L. COMPLAINT PROCEDURES

I. General Information For All Complaints

a. Application of Policy

Both below-listed complaint procedures are intended to provide a mechanism to investigate and resolve complaints of alleged violations of this Policy against employees and students. The procedures outlined below are intended to ensure that the College will conduct an impartial, fair, effective, and efficient investigation of all allegations of violations of this Policy without fear of retaliation. The complaint procedure is available to any employee or student, or applicant for employment or admission, who believes he/she has been subjected to Prohibited Conduct or Title IX Sexual Harassment as defined under this Policy. A complaint filed in another forum does not preclude an individual from filing a complaint under this Policy. Further, a complaint filed in another forum, including a criminal or civil complaint, shall not delay an investigation of a complaint filed under this Policy.

b. Confidentiality of Process

The complaint procedure will be conducted as confidentially as reasonably possible to protect the privacy rights of all individuals involved. The College may share information concerning the complaint with parties, witnesses and/or others during any phase of the procedure on a need-to-know basis and shall share information with union representatives as provided for in G.L. c.150E. All individuals with whom information is shared shall be advised of the confidential nature of the information and directed not to discuss the matter with anyone other than an advisor, if applicable.

c. Complainant Requests Confidentiality

Where a Complainant requests that no action be taken by the College or requests that her/his identity not be revealed, the College shall take reasonable steps to investigate and respond to the complaint, but shall inform the Complainant that such a request may hamper its ability to fully investigate an alleged violation of this Policy and/or to take appropriate remedial steps, including disciplinary action. Where an allegation of Prohibited Conduct involves the potential of an ongoing threat to the health, safety or security of the College or a potential adverse employment action, the Affirmative Action Officer, or in the case of an allegation of Title IX Sexual Harassment, the Title IX Coordinator, shall inform the Complainant that it cannot ensure confidentiality and disclosure of their name may likely be required.

d. Off Campus Behavior

The College reserves the right to investigate alleged Prohibited Conduct under this Policy occurring off-campus when such conduct adversely affects the College Community, poses a threat of harm to the College Community; interferes with the College’s pursuit of its educational objectives and mission, and/or if a student or employee is charged with a serious violation of state or federal law. Title IX Sexual Harassment occurs in the College’s education program or activity, against a person in the United States. Education program or activity includes locations, events, or
circumstances over which the College exercised substantial control over both the Respondent and the context in which the conduct occurs, and also includes any building owned or controlled by a student organization that is officially recognized by the College.

e. **Supportive Measures**

Title IX requires the College to take non-disciplinary/non-punitive reasonable steps to preserve or restore equal access to its education programs and activities and protect individuals from Prohibited Conduct and Title IX Sexual Harassment, including offering supportive measures before the final outcome of an investigation, irrespective of whether the complainant ever chooses to file a Formal Complaint. Such measures are designed to restore or preserve equal access to the College’s education program or activity without unreasonably burdening the other party, including measures designed to protect the safety of all parties or the College’s educational environment, or deter all forms of sexual harassment. The College shall take these steps promptly once it has notice of an allegation of Prohibited Conduct or Title IX Sexual Harassment. Examples of supportive measures include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Counseling;
- Extensions of deadlines or other course-related adjustments (for example: changing class schedule, withdrawal without penalty, providing student services such as tutoring, alternate class completion options);
- Modifications of work schedules or job assignments;
- Campus escort services;
- Mutual restrictions on contact between the parties;
- Changes in work or housing locations (if applicable);
- Leaves of absence, increased security and monitoring of certain areas of the campus; and
- Other similar measures.

The specific supportive measures implemented and the process for implementing those measures will vary depending on the facts of each case. The College will consider a number of factors in determining what supportive measures to take, including, for example, the specific needs expressed by each party; the severity or pervasiveness of the allegations; any continuing effects on each party; whether the parties share the same classes, dining hall schedule, transportation, or job location; and whether other judicial measures have been taken to protect the victim (e.g., civil protection orders).

