office of Human Resources.

Frederick Community College makes every effort to accommodate individuals with disabilities for College-sponsored events and programs. For accommodation needs or questions, please call 301-846-2408. To request a sign language interpreter, please visit <http://fcc-interpreting.genbook.com> . For interpreting related questions, please email Interpreting@frederick.edu. Sign language interpreters will not be automatically provided for College-sponsored events without a request for services. To guarantee accommodations, requests must be made at least five (5) workdays in advance of a scheduled event.

If a request pertains to accessible transportation for a College-sponsored trip, please submit the request at least twenty-one (21) calendar days in advance. Requests made less than twenty-one (21) calendar days in advance may not be able to be guaranteed.

II. Definitions for the Purpose of this Policy and Procedures

- A. **“Administrative action”** refers to interim or other measures taken by FCC at the beginning of an investigation or that are in place during an investigation under the National Science Foundation (NSF) term and condition on Notification Requirements Regarding Sexual Harassment, Other Forms of Harassment, or Sexual Assault.
- B. **“Administrative leave”** refers to any temporary/interim suspension or permanent removal of the Principal Investigator (PI) or Co-Principal Investigator (Co-PI) by FCC under FCC policies or codes of conduct, statutes, regulations, or executive orders, relating to activities, including but not limited to teaching, advising, mentoring, research, management/administrative duties, or presence on campus under the NSF term and condition on Notification Requirements Regarding Sexual Harassment, Other Forms of Harassment, or Sexual Assault.
- C. **“BERT”** refers to the Behavioral Evaluation and Response Team and is comprised of College officials who receive and evaluate student and employee concerns regarding student behavior that may be disruptive, self-injurious, or potentially pose a risk of harm to the health, safety, or property of any person or of the College, or otherwise be dangerous.
- D. **“College community”** refers to trustees, students, and all employees of the College as well as any independent contractors or other third parties to the extent articulated under contractual agreements.
- E. **“College Support Person”** refers to an employee of the College chosen to accompany and assist a complainant or respondent during an appeal hearing. Both the

Non-Discrimination Policy and Procedures

complainant and respondent are entitled to have a College Support Person of their choice. The College Support Person cannot be a fact witness or provide statements in the proceedings. The College Support Person is a non-participant who is present to assist a complainant or respondent by taking notes or providing emotional support and reassurance.

- F. **“Complainant”** refers to an individual who makes a complaint that a violation of the Non-Discrimination Policy has occurred.
- G. **“Discrimination”** refers to treatment or consideration of, or making a distinction in favor of or against, a person or thing based on the group, class, or category to which that person or thing belongs rather than on individual merit. This includes disparate treatment of an individual or group based on their actual or perceived membership in a certain group or social category.
- H. **“Harassment”** refers to any unwelcome or offensive conduct against a person based on their protected class. Harassment becomes unlawful where 1) enduring the unwelcome or offensive conduct becomes a condition of employment or continued employment, advancement, preferential treatment, or any other treatment in which “submission to or rejection of conduct by an individual is used as the basis for employment decisions affecting such individual,” (i.e., “quid pro quo harassment”), or 2) the conduct is severe or pervasive enough to create an environment that a reasonable person would consider unreasonably interfering, intimidating, hostile, or abusive (i.e., “hostile environment harassment”). Anti-discrimination laws also prohibit harassment against individuals in retaliation for filing a discrimination charge or complaint, testifying, or participating in any way in an investigation, proceeding, or lawsuit under these laws; or opposing employment practices that they reasonably believe discriminate against individuals, in violation of these laws. Petty slights, annoyances, and isolated incidents (unless extremely serious) will not rise to the level of illegality. To be unlawful, the conduct must create an environment that would be intimidating, hostile, or offensive to reasonable people. Offensive conduct may include, but is not limited to, offensive jokes, slurs, epithets or name calling, physical assaults or threats, intimidation, ridicule or mockery, insults or put-downs, offensive objects or pictures, and interference with work performance. Harassment can occur in a variety of circumstances, including, but not limited to, the following:
- The harasser can be the victim’s supervisor, a supervisor in another area, an agent of the employer, a co-worker, a non-employee/third-party, or a student.
 - The victim does not have to be the person harassed but can be anyone affected by offensive conduct.
 - Unlawful harassment may occur without economic injury to, or discharge of, the victim.
- I. **“Hate-Bias Incident”** refers to a hostile act of conduct, speech, or expression motivated, in whole or in part, by intolerance, bias, or prejudice against another. Unlike a hate crime, the hostile act is not a criminal act; like a hate crime, the hostile act is motivated by prejudice.

