

SOUTHWESTERN COMMUNITY COLLEGE	HUMAN RESOURCES SEX DISCRIMINATION AND HARASSMENT PROCEDURE – TITLE IX	4.03.05.01
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**SECTION II. TITLE IX SEXUAL  
HARASSMENT GRIEVANCE  
PROCEDURES**

**A. APPLICABILITY, COMPLAINT INTAKE, AND OVERARCHING PROVISIONS**

**2A.01 Applicability of Grievance Procedures**

As noted above, these Grievance Procedures apply to allegations of Sexual Harassment in SCC’s Education Program or Activity (and to related Retaliation, at the discretion of the Title IX Coordinator). SCC treats Complainants and Respondents equitably by providing remedies to a Complainant where SCC makes a determination of responsibility for Sexual Harassment against a Respondent under these Grievance Procedures and also by following these Grievance Procedures before imposing any disciplinary sanctions against a Respondent for Sexual Harassment.

**2A.02 Obligation to Respond and Initial Outreach to Complainant**

When SCC has Actual Knowledge of Sexual Harassment (or allegations thereof) against a person in the United States in its Education Program or Activity, SCC is obligated to respond and to follow Title IX’s specific requirements, which are addressed and incorporated in these Grievance Procedures.

Promptly upon receiving allegations of Sexual Harassment against a person in the United States in SCC’s Education Program or Activity, the Title IX Coordinator will contact the Complainant to discuss the availability of Supportive Measures with or without the filing of a Formal Complaint and to explain to the Complainant the process for filing a Formal Complaint.

**2A.03 Filing of a Formal Complaint**

As noted in the Definitions section above, a Formal Complaint means a document filed by a Complainant or signed by the Title IX Coordinator alleging Sexual Harassment against a Respondent and requesting that SCC investigate the allegation(s) of Sexual Harassment. At the time of filing a Formal Complaint, a Complainant must be participating in or attempting to participate in SCC’s Education Program or Activity. A Formal Complaint may be filed with the Title IX Coordinator in person, by mail, or by electronic mail, by using the contact information listed in Exhibit A. As used in this paragraph, the phrase “document filed by a Complainant” means a document or electronic submission that contains the Complainant’s physical or digital signature or otherwise indicates that the Complainant is the person filing the Formal Complaint. Use of the official SCC email is the preferred way to file.

When the Title IX Coordinator believes that, with or without the Complainant’s desire to participate in a grievance process, a non-deliberately indifferent response to the allegations requires an investigation, the Title IX Coordinator has the discretion to initiate the grievance process by signing a Formal Complaint. Where the Title IX Coordinator signs a Formal

SOUTHWESTERN COMMUNITY COLLEGE	HUMAN RESOURCES SEX DISCRIMINATION AND HARASSMENT PROCEDURE – TITLE IX	4.03.05.01
-----------------------------------	--	------------

Complaint, the Title IX Coordinator is not a Complainant or otherwise a party under these Grievance Procedures. Furthermore, initiation of a Formal Complaint by the Title IX Coordinator is not sufficient alone to imply bias or that the Title IX Coordinator is taking a position adverse to the Respondent.

Once a Formal Complaint is initiated, an alleged victim will be referred to as a “Complainant,” and an alleged perpetrator will be referred to as a “Respondent.”

#### **2A.04 Notice of Allegations**

Upon receipt of a Formal Complaint, the Title IX Coordinator will provide the Complainant and any known Respondent written notice of these Grievance Procedures and of the allegations of conduct potentially constituting Sexual Harassment, including sufficient details known at the time and with at least five days to prepare a response before any initial interview. Sufficient details include the identities of the parties involved in the incident, if known, the conduct allegedly constituting Sexual Harassment, and the date and location of the alleged incident, if known.

