



# Student Concerns and Grievances

At times, students may have concerns, complaints and/or grievances they need to have addressed.

## **Informal avenues of resolution may be pursued:**

We would encourage students to first approach the other(s) involved to try to resolve the situation in accordance with Matthew 18. Concerns which are community-wide may be addressed to the Student Council through its officers or representatives. Concerns with another student may be addressed to the Dean of Students. Concerns with an employee may be addressed to the Senior Director of Organizational Planning & Development. Concerns with a full-time faculty member may be addressed to the Dean of Faculty. Concerns with an adjunct professor or visiting instructor may be addressed to the Dean of Academic Administration.

## **Formal avenues of resolution are as follows:**

For complaints or grievances involving an allegation of discrimination or harassment, please see the Discrimination & Harassment Grievance Procedures on the next page.

For other complaints or grievances, the Seminary has the following standard process:

1. A student who would like to file a formal complaint must do so in writing to the Dean of Students. No adverse action will be taken against a student for filing a formal complaint.
2. The Dean of Students will convene a Student Concerns Committee to review the complaint within 30 days of the formal complaint filing. The Dean of Students will serve as the chairman of the committee. He will appoint appropriate faculty, employee and/or student representatives for each complaint reviewed by a committee. The committee shall not be composed of individuals directly involved in the complaint. The committee reviewing the complaint will make recommendations to the administration for final resolution. Within 45 days of the formal complaint filing, the Dean of Students will notify the student in writing of the final resolution. This decision is considered final.
3. If the Dean of Students is directly involved in the complaint, the student may submit the formal complaint in writing to the Office of the President. The President shall appoint a substitute chairman for the Dean of Student in this process.

# Discrimination & Harassment Grievance Procedures

We strongly encourage any person who feels that he or she has been subjected to any type of discrimination, harassment or retaliation (gender, race, disability or age) or believes he or she has witnessed such conduct to report it promptly. Failure to report any incidents promptly will hinder the seminary's ability to investigate a complaint thoroughly and will limit the seminary's ability to stop and prevent other incidents from occurring. You are encouraged to provide as much information as possible so that a fair and effective investigation may follow.

A formal complaint should be brought in writing to the Dean of Students (if the accuser is a student), to the Senior Director of Organizational Planning & Development (if the accuser is an employee), to the Dean of Faculty (if the accuser is a full-time faculty member), or to the Dean of Academic Administration (if the accuser is an adjunct professor or visiting instructor). The Seminary representative receiving the complaint will be responsible to:

1. Assure the accuser(s) that the matter will be taken seriously and treated as confidentially as possible, and that there will be no retaliation in response to allegations brought in good faith.
2. Review the written statement detailing the alleged offense(s). Encourage the accuser to include any additional details (e.g. evidence, potential witnesses, etc.) not already included in the written complaint.
3. Encourage the accuser(s) to notify the police if the offense appears to be of a criminal nature.
4. Offer to make available appropriate counseling and pastoral care.
5. Arrange to minimize unnecessary contact between the parties until the situation is resolved; underscore the importance of working within these limits and that in no case should conversations about the matter occur without the presence of a responsible third party.
6. Review the situation, including interviewing all parties involved and any other parties who may have knowledge of the incident(s) to determine the facts within 30 days of the formal complaint being filed.
7. Develop an appropriate action/disciplinary plan within 45 days of the complaint being filed.
8. Notify in writing all parties within 45 days of the complaint being filed of the outcome of the seminary's investigation including any disciplinary action(s) taken against the accused and of the right to appeal.
9. If the action plan satisfactorily resolves the issue, submit to the Office of the President a sealed summary of the matter.

If it is determined, after thorough investigation, that the accused is guilty of the allegations brought forward in the complaint, that person will be subject to appropriate disciplinary and/or corrective measures commensurate with the seriousness of the particular offense, up to, and including, termination of employment and/or expulsion from academic programs at the seminary.

Retaliation in any form against someone who exercises his or her right to make a complaint or against any individual who provides information related to any such complaint is strictly prohibited and will in itself constitute cause for appropriate disciplinary action, up to, and including, termination of employment and/or expulsion from academic programs at the seminary.

In the event that the complaint is not resolved by the fulfillment of the action plan or the parties are not satisfied with the action plan or its progress, an appeal should be brought in writing to the Office of the President within 60 days of the written notification of the original outcome. Within 45 days of the appeal, all parties will be notified of the final review and decision by the Office of the President.