

## **HARASSMENT**

Middle Georgia College is committed to a work environment in which all individuals are treated with respect and dignity. No member of its community, including faculty, staff or students, should be subjected to any form of harassment or retaliation based on race, color, religion, gender, national origin, age, disability, or any other characteristic protected by applicable federal, state or local law. Each person has the right to work in a professional atmosphere that promotes equal employment opportunities and prohibits discriminatory practices, including sexual harassment. Therefore, Middle Georgia College will not condone harassment described above or the sexual exploitation of individuals in the workplace, and expects that all relationships within the community to be business-like and free of harassment.

### **Definition**

Examples of harassing conduct include, but are not limited to, the following:

- (1) Epithets, slurs, negative stereotyping, intimidating, or hostile acts that relate to race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, or disability; and
- (2) Written or graphic material that denigrates or shows hostility or aversion toward an individual or group because of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, or disability that is placed on walls, bulletin boards, or elsewhere on college premises, or circulated on the campus.

Sexual harassment constitutes discrimination and is illegal under federal and state law, and Board of Regents' policy. For the purposes of this policy, sexual harassment is defined in the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission Guidelines, as unwelcome sexual advancements, requests for sexual favors and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature when, for example:

- (1) Submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of an individual's employment; or
- (2) Submission to or rejection of such conduct by an individual is used as the basis for employment decisions affecting such individual; or
- (3) Such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's work or academic performance or creating an intimidating, hostile or offensive working environment or academic environment.

Sexual harassment may include a range of subtle and not so subtle behaviors and may involve individuals of the same or different gender. Depending on the circumstances, these behaviors may include, but not limited to: unwanted sexual advances or requests for sexual favors; sexual jokes and innuendoes; verbal abuse of a sexual nature; commentary about an individual's body, sexual prowess or sexual deficiencies; leering, whistling or touching; insulting or obscene comments or gestures; display in the workplace of sexually suggestive objects or pictures; and other physical, verbal or visual conduct of a sexual nature.

### **Retaliation Also Prohibited**

Middle Georgia College encourages the reporting of all perceived incidents of harassment. It is the policy of Middle Georgia College to investigate such reports. Middle Georgia College prohibits retaliation against any individual who reports harassment or participates in an investigation of such reports.

This policy applies to all faculty, staff and students whether related to conduct engaged in by fellow employees or someone not directly connected to Middle Georgia College (e.g., an outside vendor, consultant or customer). Conduct prohibited by this policy is unacceptable in the workplace and in any work-related setting outside the workplace, such as during business trips, business meetings and business-related social events.

### **Procedures-Submitting a Complaint**

*I* Any faculty member, staff member, or student who believes that he or she is a victim of harassment should convey clearly his/her discomfort with the conduct to the alleged offender. (If the complainant has reason to fear reprisal from the alleged offender if step one is carried out, the complainant may move directly to the next step.)

**2** If the conduct continues, the complainant should promptly report the matter to the appropriate college official designated to handle such complaints. The appropriate college official for the faculty and staff is their supervisor or department head, and for students, the Vice President for Student Affairs. The appropriate Title IX coordinators and the Section 504 coordinator will be immediately notified that the process to address grievances has been started in order to insure appropriate fairness and a process which meets federal guidelines for handling grievances and complaints. Before any proposed resolution or decision has been communicated to any party to the grievance, the coordinators will review the process and issue a determination of compliance with federal requirements and guidelines.

**3** The initial discussion between the complainant and the appropriate college official will be kept confidential to the greatest extent possible and dissemination of any information relating to the case will be limited, in order that the privacy of all individuals involved is safeguarded as fully as possible. The college will take steps to protect the complainant from retaliatory action based upon the filing of the complaint. The foregoing notwithstanding, the appropriate college official will inquire into all reports of alleged harassment brought to his or her attention.

**4** During the initial meeting with the appropriate college official, a written summary of the complaint will be made and should be signed by the complainant.

**5** The appropriate college official will inform the alleged offender (respondent) of the allegation and of the identity of the complainant, will provide him or her with a written summary of the complaint, and will proceed as set forth in the following section.

**6** If the complainant has reason to be uncomfortable reporting as directed by this policy, the complainant should report the offensive behavior to any administrator (not a subordinate of the alleged offender) with whom the complainant feels comfortable. The administrator then has the responsibility of helping the complainant with the procedure.

**1** When a complaint is submitted, the appropriate college official will discuss the matter with the parties promptly, will notify the appropriate vice president of the charge, and will initiate whatever steps he or she deems appropriate to affect an informal resolution of the complaint acceptable to both parties. If an informal resolution is reached, it will be documented in writing, approved by the appropriate college official, signed by the complainant and the respondent.

**2** If an informal resolution satisfactory to the parties is not reached within 15 workdays after an incident is reported, or if, in the opinion of the appropriate college official, an informal resolution is not possible, a full investigation will be instituted. The investigation may include interviewing witnesses identified by the parties and such other inquiries, as the appropriate college official may deem necessary. Within thirty workdays of the initiated investigation, a report of the investigation results, along with a recommendation with regard to a resolution of the complaint and/or disciplinary action, will be made to the appropriate Title IX coordinators and the Section 504 coordinator. Title IX Contact (for non-students): Director of Human Resources, Chambers House, 478-934-3082, the Title IX Contact (for students): Registrar, Peacock Hall, 478-934-3036, and the Section 504 Contact (students and non-students): Director of Student Services, Wiggs Hall, 478-934-3023.

**3** The Affirmative Action/Equal Opportunity Officer will review the results of the investigation to determine if sexual harassment occurred; and, if so, take or recommend appropriate disciplinary and/or other action. Individuals subjected to disciplinary action may exercise their appeal rights pursuant to the procedures set forth in the Faculty Handbook, the Employee Handbook or the Student Handbook as appropriate.

Revised 3-1-08