



POLICY TITLE
Student Complaint and Grievance

POLICY NUMBER
13-001

Responsible Unit: <i>Center for Student Success</i>	Effective Date: <i>02/21/2020</i>
Responsible Official: <i>Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs and Enrollment Management</i>	Last Reviewed Date:
Policy Classification: <i>Student Affairs</i>	Origination Date: <i>01/30/2020</i>

I. POLICY STATEMENT AND RATIONALE

Southern University at Shreveport LA (SUSLA) is committed to supporting students and helping them when possible, to positively resolve issues, complaints and concerns that might impact their educational goals. The Student Complaint Policy provides students the opportunity to express their views on college-related conditions which impede their education and to seek relief from those conditions.

II. POLICY SCOPE AND AUDIENCE

This policy applies to all students enrolled at SUSLA at the time that the complaint is filed in accordance with the policy. This policy shall be observed by all SUSLA faculty and staff on all of its campuses, including other campuses where its College Connect programs are established.

III. POLICY COMPLIANCE

Failure to comply with this policy may result in no action being taken with respect to the subject matter of the complaint. Where such failure also causes violation of rules and policies regarding student or employee conduct, disciplinary action may result in accordance with the applicable rules

and policies. The filing, processing and resolving of all student complaints shall comply with this policy except where explicitly noted herein.

If a student complaint involves a Title IX offense (sexual assault, sexual harassment, etc.), proceed to the SUSLA Title IX Compliance and Ethics. <http://www.susla.edu/page/title-ix>.

Similarly, if your concerns are about academic accommodations for students with disabilities, you must discuss them with the Office of Disability Support Services located on the SUSLA website under Offices and Services at Title II 504 Compliance. <http://www.susla.edu/page/disability-support-services>

IV. POLICY DEFINITIONS

Student – a student is defined as one who is enrolled in courses at SUSLA, whether full-time or part-time, for credit or non-credit or mode of course delivery (face-to-face, on-line). An individual is no longer considered a student upon graduation, official withdrawal from the University, expulsion from the University, or death. Parents, relatives, employers, agents, and other persons acting for or on behalf of a student are not students within the meaning of this policy.

Student Complaint – any written concern made and signed by a student that is received by an authorized official of the university.

Days – indicates SUSLA business days. In calculating time lines under this policy, the day a document is filed is day zero. The following day is day one.

Complaint/Grievance - the terms “complaint” and “grievance” shall have the same meaning.

Harassment-- abusive or hostile conduct that is directed toward or inflicted upon another person because of his or her race, color, religion, ethnicity, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, age, disability, or veteran's status. Because of its severity or pervasiveness of this conduct, it unreasonably interferes with an individual's work or academic performance or creates a hostile or abusive work or learning environment for that individual's work, education, or participation in a [college] activity. Typically, harassment is based on stereotyped prejudices and includes, but is not limited to, slurs, jokes, objectionable epithets, or other verbal, graphic, or physical conduct that demeans, insults, or intimidates an individual because of his or her race, color, religion, ethnicity, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, age, disability, or veteran status.

Sexual Misconduct - Sexual Misconduct is a sexual act or contact of a sexual nature that occurs, regardless of personal relationship, without the consent of the other person(s), or that occurs when the person(s) is unable to give consent or whose consent is coerced or obtained in a fraudulent manner. As defined by the Board of Regents, Sexual Misconduct includes, but is not limited to, sexual assault, sexual abuse, violence of a sexual nature, sexual harassment, non-consensual sexual intercourse, sexual exploitation, video voyeurism, contact of a sexual nature with an object, or the obtaining, posting or disclosure of intimate descriptions, photos, or videos without the express consent of the persons depicted therein, as well as dating violence, domestic violence and stalking.

Representative - shall mean any person who or organization that is designated by the student to represent the student in the complaint process.

V. POLICY IMPLEMENTATION PROCEDURES

The University encourages students to voice their concerns and seek resolution of their grievances/complaints. The university complaint process adheres to the principle that the rights and responsibilities of students will be observed and students will be free from retaliation. The University encourages students to first informally discuss their concerns with the person most directly responsible for the condition which brought about the complaint.