In general, when taking supportive measures, the College shall minimize the burden on each party. The College must maintain as confidential any supportive measures provided to the parties, to the extent that maintaining such confidentiality would not impair the ability of the College to provide the supportive measures.

f. **Interim Action and Emergency Removal**

The College reserves the right to suspend a student on an interim basis or place an employee on paid administrative leave prior to completing an investigation under this Policy when it reasonably concludes that a student or employee: (a) poses a threat to health or safety; (b) poses a threat to College property or equipment; (c) is disruptive or interferes with the normal operations of the
College; or (d) is charged with a serious violation of state or federal law. In such cases, the College shall provide the employee or student of the specific reason(s) for the interim action. During a student’s interim suspension or an employee’s leave, the College reserves the right to prohibit the individual from entering upon the College’s property or participating in any College activities absent written authorization from an appropriate official of the College.

In the case of a Title IX Sexual Harassment claim, the College must base its decision to institute interim action (i.e., emergency removal) on the following factors: (1) It undertakes an individualized safety and risk analysis, (2) determines that an immediate threat to the physical health or safety of any student or other individual arising from the allegations of Title IX Sexual Harassment justifies removal, and (3) provides the respondent with notice and an opportunity to challenge the decision immediately following the removal. A respondent subject to emergency removal from the Title IX Coordinator may appeal the decision per the Appeal procedure below in Step 4 of the Title IX Sexual Harassment Complaint Process. The College shall make reasonable efforts to minimize disruption in the professional or educational experience of all affected parties. The College, Complainant, and Respondent will take reasonable efforts to preserve all relevant materials to a complaint, including communications (e.g. email and voice) and documents.

g. Joint Investigation

In some circumstances a Responding Party’s conduct may constitute a potential violation of this Policy and/or other conduct policies applicable to employees or students. In such cases, in order to avoid duplicative investigatory efforts, a joint investigation under this Policy may be conducted by the AAO or, in the case of an alleged Title IX Sexual Harassment, the Title IX Coordinator, and the administrator charged with enforcing conduct policies. For example, if the Responding Party is a student, the Affirmative Action Officer (or Title IX Coordinator if a Title IX Sexual Harassment is alleged) and Student Code of Conduct Officer may jointly investigate the complaint. Based on the findings of their joint investigation, the student may be subject to disciplinary action for violations of this Policy and/or the Student Code of Conduct. Where the Responding Party is an employee, a joint investigation may be conducted by the Affirmative Action Officer (or Title IX Coordinator if a Title IX Sexual Harassment is alleged) and the employee’s supervisor. Based on the findings of their joint investigation, the employee may be subject to disciplinary action for violations of this Policy and/or for inappropriate and unprofessional conduct.

h. Collateral Rights of Employees

Any disciplinary action taken against an employee shall be regarded as an administrative action subject to all terms and conditions of applicable collective bargaining agreements.

i. Anonymous Report

Any individual may file an anonymous report concerning any Prohibited Conduct or Title IX Sexual Harassment referenced under this Policy. An individual may report the incident without disclosing his/her name, identifying the respondent or requesting any action. An anonymous report may be filed with the Affirmative Action Officer or, in the case of an allegation of Title IX Sexual Harassment, the Title IX Coordinator. Depending on the level of information available about the
incident or the individuals involved, however, the College’s ability to respond to an anonymous report may be limited (e.g. offering supportive measures to a Complainant of Title IX Sexual Harassment).

**j. Amnesty**

Students may be hesitant to report sexual violence out of concern that they, or witnesses, might be charged with violations of the College’s drug/alcohol policies. While the College does not condone such behavior, it places a priority on addressing allegations of sexual violence. Accordingly, the College may elect not to pursue discipline against a student who, in good faith, reports, witnesses or possesses personal knowledge of an incident of sexual violence.

**k. False Charges**

Filing a false charge under this Policy is a serious offense. If an investigation reveals that a complainant knowingly filed false charges, the College shall take appropriate actions and issue sanctions pursuant to other applicable College policies, including any applicable collective bargaining agreement. The imposition of such sanctions does not constitute retaliation under this Policy. A report made in good faith, however, is not considered false merely because the evidence does not ultimately support the allegation of prohibited conduct.