Non-Discrimination Policy and Procedures

- J. **“Hearing Board”** refers to a group comprised of the Vice President for Student Affairs (Chair); the Provost/ Vice President for Teaching, Learning and Student Success ; the Executive Director of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion; the Executive Director of Student Leadership and Engagement; and the Executive Director of Career and Academic Planning Services (CAPS), or their designees. The Hearing Board serves as a hearing panel for complainant or respondent appeals of decisions/remedies/corrective action/sanctions imposed after a Non-Discrimination Policy violation investigation.
- K. **“Preponderance of the evidence”** refers to evidence which is of greater weight or more convincing than the evidence to the contrary; evidence which shows that something is more likely than not to be true or 50.1% likely to have occurred.
- L. **“Respondent”** refers to an individual who has been accused of violating the Non-Discrimination Policy and is referenced in a complaint.
- M. **“Retaliation”** refers to intimidating, threatening, coercing, discriminating, or otherwise taking adverse action against an individual for the purpose of interfering with any right or privilege secured by law or College policy relating to discrimination, or because an individual has made a report, filed a complaint, testified, assisted, or participated in any manner in an investigation or proceeding related to discrimination. Retaliation includes retaliatory harassment.
- N. **“Student”** refers to an individual who is registered at the College, either full or part-time, in a credit or continuing education course or courses, who has either paid or made arrangement for payment of tuition and/or fees.
- O. **“Workdays”** refers to Monday through Friday and does not include weekends, holidays, scheduled breaks, or other days the College is closed.

III. Training, Education, and Prevention

The College will be proactive and will, through educational programs, help faculty, staff, and students become aware of and recognize covert and subtle forms of discrimination and remove those institutional barriers to equal opportunity.

Prevention is the best tool to eliminate discrimination and harassment. The College will take appropriate steps to prevent and correct unlawful discrimination and harassment. The College, through this policy, clearly communicates that discrimination and harassment will not be tolerated. Notice of non-discrimination is posted across the College and on the College website, and in all general publications. Anti-harassment and non-discrimination training for supervisors and employees is a part of the orientation process and is ongoing. The College will take immediate and appropriate action when an employee or student complains of discrimination or harassment.

Early reporting of discrimination and harassment to the Vice President (VP) for Talent and Culture can help prevent its escalation.

Notice of College non-discrimination and disability accommodations should be included in all public and published materials.

Non-Discrimination Policy and Procedures

IV. Responsible Senior Leader and Responsible Office

Vice President for Talent and Culture

Office of Human Resources

V. Entities Affected by this Policy and Procedures

The College community

VI. Procedures

The following procedures will be used to process complaints alleging discrimination in violation of this Non-Discrimination Policy. These procedures will be in addition to any complaint or charges an employee, applicant, or student files with local, state, or federal agencies. For all complaints of sexual harassment, see the [Title IX Sexual Harassment Policy and Procedures](#).

Filing a Complaint

Any employee, applicant, or student who alleges discrimination should file a written complaint with the VP for Talent and Culture. A discrimination complaint must be filed as soon as possible after the facts giving rise to the allegation have occurred.

If the complaint is against the VP for Talent and Culture, the complaint should be filed with the President. If the complaint is against the President, the complaint should be filed with the VP for Talent and Culture and the Chair of the Board of Trustees.

Individuals who have experienced conduct they believe is contrary to this policy are urged to take advantage of this complaint procedure. An employee's failure to fulfill this obligation could affect their rights in pursuing legal action. Also, please note, federal and state discrimination laws establish specific time frames for initiating a legal proceeding pursuant to those laws. Early reporting and intervention have proven to be the most effective method of resolving actual or perceived incidents of harassment. Therefore, while no fixed reporting period has been established, the College strongly urges the prompt reporting of complaints or concerns so that it can take prompt corrective action.

The availability of this complaint procedure does not preclude individuals who believe they are being subjected to harassing conduct from promptly advising the offender that their behavior is unwelcome and requesting that it be discontinued.

Assessment

The VP for Talent and Culture will work with other College staff to conduct an immediate assessment of the reported violation of the Non-Discrimination Policy. Immediate measures will be taken to ensure the safety and security of any individuals involved.

The VP for Talent and Culture will conduct an initial meeting with the complainant and inform them of the process that will be used in response to the complaint, as well as the College policy prohibiting retaliation against complainants. The assessment will be

Non-Discrimination Policy and Procedures

completed within five (5) workdays of receiving a report of discrimination and the complaint will be documented appropriately. The complainant will be notified if an extension of time is needed. The assessment will determine if an investigation of the complaint as a violation of the Non-Discrimination Policy is warranted and, if so, on what basis.

