

## **Student Complaints**

Albany Technical College (ATC) is committed to providing and ensuring an environment conducive for all students that is fair, respectful, free from illegal or inappropriate conduct or treatment to accomplish the mission. The institution publishes appropriate and clear procedures for addressing written student complaints, demonstrates that it follows the procedures when resolving them, and maintains records of student complaints. The procedures for written student complaints support the ATC mission by providing student avenues to inform, submit and notify specifically five administrative units on campus determined upon the basis of the complaint. Complaints can be informal, formal, academic, non-academic, unlawful harassment, or discrimination. The adopted policies and procedures for addressing written complaints are well publicized in the ATC student handbook, catalog, and website. Moreover, ATC adheres to the TSCG standards of protocol with addressing, investigating and resolving complaints including the Model Student Code of Conduct procedures.

### **Policies and Procedures:**

The College adheres to the fundamentals of complaint resolution by reaching a fair, equitable, and consistent resolution for students with written complaints. The College has developed adequate procedures for students who wish to file informal and formal disagreements, disputes and complaints concerning all aspects of the campus environment both academic and nonacademic. In reporting complaints various categories have been divided to be handled by different administrative responsibilities to review, investigate, conduct a hearing, consider preponderance of evidence and determine a meaningful satisfactory resolution for all parties involved and offer an appeals process. Albany Technical College (ATC) has adopted comprehensive policies and procedures for addressing student complaints, which are reasonable, and fairly administered. The policies are well-publicized in the catalog and the on the college website. The college maintains logs of student complaint information within the respective office responsible for the information. The logs contain data relevant to the student filing the complaint including student identification number, the student name, ethnicity, gender, date the complaint received, the sanction, the decision, and the date the student was notified of the decision.

### **Unlawful Harassment and Discrimination Complaints**

The Vice President of Administration (VPA) serves as the Title IX Officer. The VPA works in collaboration with campus police and other campus units to investigate unlawful sexual violence and unlawful harassment to gather facts, conduct interviews, and present findings to a hearing committee, and to make a decision within a reasonable time frame for a reasonable satisfactory resolution to the student written complaint. The student can appeal the decision within 5 business days to the College President. The procedures are proactive in ensuring the campus is free of sexual discrimination, handling complaints of sexual discrimination, harassment, and sexual violence based upon the preponderance of evidence of investigations and where applicable appropriate discipline is set forth. The VPA works collaboratively with the VPAA, and the VPSA to solicit input if a written grievance or violation has occurred either academically or non-academic. The VPA has referral processes to refer students of whom need assistance based upon the nature of the complaint to receive assistance in dealing with unlawful harassment or sexual violence.

The VPA ensures that discrimination of transgender students and gender-related cases of unwanted sexual behavior do not significantly interfere with access to educational opportunities. Further, the grievance policies prohibit sexual violence, domestic violence, dating, stalking and unwelcomed sexual behavior to address issues so that vulnerable students can be free from fear of exploitation. In addition, the policies prohibits sexual discrimination, pregnant parenting students, gender based rape, sexual assault, stalking threats, abuse and abuse from prior partners. The regulations of the Violence Against Women Act of 2015 (VAWA), Clery-Act, and the Yearly Safety Report, are presented as annual training for all staff, faculty and students efforts are led by the VPA. All Title IX written complaint files are housed within the administrative office of the VPA under a secure and confidential file system within the VPA's office.

## **Procedure for Reporting Unlawful Harassment and /Discrimination**

The Sexual Complaint Procedure and the Discrimination and Grievance Complaint Procedure are both multi-step procedures through which students and members of the faculty, staff or community may file written complaints against the College. Sexual harassment complaints must be filed in writing with the VPA, as the Title IX Officer who is directly over the Human Resources Department and campus police. Both procedures provide levels of appeal and timelines for decisions. In addition, all students have the right to appeal directly to the Office of Civil Rights, Suite 2702, 101 Marietta Street, Atlanta, Georgia, if the student feels discriminated against based on gender, race, color, sex, religion, national origin, age, political affiliation, veteran's status, or handicap

The Coordinator of Disability Services/ Special Needs (DS) serves as the College's Section 504 and ADA coordinator to determine if discrimination based upon a disability, access to programs or services has occurred. The DS works with collaborative efforts in ascertaining disability related complaints for both informal and formal written grievances. The procedures for resolving discrimination begins with written notification, information gathering, investigating, and conducting a hearing if needed, and in asserting an applicable resolution. The ATC procedures includes an appeals process if the issue and decision has not been satisfactory resolved. All students are involved in training during new student orientation on how to and who to respond and report complaints, and grievances of harassment, discrimination at the College. The DS works closely with the academic faculty and facilities personnel for matters directly related to discrimination based upon disability, discrimination and access to all programs and services that ATC provides.