**l. Informal Procedures**

Where appropriate, the parties to a dispute and/or the Affirmative Action Officer or Title IX Coordinator may attempt to reach an informal and prompt resolution of the matter. Informal resolution is encouraged and any of the parties involved may request the intervention of the Affirmative Action Officer/Title IX Coordinator to assist in resolving the matter informally. An informal resolution is achieved through open or closed dialogue between the parties that allows for the airing of any misunderstandings or disputed issues. The informal procedure shall not be used in an effort to resolve student allegations of any type of sexual harassment/violence asserted against an employee, or in cases involving sexual harassment/violence unless a Formal Complaint is filed. If the parties accept the informal resolution, its terms shall be reduced to writing, signed by both parties, and the Affirmative Action Officer/Title IX Coordinator shall retain the document, with copies to the parties; thereafter, the matter shall be considered resolved between the parties. In the case where the Respondent is an employee, prior to execution of a resolution, they will be notified that a copy of the informal resolution may be placed in their personnel file. The parties may request from the College that an informal resolution not be placed in the Respondent’s personnel file; however, the College retains the sole discretion to approve or to deny this request. In cases where such request is denied, each party reserves their right to withdraw from the informal resolution process and resume the Complaint process. All other documents related to the informal resolution of a Complaint shall be kept separate from the personnel file. Further, at no time shall a responding party question or confront a Complainant, or engage a third party to do so, as such conduct may constitute intimidation and/or retaliation, which are strictly prohibited under this Policy.
II. Complaint Process

The following rules apply throughout all phases of the complaint process, (except where there is a Formal Complaint of Title IX Sexual Harassment): (1) all parties to a complaint may have an advisor; (2) the role of an advisor is limited to providing discrete advice and counsel to the party; (3) the filing of a complaint under this Policy shall not preclude a Complainant from pursuing a complaint in a separate legal forum; (4) a grade dispute based on alleged Prohibited Conduct shall proceed under this Policy and not the Grade Appeal Process contained in the Student Grievance Procedure; and (5) all findings reached under Complaint Procedure must be based on a “preponderance of evidence” (i.e.; more likely than not) standard.

At any point during the complaint procedure, either party may request mediation by contacting the Affirmative Action Officer. The purpose of mediation is to resolve the dispute to the satisfaction of both parties. Mediation shall be mutually agreed upon by the parties. The Affirmative Action Officer, or designee, shall select an impartial mediator, who shall be mutually agreed upon and not unreasonably refused by either party, and inform the parties in writing of the mediation process and schedule. The mediator must have training or experience in mediating matters subject to this complaint process. Where practicable, a mediation session shall be conducted no later than thirty (30) days after agreed to by the parties. The timelines presented under the Complaint Procedure shall be tolled pending the outcome of mediation. If mediation is successful in resolving the complaint, the Affirmative Action Officer shall reduce to writing the terms of the mediated resolution, which shall be signed by the parties. If mediation does not result in a resolution, all mediation discussions shall remain confidential and may not be used or introduced in this process or any other forum.

Step 1 – Investigation

When a Complainant believes that he/she has been subjected to Prohibited Conduct, the Complainant may file a written complaint with the Affirmative Action Officer. For student Complainants, a complaint may be filed within thirty (30) days following the end of the instructional period when the Complainant knew or should have known of the grievable act. For employee Complainants, a complaint may be filed within thirty (30) days from when the Complainant knew or should have known of the grievable act. The complaint shall contain a statement of all known facts pertaining to the alleged violation and shall be filed preferably on the Affirmative Action Discrimination Complaint Form (see Appendix A). If a student is involved, the Affirmative Action Officer shall notify the Vice President or Dean of Student Services.

During Step 1, the Affirmative Action Officer has the authority to seek to resolve the complaint through an administrative remedy. If the parties accept the administrative remedy proposed, its terms shall be reduced to writing, signed by both parties and the Affirmative Action Officer shall retain the document, with copies to the parties. Thereafter, the matter shall be considered resolved between the parties.

Upon receiving a written complaint, the Affirmative Action Officer will notify the Responding Party in writing, of the complaint (see Appendix B), and provide the Responding Party with a copy thereof. The timeliness of such notification shall be in accordance with the appropriate collective bargaining agreement, if applicable. The Responding Party shall have ten (10) days
from receipt of notice to submit to the Affirmative Action Officer a written response to the complaint.