To ensure that all student complaints are consistent with the procedural processes, tracking and logging throughout all campuses, the Office of the Vice Chancellor of Student Affairs and Enrollment Management will administer the student complaint process and coordinate with complaint processing designees of each unit involved in processing a student complaint.

The student complaint process will consist of two levels, informal and formal, each with steps that prescribe the action and the time for the process. All students are required to follow these steps to resolve all complaints from informal to formal complaints. Students are strongly encouraged to resolve conflicts under the informal complaint process level first before advancing to the formal complaint process level.

General Provisions

Filing

Complaint and Appeal forms are filed electronically through the university website. Filings submitted by electronic communication are deemed to be filed timely if they are received by the close of business on the deadline, as indicated by the date/time shown on the electronic communication.

Copies of any documents that support the complaint should be attached to the complaint form. If the student does not attach such documents at filing, copies of these documents may be presented at the Informal Complaint Process Level conference. After the Level 1 Informal Complaint Process conference, no new documents may be submitted by the student unless the student did not know the documents existed before the Level 1 Informal Complaint Process conference.

A complaint or appeal form that is incomplete in any material aspect may be dismissed but may be refiled with all the required information if the refiled is within the designated time for filing.

Scheduling Conferences

The University shall make reasonable attempts to schedule conferences at a mutually agreeable time. If a student fails to appear at a scheduled conference, the University may hold the conference and issue a decision in the student's absence.

Response

On each Level, Steps One, Two, and Three, “response” shall mean a written communication to the student from the appropriate administrator. Responses are sent by electronic communication to the student’s e-mail address of record or a copy may be sent by mail (if the student noted this preference in the complaint form) to the student’s mailing address of record. Mailed responses shall be timely if they are postmarked by U.S. Mail on or before the deadline.

Representative

The student may designate a representative through written notice to the University at any level of this process. If the student designates a representative with fewer than three days’ notice to the University before a scheduled conference or hearing, the University may reschedule the conference or hearing to a later date, if desired, in order to include the University’s counsel. The University may be represented by counsel at any level of the process.

Consolidating Complaints

Complaints arising out of an event or a series of related events shall be addressed in one complaint. A student shall not file separate or serial complaints arising from any event or series of events that have been or could have been addressed in a previous complaint.

Notice to Students

The University shall inform students of this policy through university publications, orientations and student forums. <http://www.susla.edu/assets/susla/StudentHandbook2019-202191619.pdf>

Untimely Filings

All time limits shall be strictly followed unless modified by mutual written consent.

If a complaint form or appeal notice is not timely filed, the complaint may be dismissed, on written notice to the student, at any point during the complaint process. The student may appeal the dismissal by seeking review in writing within ten days from the date of the written dismissal notice, starting at the level at which the complaint was dismissed. Such appeal shall be limited to the issue of timeliness.

Costs Incurred

Each party shall pay its own costs incurred in the course of the complaint.

Complaint and Appeal Forms

Complaints and appeals under this policy shall be submitted in writing on a form provided by the University. <http://www.susla.edu/form/student-complaint-form>

Copies of any documents that support the complaint should be attached to the complaint form. If the student does not attach such documents at filing, copies of these documents may be presented at the Informal Complaint Process Level conference. After the Level 1 Informal Complaint Process conference, no new documents may be submitted by the student unless the student did not know the documents existed before the Level 1 Informal Complaint Process conference.

A complaint or appeal form that is incomplete in any material aspect may be dismissed but may be refiled with all the required information if the refiled is within the designated time for filing.

Freedom from Retaliation

No employee of SUSLA nor persons in the SU system to whom the complaint is referred shall unlawfully retaliate against any student for bringing a concern or complaint.

Level 1 Informal Complaint Process Level (Steps 1 & 2):

Step 1: Address the Matter Informally

The purpose of the informal process is to try to amicably resolve the problem informally as soon as possible. Students should be aware they have 15 days from the date of the incident that caused his/her concerns to file their informal complaint. If the student files a formal complaint before a decision has been rendered in the informal process, the student whose concerns are resolved during the informal process may withdraw a formal complaint.

In the informal complaint process, if the student feels safe or comfortable, the University encourages students to discuss their concerns with the appropriate instructor or an administrator, one-on-one, who has the authority to address the problem. The University recommends that students use the Student Complaint Resolution Chart to identify the appropriate person to address their concern initially.