### **Academic Complaints**

ATC is committed to resolving student academic appeals and complaints in a just and timely manner. ATC has established adequate policies and procedures for students who desire to file written academic complaints and/or appeals. The established policies and procedures are adhered to in all circumstances. Students with complaints or appeals are encouraged to seek a resolution for a concern informally by directly addressing the issue with the individual(s) involved. When matters are beyond informal resolution, students have the opportunity to submit a written formal complaint or appeal. The College's academic written complaint and appeal procedures are discussed with students during new student orientation and program orientation.

In addition, the formal student complaint and appeal procedure are covered in the ATC 2017-18 student handbook and college catalog which is accessible through the College's web page .The College's distance education student population is afforded the same opportunity to express concerns as the college's traditional student population. Students can access the student complaint and appeal procedure in all Blackboard courses located under the "Resource" tab. ATC has established a local procedure that addresses the process for academic appeals. The student academic appeal procedure is categorized in two areas:

#### **1. Academic Probations**

A student who fails to maintain the required grade point average in a particular program may be placed on academic probation. A student who fails to improve his or her academic performance after being placed on probation shall be suspended or dismissed from either the academic program or ATC. In appropriate circumstances, a student maybe dismissed from an academic program or the College without first being placed on academic probation. A student who is dismissed from the College may appeal the suspension or dismissal by filing an Academic Appeals Request Form with the VPAA within two weeks from the date of learning of the suspension or dismissal, or two weeks from the date that the student should reasonably have known of the date of suspension or dismissal.

The VPAA will notify the student of the decision to grant or deny their academic appeal within five business days of receipt of the student's appeal. If the student's appeal is granted, the VPAA will notify the registrar's office in order to allow the student to continue the registration process for the upcoming term. However, if the student's appeal is denied the VPAA will advise the student, in writing, that the appeal has been denied and a hold will be placed on the student account in Banner.

## **2. Grade Appeals**

Final grades or other academic decisions may be appealed as follows: The student may raise the issue with the instructor who awarded the grade or made the academic decision within three business days from the date the grades were posted. If talking with the instructor does not resolve the issue, then the student may appeal to the Dean of Academic Affairs by filing an Academic Appeals Request form within five business days of talking with the instructor. If this action does not resolve the issue, the Academic Appeals Request form will automatically be forwarded to the VPAA. The decision of the VPAA shall be final. If a student is still not satisfied with any resolution of an appeal, he or she may contact the President of ATC by telephone or by submitting a Memorandum to the President, located in the main lobby of the Kirkland Building or on the College's website.

## **Student Grievances**

The Vice President of Student Affairs (VPSA) serves as the Student Disciplinary Officer, and adjudicates any infraction of the student code of conduct according to TCSG's published regulations. ATC adheres to a written grievance process that provides an open and meaningful environment for all students to submit their grievances. The student grievance procedure can be found on the college's website. If a student has a non-academic grievance against another student or a member of the ATC staff, administration or faculty, the student submits a written explanation of the nature of the grievance to the VPSA. If the grievance cannot be resolved informally, the student may follow the formal process of resolution.

The ATC's student handbook sets forth the procedure that is to be followed in the proceeding, including hearing procedure and appeal rights. The Student Grievance Procedure allows students to formally file a complaint against faculty or staff concerning grievance issues related to academic and nonacademic issues. The VPAA and the VPSA collaborate to determine which perspective unit the grievance falls under. The VPSA receives and attempts to resolve allegations of misconduct received on the student code of conduct complaint form or incident form received from the Campus Police. Following the meeting with the student, the VPSA shall determine whether the student committed the alleged conduct and whether the alleged conduct is a violation of the model student conduct code. If the VPSA determines that the student committed the alleged act and that the student violated the student conduct code, the VPSA may either impose a lesser sanction: restitution, reprimand, restriction, disciplinary probation, failing or lowered grade, or recommend a more severe sanction: suspension, expulsion, system-wide expulsion and refer the case to the hearing body. The hearing body is to be made up of one or more people designated by the VPSA; the VPSA may not serve as an advisor to the hearing body nor a member of the hearing body.

## **Elements of Student Complaint Files**

Once a student complaint has been fully adjudicated, if the matter was an academic concern, the file is housed in academic affairs. If it is a student affairs complaint, it's housed in Student Affairs. If it's Title IX, Office of Civil Rights, it's housed in the Office of Administrative Services. In the files for Student Affairs, Academic Affairs and the Office of Administrative Services, we will have the following: name of student, gender, nature of the offense, when it was adjudicated and when the student was notified of the final outcome. The information collected is consistent in Academic Affairs and the Office of Administrative Services.

## **Memorandum to the President**

ATC students also have the option of filing a formal written complaint directly with the President of the College by obtaining a Memorandum to the President form at the Welcome Center reception desk in the lobby of ATC Kirkland Administration Building or on the College's website. Although no specific timeline is given for the President's response, experience indicates that the response is typically provided within five days of the receipt of the complaint.