Where practicable, within thirty (30) days from the date the Respondent’s written response is received, or the date it was due if none was submitted, the Affirmative Action Officer shall conduct an investigation and prepare and issue a Report of Preliminary Findings to the parties. The investigation shall include, but is not limited to, an analysis of the allegations and defenses presented, consideration of all relevant documents, including materials presented by the parties, interviews of the parties and other individuals and/or witnesses, and/or reviewing certain documents or materials in the possession of either party that the Affirmative Action Officer has deemed relevant to the complaint. The Affirmative Action Officer’s report shall specify the investigation undertaken and summarize his/her preliminary findings. The report shall be delivered to the parties in hand or by certified mail. If the investigation is not completed within thirty (30) days, status updates shall be provided to the parties every thirty (30) days until it is completed. Any request by a party to extend a deadline established under this procedure shall be presented in writing to the Affirmative Action Officer.

Thereafter, the parties will have ten (10) days from the date of their receipt of the Report of Preliminary Findings to submit Rebuttal Statements to the Affirmative Action Officer. The parties may present no new allegations at that time. Where practicable, within seven (7) days of receiving the parties’ Rebuttal Statements, the Affirmative Action Officer shall review the Rebuttal Statements and prepare and submit a Report of Final Findings and Recommendations to the President’s Designee for consideration.

**Step 2 – Review and Decision by the President’s Designee**

Where practicable, within ten (10) days of receipt of the Affirmative Action Officer’s Report of Final Findings and Recommendations, the President’s Designee shall issue a written decision to the parties. The written decision shall accept, reject or modify the Affirmative Action Officer’s Final Findings and Recommendations. The Designee’s written decision shall be delivered in hand or by certified mail and shall include the Report of Final Findings and Recommendations. If the President is the Responding Party in an Affirmative Action Complaint, then the Chair of the College’s Board of Trustees shall designate a Board member(s) as Designee to administer Step 2 of the Complaint Process.

**Step 3 – Appeal to President**

A party who is not satisfied with the Designee’s written decision may file an appeal with the President within five (5) days of receiving the Designee’s decision. Where practicable, within five (5) days of receiving the appeal, the President shall issue a written decision accepting, rejecting or modifying the Designee’s decision. The President’s decision is final provided that any corrective action and/or discipline imposed are subject to applicable collective bargaining agreements.

If the President is the Responding Party in an Affirmative Action Complaint, then the Chair of the College’s Board of Trustees shall consider the appeal and issue the written decision.
III. Title IX Sexual Harassment Complaint Process

Formal Complaint Requirement
This Title IX Sexual Harassment Complaint Process shall be available for allegations involving a Formal Complaint of Title IX Sexual Harassment.\(^1\) The College may consolidate Formal Complaints as to allegations of Title IX Sexual Harassment against more than one Respondent, or by more than one Complainant against one or more Respondents, or by one party against the other party, where the allegations arise out of the same facts or circumstances. A party may raise concerns to the Title IX Coordinator (or designee) as to any consolidation; however, the College retains the right to proceed with any consolidation in its sole discretion.

Jurisdiction of the College
By simultaneous written notice to the parties, the College must dismiss any Formal Complaint with regard to that conduct for purposes of Title IX Sexual Harassment, if the conduct alleged:
- Would not constitute Title IX Sexual Harassment as defined, even if proven;
- Did not occur in the College’s education program or activity; or
- Did not occur against a person in the United States.

The College may dismiss any Formal Complaint for the purposes of Title IX Sexual Harassment if:
- A Complainant withdraws the Formal Complaint or any allegations therein;
- The Respondent is no longer enrolled or employed by the College; or
- Specific circumstances prevent the College from gathering evidence sufficient to reach a determination as to the Formal Complaint or allegations therein.\(^2\)

In the case that a Formal Complaint is precluded from review under the Title IX Sexual Harassment Complaint Procedure for jurisdiction purposes, the College reserves the right to address such other complaints under the Complaint Process (found herein at Section L., II.).

Step 1 – Investigation
Upon receipt of a Formal Complaint (preferably in the format of Appendix C), the Title IX Coordinator (or designee) must promptly contact the Complainant confidentially to discuss the availability of supportive measures and resources, consider the Complainant’s wishes with respect to these supportive measures, and explain to the Complainant the Title IX Sexual Harassment Complaint Process. If a student is involved, the Title IX Coordinator shall notify the Vice President or Dean of Student Services.