When attempting to resolve a concern or conflict informally, it is important to address the concern, to the best of the students' ability, discuss the concern clarify the requested resolution of the matter. Most concerns and problems can be resolved during the informal process.

Step 2: Speak with Next Level of Supervisory Authority

If the student is not satisfied with the outcome of their initial attempt to resolve the complaint, the student may continue to resolve their concerns informally by requesting to meet and discuss them with the supervisor of the administrator with whom the initially met with seeking resolution. Students should consult the Student Complaint Resolution Chart for this purpose.

If the complaint is not resolved by working with the Supervisor, or if the conference is not granted the student in time to avoid expiration of the 15 days to file a formal complaint, the student may file a formal complaint at this time.

Note: If the complaint is not filed with the appropriate administrator, the receiving administrator must note the date and time of receipt and immediately forward the complaint to the appropriate

administrator. The appropriate administrator shall investigate the complaint as necessary and schedule a conference with the student within 10 days after receipt of the complaint.

Level 2 Formal Complaint Process Level (Steps 3, 4 & 5):

Step 3: File a Formal Complaint Online (*including harassment or retaliation complaints*)

Official complaints can be filed after clicking on the Student Complaint Form on the “Current Students” web page. An investigation of the complaint will be processed by the appropriate staff member responsible for taking appropriate action on matters within his/her jurisdiction or for routing the complaint to the appropriate authority for action.

The administrator to whom the complaint has been referred will investigate the complaint and schedule a conference with the student within 10 days after receipt of the written complaint. This administrator will set reasonable time limits for the conference. The investigation may include compiling the appropriate records relating to this complaint, specifically including the information resulting from the informal process, scheduling of the student to discuss his/her complaint with the next level administrator.

Absent any extenuating circumstances, the next level administrator is charged with rendering a written response to the student’s complaint within 10 days following the conference. The written response shall set forth the basis for the decision. The administrator may consider information provided during the Step 1 and Step 2 of the informal process and any relevant documents or information the administrator believes will help resolve the complaint.

The Step 3 records should include:

1. The original complaint form and any attachments
2. Documents from the Informal Complaint process.
3. The written response and attachments issued at Step 2.
4. All other documents relied upon by the Step 2 administrator in reaching its decision.

If the student did not receive the requested resolution at Step 3 or if the time for a response has expired, the student may request a conference with the executive official to the next level administrator. The administrator on this level is charged with rendering a response to the student’s complaint within 10 days following the conference. If the student is yet not relieved of the requested resolution, the student may file an appeal to the Chancellor or his/her designee to appeal the decision rendered in Step 3.

Step 4: File an Appeal Online

The appeal notice must be filed in writing on the form provided on the SUSLA website under “Current Students” within 10 days of the Step 3 written response or if no response was received, within 10 days of the Step 3 response deadline.

After receiving the notice of appeal, the Step 3 administrator shall assemble all records used at each step in the complaint process to render a response and forward them to the Chancellor or his/her designee. The Chancellor or his/her designee will consider the relevant documentation and may at his or her discretion, consult with complaint respondents who rendered decisions at each level of the process. The Chancellor or his/her designee may interview any parties relevant to

complaint. If the Chancellor or his/her designee determines that the complaint process has been conducted in accordance with this policy and the outcome is appropriate, the Chancellor or his/her designee may dismiss the appeal. Alternately, he/she will decide the appeal in consultation persons chosen to participate on the appeal hearing. The Chancellor or his/her designee shall inform the student of the date, time and place of the appeal hearing at which the final resolution will be rendered. The appeal shall be limited to issues and documents considered at Step 3, except that if at Step 4 the hearing administration intends to rely on evidence not included in the Step 3 record, the administration shall provide the student notice of the nature of the evidence at least three days before the hearing.

Once a complaint has been fully vetted and all steps have been followed and a resolution to the complaint has been issued (by the University), an individual can move beyond the University if displeased with the result.

Step 5: External Complaints Following an Appeals Hearing

This step is used only if the student is dissatisfied with the outcome of an Appeals Hearing (Step 4 of this) and have exhausted the complete complaint process at SUSLA. If the student is dissatisfied with the outcome of a fully vetted complaint, he/she may report the complaint to the proper external agency that governs the college.

