

## STANDARD XI: INTEGRITY

The University of Vermont subscribes to, exemplifies, and advocates high ethical standards in the management of its affairs and in all of its dealings with students, faculty, staff, external agencies and organizations, and the general public. In the 1988 Self-Study Report the institution stated that: "An atmosphere of perceived equity is one of the most important requirements for good morale in a university community." That sentiment continues to inform institutional decision-making.

It is our expressed intent that truthfulness, clarity, and fairness characterize the institution's relations with all internal and external constituencies. Adequate provision is made to ensure academic honesty, privacy rights, and fairness in dealing with students, faculty, and staff. The institution's educational policies and procedures are applicable and equitably applied to all its students.

### Students

The student judicial process and students' responsibilities and procedural rights are outlined in "The Code of Student Rights and Responsibilities" section of *The Cat's Tale*, the student handbook. Students are expected to know and comply with the provisions in "The Code," and all University policies. In judicial cases in which a student is found responsible for violating one or more of these provisions, sanctions are administered by the hearing body, as outlined in Section III.C.1 of "The Code." The appeals procedures exist to guarantee due process in the administration of the judicial process and are outlined in Section III.C.4. of "The Code."

The University system adjudicates over 1600 cases annually and strives to maintain fairness, consistency, and timeliness in the administration of the process. On occasion, students may perceive the system to do otherwise, largely because information about specific cases and their outcomes cannot be disseminated to third parties due to the privacy rights of the accused. The dilemma can place the University in a difficult position: trying to balance the confidentiality restriction of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act with the campus' need to know concerning judicial incidents and outcomes. To balance these often antagonistic rights, partnerships are being developed to improve communication to the campus community about judicial case results. Currently, summary data are disseminated annually; our hope is to increase the frequency of information dissemination and to improve the format in which the information is shared. The current initiative seeks to provide concrete examples of behaviors being responded to and general information about institutional response. The hope is to increase student awareness of "what can happen if I do X..." and to improve confidence that the University does take seriously and respond to judicial incidents in order to maintain a campus environment conducive to academic success.

The policy on academic honesty is outlined in the student handbook, *The Cat's Tale*, under the "University Policies" section and is applicable to students in the undergraduate colleges and schools and in the corresponding graduate programs. The academic honesty system is administered by the Coordinator for Academic Honesty who responds to all cases referred by

faculty or students. While the academic honesty policy was revised in 1988 to alleviate major concerns about the previous resolution mechanism, its administration remains dependent primarily upon faculty referrals. The number of cases handled annually remains relatively low. It may be that many faculty continue to resolve cases outside the process, which is in place to promote academic integrity on our campus and to provide a response mechanism which adheres to the requirement of due process for all students who may be involved with alleged violations of the policy.

The institution is committed to the free pursuit and dissemination of knowledge. It ensures faculty and students the freedom to teach and study a given field, to examine all pertinent data, to question assumptions, and to be guided by the evidence of scholarly research. Relevant documentation is filed in the following:

*Officers' Handbook 1996, Academic Freedom, pp. 15 -16*  
*1998-99 Cat's Tale: Student Handbook, Code of Student Rights, pp. 165 -167, 189 - 201*

The Office of Sponsored Programs (OSP) manual clearly documents the specific areas of support for research and scholarship. The institution provides support in the location of appropriate funding sources, both internal and external. As stated in the manual: "The OSP Resource center contains a variety of directories, indices, proposal writing resources and information on funding sources. Direct assistance to individual projects is available through *OSP Funding Highlights*, a biweekly publication providing timely information on funding opportunities to faculty, staff and students. In addition, individual consultations are available on request. OSP maintains a Web page with access to several grant search tools and links to many federal and private sponsors. Specific policies are clearly defined and committee review structures are in place to maintain the highest standard of professionalism. Relevant search tools, links, and policies have also been provided for the file.

Under the direction of the Provost, the institution established The Center for Teaching and Learning. A committee has been formed and has begun to draft mission documents. The Staff Development office provides a wide variety of workshops and training opportunities to support teaching styles and increase professionalism.

The University as a matter of policy observes the spirit as well as the letter of applicable legal requirements. It has a charter and/or other formal authority from the appropriate governmental agency authorizing it to grant all degrees it awards; it has the necessary operating authority for each jurisdiction in which it conducts activities; and it operates within this authority.

The institution adheres to non-discriminatory policies and practices in recruitment, admissions, employment, evaluation, and advancement (promotion). It fosters an atmosphere within the University community that respects and supports people of diverse characteristics and background.

## **Affirmative Action and Equal Opportunity**

The University of Vermont is committed to a policy and practice of Affirmative Action and Equal Opportunity. It makes a good faith effort to recruit and hire women and minorities at a rate upon which they are available. The University strongly desires to increase faculty, staff, and students of color at UVM and has resultantly developed programs and initiatives to enhance outreach to women and minorities in accordance with Affirmative Action policy.

The Affirmative Action and Equal Opportunity (AA/EO) Office is primarily responsible for ensuring that The University of Vermont complies with federal, state, and local laws, as well as University policies regarding equal employment, educational opportunities, and affirmative action. The AA/EO helps the University work toward the equitable and humane treatment of all people.

The Office monitors University employment recruitment practices, and uses the Affirmative Action Plan for guidance. The Office advises hiring officials regarding advertising strategy, job descriptions, and related recruitment issues so as to maximize pool size and to ensure inclusiveness.