Within five (5) days of receiving a Formal Complaint, the Title IX Coordinator will notify the Respondent in writing of the Formal Complaint (see Appendix D), provide the Respondent with a copy thereof and discuss supportive measures. The timeliness of such notification shall be in accordance with the appropriate collective bargaining agreement, if applicable. The Respondent shall have five (5) days from receipt of notice to submit to the Title IX Coordinator a written response to the Formal Complaint.

\(^1\) A College may address sexual harassment affecting its students or employees that falls outside Title IX’s jurisdiction, including by providing supportive measures or pursuing discipline consistent with applicable policies.

\(^2\) This decision may be appealed consistent with the appeal procedure in Step 4 below.
Where practicable, within fifteen (15) days from the date the Respondent’s written response is received, or the date it was due if none was submitted, the Title IX Coordinator shall conduct an investigation and issue all evidence\(^3\) gathered to the parties (and Advisors) for review and written response within ten (10) days upon their receipt.\(^4\) Upon receipt of said parties’ written response(s), or the date they were due if none were submitted, the Title IX Coordinator will have ten (10) days to complete and send an investigative report that fairly summarizes the relevant evidence to each party (and Advisor) for their review and written response within ten (10) days upon their receipt. Within ten (10) days of receipt, the Title IX Coordinator shall review the responses (if any) and prepare and submit the final investigative report including all relevant evidence (and including a section denoting all evidence submitted that was found by the Title IX Coordinator not to be relevant) to the Decision Maker; simultaneously, the Title IX Coordinator shall notice all parties of a hearing date that shall take place no later than ten (10) days later. Any request by a party to extend a deadline established under this Procedure shall be presented in writing to the Title IX Coordinator.

**Step 2 – Hearing**

The Title IX Coordinator (or designee) will be responsible for coordinating the hearing process. The Decision Maker shall be responsible for conducting the hearing. The duties of the Title IX Coordinator will include: scheduling the hearing; notifying the parties, advisors, and witnesses of the hearing; ensuring that the trained Decision Maker is provided with appropriate materials including a copy of the final investigative report and any exhibits; coordinating videoconferencing (if necessary); and securing a location for the hearing. The Title IX Coordinator will also act as liaison between the parties and the Decision Maker on procedural matters. A hearing is conducted in private. If a Respondent or Complainant has a good faith belief that the individual selected as the Decision Maker has a specific bias or conflict of interest, they may file a request with the Title IX Coordinator (or in instances where the Title IX Coordinator is serving as the Decision Maker, the request shall be directed to the individual selected as the designee in Step 1 - Investigation) for a replacement within two (2) calendar days of being noticed of the Decision Maker’s identity. The Title IX Coordinator (or designee) shall review the request and make a decision in no more than three (3) calendar days either granting the request or providing reasons for denying the request. All procedural questions are subject to the final decision of the Decision Maker.

In general, hearings will proceed as follows:

a. The Decision Maker\(^5\) shall summarize the Hearing Policy and allow the Title IX Coordinator the opportunity to briefly state the allegations and summarize the investigative report.

---

\(^3\) A College cannot access or use a party’s medical, psychological or similar treatment record unless it obtains the party’s voluntary, written consent to do so.

\(^4\) All parties (and their Advisors) are strictly prohibited from disseminating any of the evidence subject to inspection and review, or from using such evidence for any purpose unrelated to the Title IX Sexual Harassment Complaint Process.

\(^5\) A College’s Title IX Coordinator, Decision Maker, investigators and any college-chosen advisor must receive training on this Policy, issues of relevance, and how to apply the rape shield protections (*see first paragraph of Hearing Policy*) provided only for Complainants.
b. Each party’s advisor will be given the opportunity to question the other party and any witnesses by presenting questions to the Decision Maker (including questions on credibility). If the Decision Maker determines a question is relevant, the other party will be asked to respond.

c. The Decision Maker shall have a final opportunity to question the parties.
d. The Decisions Maker will conclude the hearing by informing the parties that they will issue a decision to the parties and their advisors within ten (10) days, and that it will be based upon a Preponderance of the Evidence standard (i.e.; more likely than not).