Informal Resolution

Upon completion of the assessment, if the VP for Talent and Culture determines that informal resolution is appropriate and an investigation is not warranted, the VP for Talent and Culture may be able to resolve the complaint informally. All parties must voluntarily agree to participate in an informal resolution that does not involve a full investigation and adjudication after receiving a full disclosure of the allegations and their options for formal resolution. Should a satisfactory resolution be reached, the matter will be considered closed. All informal resolutions will be appropriately documented. If no investigation is warranted, the identity of the respondent will not be recorded. If the complainant disagrees with the assessment and requests an investigation, the process moves to formal resolution.

Formal Resolution

If an informal resolution is not reached, the assessment determines that an investigation of the complaint is warranted, or the complainant requests an investigation, the College will move to a formal resolution process, which includes an investigation. Any investigation requires an explanation of the basis for the determination. The VP for Talent and Culture will coordinate the formal resolution process. The College will initiate a prompt, thorough, and impartial investigation conducted by an Investigator. When necessary, law enforcement will be involved, and the College will, in all cases, cooperate with law enforcement, in the event of such involvement, and will continue to take steps to protect the safety and security of all parties involved during the pendency of any law enforcement investigation.

The complainant and respondent will be notified within five (5) workdays of the College decision to initiate an investigation and they will be informed of the process that will be used.

As a condition of acceptance of grant awards originating from the NSF, the College will promptly notify NSF if the Principal Investigator (PI) or Co-Principal Investigator (Co-PI) on an NSF-funded project is placed on administrative leave while under investigation for a possible violation of this Policy and Procedures.

Investigative Process

A notice of investigation will be delivered to all parties which contains a summary of the allegations at issue, the range of potential remedies/corrective action/sanctions. Along with the notice of investigation, the complainant and respondent will receive a notice of rights and responsibilities. Upon receipt of the notice of investigation, or at any stage in the process, the respondent may choose to accept responsibility for the Policy violation.

Non-Discrimination Policy and Procedures

During the investigation, the complainant and respondent will have an equal opportunity to be heard, to submit information, and to identify witnesses who may have relevant information. The VP for Talent and Culture will speak separately with the complainant, the respondent, and any other individuals who have information relevant to the investigation. The VP for Talent and Culture may gather or receive information that is relevant, including information about the impact of the alleged discrimination. The VP for Talent and Culture will also gather any available evidence, including prior statements by the parties or witnesses, any communications between the parties, email messages, social media materials, text messages, and other records as appropriate and available. Members of the College community are expected to cooperate with the investigation.

At the conclusion of the investigation, the VP for Talent and Culture will prepare a draft investigative report that summarizes the information gathered and synthesizes the areas of agreement and disagreement between the parties with any supporting information or accounts. Prior to finalizing the investigative report, the VP for Talent and Culture will provide the complainant and respondent an opportunity to review the draft investigative report.

The complainant and respondent may submit any additional comments or information to the VP for Talent and Culture within five (5) workdays of being provided the draft investigative report for review. This is the final opportunity for the parties to identify any additional information or witnesses and review their statements for accuracy. Should extenuating circumstances exist, consideration will be given to a request for an extended timeline and both parties will be notified.

After the five (5)-day opportunity for both parties to review the draft investigative report, the VP for Talent and Culture will submit the final investigative report, which incorporates any additional information provided by both parties, to the appropriate College employee(s) for a decision based on the nature of the complaint as follows:

- For complaints involving only employees: The complaint shall be reported to the supervising Associate Vice President or Senior Leader, or their designees; if the complaint is against the Senior Leader, to the President; if the complaint is against the President, to the VP for Talent and Culture and the Chair of the Board of Trustees.
- For complaints involving only students: The complaint shall be reported to the Dean of Students (DOS); if the complaint is against the DOS, to the Senior Leader, or their designees.
- For complaints involving both a student and an employee: The complaint shall be reported to the supervising Associate Vice President or Senior Leader, or their designees, and the DOS; if the complaint is against the Senior Leader, to the President; if the complaint is against the President, to the VP for Talent and Culture and the Chair of the Board of Trustees.

Remedies/Corrective Action/Sanctions

After reviewing the final investigative report, and meeting with the complainant and respondent separately, the appropriate College employee(s) will make a decision as to

Non-Discrimination Policy and Procedures

whether there has been a violation of the Non-Discrimination Policy. If a party fails to respond to a request for the meeting with the appropriate College employee, the appropriate College employee will make a decision based on the evidence before them. The decision will be based upon a preponderance of the evidence and remedies/corrective action/sanctions will be imposed, if warranted. Both the complainant and the respondent will be notified in writing of the decision and the remedies/corrective action/sanctions imposed within five (5) workdays of receipt of the final investigative report. Extended time for a decision may be necessary, in which case both parties will be informed.