## **Unlawful Discrimination and Sexual Harassment**

The University of Vermont is committed to a policy of equal educational and employment opportunity. The University, therefore, prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, national or ethnic origin, age, sex, sexual orientation, disability, and marital status in employment and educational programs. In addition, The University of Vermont recognizes that sexual harassment is a form of unlawful sex discrimination, and it is therefore the policy of the University that sexual harassment will not be tolerated. At The University of Vermont, sanctions for unlawful discrimination by faculty, staff, and students may include the full range of disciplinary actions up to and including termination of employment or expulsion from the University.

In order to maintain an environment where no member of the University community is subject to unlawful discrimination, procedures governing complaints of discrimination and sexual harassment have been established. These procedures, which have been in effect since 1987, have never been challenged as improper, and are believed to address the needs of both complainants and respondents. Although either complainant or respondent can access external complaint procedures, most individuals do not.

The Office of Affirmative Action manages discrimination complaints involving faculty, staff, and students who allege to have experienced unlawful discrimination by either faculty or staff. The Office of Student Affairs manages student-to-student discrimination complaints through the student judicial process.

Policy statements on Equal Employment Opportunity and Affirmative Action, Equal Opportunity in Educational Programs and Activities, and Sexual Harassment, as well as the Procedures Governing Complaints of Discrimination and Sexual Harassment at The

University of Vermont are widely posted. Policies and complaint procedures are also included in the staff and student handbooks, and discussed and disseminated during new employee and student orientation programs and during annual training for faculty, staff, and students. In addition, University colleges, schools, and departments are encouraged to utilize available discrimination and sexual harassment training designed to meet unit informational needs.

Any University employee wishing to speak privately and in confidence about discrimination and sexual harassment may contact the UVM Employee Assistance Program (EAP). Any University student wishing to speak privately and in confidence about discrimination and sexual harassment may contact the UVM Counseling Center.

All complaints of discrimination and sexual harassment are considered as "official" complaints. With the exception of counselors in the EAP Program and the Counseling Center, all University officials such as deans, directors, department chairs, and supervisory level personnel are required to notify the Office of Affirmative Action and Equal Opportunity or the Office of the Vice President for Student Affairs of discrimination and sexual harassment allegations.

Overall, the institution believes it manages its administrative operations with honesty and integrity. Clear policies ensuring institutional integrity have been established and widely publicized. Included among them are appropriate policies and procedures for the fair resolution of grievances brought by faculty, staff, and students.

### **The Staff**

Staff members (employees who are not faculty and who hold one of the positions included in the University's position classification system) have grievance procedures separate from those available to faculty and officers of the institution.

Of approximately 1,800 staff, 17 police officers are represented by the Teamsters for the purpose of collective bargaining and 320 are represented by the United Electrical Workers. Each of these units is presently bargaining their first collective bargaining agreements with the University and each will, upon signing contracts, have grievance procedures separate from the remainder of University staff members. These grievance procedures will include union representation and final resolution in a hearing before the State of Vermont Labor Relations Board. As in all cases of employee relations, the University seeks to maintain processes that are fair and intends to bargain in good faith.

The remaining 1500 staff have access to two sequential grievance processes.

*Grievance Process I:* The new grievance process for non-represented staff (new process went into effect on August 1, 1998) begins with an informal step in which the staff member has access to staff mediation. The staff member may, should he or she choose, receive assistance from a staff advocate who, at the staff member's request, helps in advocating a position in the grievance process.

If the grievance is not resolved during the informal stages that include mediation, the grievance may be taken before a University panel, which will hear the grievance and recommend a resolution to the grievance. This recommendation is subject to executive review and implementation.

*Grievance Process II:* If the grievance is not resolved within the University's grievance process, the complaint may be taken to the State Labor Relations Board for hearing and final disposition.

A completely separate procedure exists for staff members to appeal salary decisions. This process begins with the Wage and Salary Office of the Human Resources Department.

With all three grievance processes being implemented as new for the upcoming year, there will be a very significant need for communication among staff and their supervisors and training on how the process will work.

The University's Staff Council is optimistic regarding the new procedure for non-union personnel and will play a significant role in making the new grievance procedure a success.

### **Faculty**

The Faculty Grievance Procedure is outlined in Section 270 of the *Officers' Handbook*. The structure and process is designed to ensure maximum faculty representation, due process, and openness. The Faculty Ombudsperson is charged to provide faculty with the necessary support, advice, and assistance in seeking resolution of a complaint through the normal institutional process. The process includes a representative grievance committee composed of elected faculty members and an appeal process.

In its relationships with the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education, the institution believes it demonstrates honesty and integrity, and it complies with the Commission's Standards, policies, and requests.

The institution's commitment to forthright documentation can be seen in the 1988 Report from the Commission, which noted UVM's honest and open reporting and assessment and the 1993 UVM Interim Commission Report.

In addition to the considerations stated in this Standard, the institution adheres to these requirements related to institutional integrity embodied in all other commission standards.

The institution periodically assesses the effectiveness of its ethical policies and procedures and demonstrates that mechanisms exist for the effective implementation of its principles.

This effort by the institution is demonstrated by the commitment to on-going self-examination and the willingness to engage external review as a means of supporting and holding the institution accountable to its high ethical standards.