**Hearing Policy**
Questions and evidence about a Complainant’s prior sexual behavior will be deemed irrelevant unless offered to prove that someone other than the Respondent committed the alleged misconduct or offered to prove consent.

If a party does not have an advisor present at the live hearing, the College will choose a trained member of the community, to conduct cross examination on behalf of that party. All advisors are limited to active participation in the question and follow-up cross-examination part of the live hearing. Further, Advisors are the only parties allowed to present questions (cross-examination or otherwise) to the Decision Maker.

Generally, live hearings may be conducted with all parties physically present in the same geographic location. At the request of either party, the College must provide for the live hearing to occur with the parties located in separate rooms with technology enabling the Decision Maker and parties to simultaneously see and hear the party or the witness answering questions.

Only relevant questions or cross-examination questions may be asked of a party or witness. Before a Complainant, Respondent, or witness answers a cross-examination or other question, the Decision-Maker must first determine whether the question is relevant and explain to the party’s Advisor asking cross-examination questions any decision to exclude a question as not relevant. If a party or witness does not submit to cross-examination at the live hearing, the decision-maker(s) must not rely on any statement of that party or witness in reaching a determination regarding responsibility; provided, however, that the decision-maker(s) cannot draw an inference about the determination regarding responsibility based solely on a party’s or witness’s absence from the live hearing or refusal to answer cross-examination or other questions.

Formal rules of evidence applied in courtroom proceedings (e.g., Massachusetts Evidence Code) do not apply in the hearing. The Decision Maker will make an official audio recording of the hearing. The recording is College property. No other recording of the hearing is permitted. The audio recording will be retained by the Title IX Coordinator in accordance with the College’s records/information retention and disposition schedule. Access to the recording will be made available to the parties for inspection and review, however, parties are prohibited from making any copies of such recording. The recording shall only be released in compliance with applicable discovery proceedings in any future legal/administrative proceedings. The Decision Maker controls the hearing, is responsible for maintaining order during the hearing, and makes whatever rulings are necessary to ensure a fair hearing. The Decision Maker's decisions in this regard are final.
**Step 3 – Review and Decision by the Decision Maker**

The Decision-Maker must issue a written determination regarding responsibility to all parties (and their Advisors) simultaneously, within ten (10) days of the hearing. The written determination must include — Identification of the allegations potentially constituting sexual harassment; A description of the procedural steps taken from the receipt of the formal complaint through the determination, including any notifications to the parties, interviews with parties and witnesses, site visits, methods used to gather other evidence, and hearings held; Findings of fact supporting the determination; Conclusions regarding the application of the College’s code of conduct to the facts; A statement of, and rationale for, the result as to each allegation, including a determination regarding responsibility, any disciplinary sanctions the College imposes on the Respondent, and whether remedies designed to restore or preserve equal access to the College’s education program or activity will be provided by the College to the Complainant; and The College’s procedures and permissible bases for the Complainant and Respondent to appeal. The determination regarding responsibility becomes final either on the date that the College provides the parties with the written determination of the result of the appeal, if an appeal is filed, or if an appeal is not filed, the date on which an appeal would no longer be considered timely. The Title IX Coordinator is responsible for effectuating any remedies including referral to appropriate College administrators as may be applicable.

**Step 4 – Appeal to the President**

A party who is not satisfied with the Title IX Coordinator’s decision to implement an emergency removal or dismiss a Formal Complaint; or, the Decision Maker’s written decision may file an appeal with the President within five (5) days of receiving said decision, respectively on the following bases: procedural irregularity that affected the outcome of the matter, newly discovered evidence that could affect the outcome of the matter, and/or that any Title IX personnel (including the Decision Maker) had a conflict of interest or bias, that affected the outcome of the matter. Where practicable, within five (5) days of receiving the appeal, the President shall issue a written decision simultaneously to all parties, accepting, rejecting or modifying the decision, describing the result of the appeal and the rationale for the result. The President’s decision is final provided that any corrective action and/or discipline imposed are subject to applicable collective bargaining agreements. If the President is the Respondent, then the Chair of the College’s Board of Trustees shall consider the appeal and issue the written decision.