Recording Student Complaints

SUSLA Student Complaint Log is administered by the Office of Student Affairs and Enrollment Management (SAEM). The vice chancellor of student affairs and enrollment management is responsible for this function or their designee.

All units that receive and resolve student complaints are required to record complaints and their resolution in the University Student Complaint Log, provided by the Office of Student Affairs and Enrollment Management or his/her designee. This will be the formal record of information obtained from all other forms of recording student complaints. Recorded complaints must be 1) student-initiated, 2) received from currently enrolled students, and 3) in written form (paper or electronic).

The Complaint Log contains confidential information regarding formal complaints filed by current students. The log is to include the following confidential information to be maintained on each complaint by the designee(s):

1. Date the complaint was filed;
2. Name of student and student ID;
3. Description of the complaint;
4. Steps taken to resolve the complaint and all documentation associated with those steps;
5. Date and the final resolution, action or explanation regarding the complaint, including referral to outside agencies; and
6. Any other external actions initiated by the student to resolve the complaint, if known by SUSLA (e.g. lawsuit, EEOC investigation, etc.)

Information on all student complaints may be made available for outside review by the Department of Education, Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACS COC) and any other official legally entitled to such review; however, steps will be taken to insure the anonymity of any student who files a complaint.

VI. POLICY RELATED INFORMATION

This Policy is aligned with the Louisiana Board of Regents Student Complaint Process

Filing a Student Complaint Against a Louisiana Institution

1. Process for students enrolled at a Louisiana public post-secondary academic degree-granting institution:

The first step for students who wish to file a complaint against a Louisiana institution is to exhaust **all** of the institution's student complaint or grievance procedures. An institution's student complaint or grievance procedures are typically available in the academic catalog or student handbook on the institution's website.

<https://regents.la.gov/students-parents/student-complaint-process/>

This Policy is aligned with Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) Section 12: Academic and Student Support Services 12.4. The institution (a) publishes appropriate and clear procedures for addressing written student complaints, (b) demonstrates that it follows the procedures when resolving them, and (c) maintains a record of student complaints that can be accessed upon request by SACSCOC. (Student

complaints). <http://sacscoc.org/app/uploads/2019/08/2018PrinciplesOfAcreditation.pdf>

SUSLA student complaint form <http://www.susla.edu/form/student-complaint-form>

Student Complaint Resolution Chart <http://www.susla.edu/form/student-complaint-form>

SUSLA Student Handbook <http://www.susla.edu/assets/susla/StudentHandbook2019-202191619.pdf>

Title IX and Ethics - <http://www.susla.edu/page/title-ix>

Office for Civil Rights, Dallas Office, U.S. Department of Education, 1999 Bryan Street, Suite 1620, Dallas, TX 75201-6810. The email address for OCR is OCR.Dallas@ed.gov.

VII. POLICY HISTORY AND REVIEW CYCLE

This is a new policy that is subject to a five-year policy review cycle.

VIII. POLICY URL

www.susla.edu

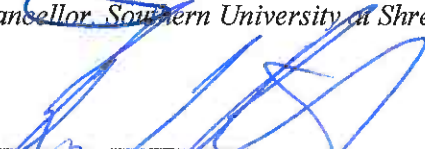
IX. POLICY APPROVAL



Rodney A. Ellis, Ed.D.
Chancellor, Southern University at Shreveport

2/21/20

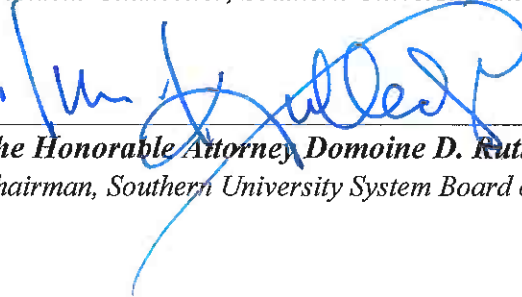
Effective Date of Policy



Ray L. Belton, Ph.D.
President-Chancellor, Southern University and A&M College System

2/21/20

Effective Date of Policy



The Honorable Attorney Domoine D. Rutledge, Esq.
Chairman, Southern University System Board of Supervisors

2-21-20

Effective Date of Policy