As a condition of acceptance of grant awards originating from the NSF, the College will promptly notify NSF if any administrative action is imposed on the PI or Co-PI on an NSF-funded project related to any finding/determination or an investigation of an alleged violation of this Policy and Procedures.

Appeals

The complainant as well as the respondent have the right to request a hearing to appeal the decision and/or the imposition of remedies/corrective action/sanctions for Non-Discrimination Policy violations. Appeals shall be in writing and must be submitted to the VP for Talent and Culture within five (5) workdays of the decision/remedies/corrective action/sanctions.

Appeal Hearing

The Hearing Board will conduct a hearing on all appeals of decisions/remedies/corrective action/sanctions related to Non-Discrimination Policy violations. The hearing shall be closed to the public and will be recorded or transcribed. Failure of the individual who requested the appeal to appear for the hearing, without prior notification or evidence of extenuating circumstances, waives their right for further appeal and the decision and remedies/corrective action/sanctions will stand.

The first hearing session shall be limited to the complainant and respondent, other individuals with personal knowledge of relevant facts who will be presented as witnesses, and persons contractually engaged by the College for the purposes of the hearing (e.g., transcriptionists, etc.). Representation by legal counsel is not allowed in the hearing. Each party may be accompanied by a College Support Person of their choice. During the hearing, the complainant and respondent will have an equal opportunity to be heard.

The Hearing Board may then meet separately with each party in a session that will be closed to the other party. Likewise, the Hearing Board will meet with available witnesses in sessions, which will be closed to the parties.

After consideration of all relevant information, the Hearing Board will make its own determination by a preponderance of the evidence. The Hearing Board may affirm, modify, or reject the decision/remedies/corrective action/sanctions regarding the policy violation, and/or return the outcome to the VP for Talent and Culture to conduct additional investigation before completing its review. All Hearing Board decisions require a majority vote and shall be accompanied by an explanation of the rationale for the decision of the Hearing Board.

Non-Discrimination Policy and Procedures

The Hearing Board will have five (5) workdays to make a determination as to whether to affirm, modify, or reject the decision/remedies/corrective action/sanctions of the Non-Discrimination Policy violation. The Hearing Board may request additional information and direct the VP for Talent and Culture to conduct further investigation and the five (5) day timeline may be extended. The VP for Talent and Culture will notify both the complainant and the respondent of the need for additional time.

The Hearing Board shall issue its determination to the VP for Talent and Culture. The VP for Talent and Culture will then issue a formal notice of the Hearing Board decision to both parties, separately and simultaneously. The notice of the Hearing Board decision on the appeal shall include a reference to the specific discrimination at issue, a summary of the investigation and the Hearing Board stated rationale for its decision regarding the appeal of the decision/remedies/corrective action/sanctions. Copies of the notice of the Hearing Board decision will be sent to the appropriate supervisor, department chair, Dean, and Provost/Vice President for Teaching, Learning and Student Success, or designee and other administrators, as necessary on a need-to-know basis. The decision of the Hearing Board will be final.

If the concern is not able to be resolved through the College internal appeal process, the Maryland Higher Education Commission has developed a complaint resolution process for students who are residents of the state of Maryland

(https://mhec.maryland.gov/institutions_training/Documents/acadaff/SARA/SARA%20complaint%20process.pdf).

Although individuals are encouraged to seek resolutions to complaints within College processes, they also have the right to file any complaint directly with the applicable local, state, or federal agencies, at any time, which may include, but are not limited to:

Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC)
10 Howard Street, Third Floor
Baltimore, MD 21201

Maryland Commission on Civil Rights
6 Saint Paul Street, Suite 900
Baltimore, MD 21202-1631

Office for Civil Rights, Philadelphia Office
United States Department of Education
Wanamaker Building
100 Penn Square East, Suite 5151
Philadelphia, PA 19107-3323

US Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Civil Rights Division
Disability Rights Section – 1425 NYAV
Washington, D.C. 20530

Non-Discrimination Policy and Procedures

Confidentiality

All parties and staff will keep the complaint, fact-finding process, and conference or hearings confidential, except to the extent that it is necessary to investigate and process the complaint.

Reprisals and False Complaints

Persons filing complaints of discrimination, harassment, or retaliation will be protected against reprisals by actions that are appropriate to the circumstances. Those persons filing deliberate false complaints will be subject to disciplinary action including separation from employment or expulsion.

VII. Related Policies and Procedures

[Code of Student Conduct](#)

[Complaint Policy and Procedures for Employees](#)

[Complaint Policy and Procedures for Students](#)

[Employee Code of Ethics](#)

[Employee Misconduct](#)

[Separation from Employment and Appeal Procedure for Involuntary Separation from Employment](#)

[Title IX Sexual Harassment](#)