Complaint Management Process for All GRCC Employees

[Managed by the Student Feedback Management Team (SFMT)]

Higher Learning Commission statement regarding Complaint Management:
(The College) Provides clear information for receiving complaints, responds in a timely manner, and analyzes to ensure improved practice.

*HLC focuses on complaints from all Stakeholders, not just students. If you do not work directly with students, please read the following guidelines with your “customer” in mind.

Working definition of “complaint”:
A written or spoken statement of concern or dissatisfaction about the student experience from a stakeholder that is actionable either in the short or long term.

Any written complaint is considered a formal complaint. When employees are speaking to someone in person, it is their discretion to determine if the person is “complaining” versus making a complaint. Our philosophy is that we will attempt to resolve the situation for the individual regardless of that distinction, but will only track the information if we felt we heard a “complaint” that should be documented to help identify trends that may require systematic change.

Employees are also encouraged to make observations of possible improvements/barriers for our stakeholders and to forward those observations/ideas to the appropriate area or to the SFMT for consideration.

Responding to Complaints:

We encourage employees to resolve issues at the lowest level possible, responding to the initial complaint within 2 business days or sooner. (Response, at minimum, is defined as contact with the person to inform them we received the complaint and are working on it, or if filed in person, to inform them of the progress we have made toward resolution.)

If a student walks into an office/emails/calls with a complaint, all employees are to follow the complaint process dependent upon the category of the complaint.

- For Academic Complaints, all students are encouraged to address their concern through the informal resolution process first. If not successful, they move into the formal process for Academic concerns (grades, instructor complaints, etc.) There is a well-defined process with requirements and timelines outlined in the Catalog and online.
• For Service area complaints, those that cannot be resolved at the lowest level are referred to the manager of that area.

**Tracking, Analyzing and Reporting Complaints:**

All employees (including student employees) must be engaged in the tracking process for it to be successful. The method/format for tracking is determined by each individual area. (Template examples can be provided by the SFMT.)

**Area Specific (Program, Department, Unit, etc.):**
Everyone would be tracking all complaints/dissatisfaction about your area specifically. This data should be reviewed and utilized for continuous quality improvement and should be analyzed at least once per year during the Department Planning process. During that process, each area will identify and document complaints/trends in their area, any improvements made during the year, as well as any plans for improvements moving forward.

**SFMT Trends:**
All complaints that speak to the larger college, things you cannot improve solely by the collecting area, should be tracked and submitted to the Student Feedback Management Team.

**Guidelines for what to track:**

a. Academic vs. Non-Academic concerns –
   i. Academic concerns go to the appropriate department – complaints are recorded by Department Head and Program Directors
   ii. Non-Academic concerns –
      1. Department specific concerns go to that department
      2. General College concerns should be tracked and forwarded to SFMT
b. Track comments of dissatisfaction – if they’ve chosen to tell us, they will likely tell others
   Example: Parking here is frustrating
c. Track anything you think the college might be able to fix, but that you cannot fix on your own.
   Example: I can’t get the class I want. Why aren’t there wait lists?
d. Track student complaints about specific policies or operational processes
   Example: I can’t swap just my lab or lecture, I have to swap both?
e. Use your own judgment – if what you heard doesn’t fit within these guidelines, but you think someone should hear it, track it.

f. Track items that fall within the definition – they are concerns about an experience that is actionable now or in the future.

g. If there is a process for managing the complaint, refer the student there and do not track it. If you own the process, track it.

*If a student mentions feeling harassed and/or discriminated against, they should be given the information about the Ethics hotline reporting and/or a copy of the Ethics brochure.*

**Records Retention** – All complaint records should be maintained for seven years.

**It is expected that all employees will understand and follow the complaint process as approved by the Cabinet.**

In order to meet this expectation, the following actions will occur on an annual basis:

- An all staff email reminder will be sent at the start of each academic year with this process document, the outline for where to direct complaints, as well as the service excellence guidelines.
- New employees and student employees will continue to receive the documents listed above during their onboarding/training process.
- The SFMT will hold annual training in August to review updates and cover new information to identified departments who experience high levels of in person student interaction/complaints.

Cabinet approval date: November 2013
Next review: November 2016