The written notice will include a statement that the Respondent is presumed not responsible for the alleged conduct and that a determination regarding responsibility is made at the conclusion of the grievance process. The written notice also will inform the parties that they may have an advisor of their choice, who may be, but is not required to be, an attorney and that at appropriate junctures the parties and their advisors may review and inspect evidence collected during the investigation. Additionally, the written notice will inform the parties of SCC’s prohibition on knowingly making false statements or knowingly submitting false information during the grievance process.

If, in the course of an investigation, SCC decides to investigate allegations of Sexual Harassment involving the Complainant or Respondent that are not included in the original written notice of allegations, SCC will provide notice of the additional allegations to the parties whose identities are known.

#### **2A.05 Dismissal**

SCC will investigate the allegations in a Formal Complaint; however, SCC *will* dismiss a Formal Complaint or a portion of the allegations therein if (1) the conduct alleged in the Formal Complaint, even if substantiated, would not constitute Sexual Harassment; (2) at the time of filing the Formal Complaint the Complainant was not participating in or attempting to participate in SCC’s Education Program or Activity; (3) the conduct alleged in the Formal Complaint did not occur in SCC’s Education Program or Activity; or (4) the conduct alleged in the Formal Complaint did not occur against an individual in the United States. Such a dismissal may take place at the conclusion of the investigation or at any time prior to the conclusion of the investigation.

Additionally, SCC *may* dismiss a Formal Complaint or a portion of the allegations therein if (1) the Complainant notifies the Title IX Coordinator in writing that the Complainant would like

SOUTHWESTERN COMMUNITY COLLEGE	HUMAN RESOURCES SEX DISCRIMINATION AND HARASSMENT PROCEDURE – TITLE IX	4.03.05.01
-----------------------------------	--	------------

to withdraw the Formal Complaint or any allegations therein; (2) the Respondent is no longer enrolled or employed at SCC; or (3) despite efforts to do so, SCC is unable to gather evidence sufficient to reach a determination as to the Formal Complaint or allegations therein.

In the event the Title IX Coordinator determines that dismissal of a Formal Complaint or a portion of the allegations is appropriate, the Title IX Coordinator will promptly notify the parties in writing of the dismissal and the reasons for it. Dismissal does not impair SCC’s ability to proceed with any appropriate investigatory or disciplinary actions under the Sex Discrimination and Harassment Policy or SCC’s Standards of Student Conduct or Employee Code of Conduct policies; and/or to provide Supportive Measures to the parties.

Either party may appeal a decision to dismiss a Formal Complaint or a portion of the allegations on the following grounds by submitting a written appeal to the Title IX Coordinator within five days of the issuance of the written notice of the dismissal: (1) procedural irregularity that affected the decision to dismiss; (2) new evidence that was not reasonably available at the time of dismissal and that could affect the outcome of the matter; or (3) the Title IX Coordinator or other participant in the dismissal having a conflict of interest or bias for or against Complainants or Respondents generally or the individual Complainant or Respondent that affected the decision to dismiss.

The Title IX Coordinator will promptly notify the other party of the appeal, and the non-appealing party may submit a response to the appeal within three days of notification of the appeal

The Title IX Coordinator will appoint an appeal officer and will contemporaneously share the appeal officer’s name and contact information with the Complainant and the Respondent.

Within two days of such appointment, the Complainant, or the Respondent may identify to the Title IX Coordinator in writing alleged conflicts of interest or bias on the part of the appeal officer. The Title IX Coordinator will consider such statements and will promptly assign a different appeal officer if the Title IX Coordinator determines that a material conflict of interest or material bias exists.

The Title IX Coordinator will forward the Formal Complaint and any documents upon which the dismissal decision was based, as well as the appeal and any response to the appeal to the appeal officer.

Within seven days of receipt of those materials, the appeal officer will determine whether any of the grounds for appeal warrant overturning or modifying the dismissal. The decision by the appeal officer is final.

**2A.06 Advisors**

The Complainant and the Respondent may be accompanied to any meeting or proceeding under these Grievance Procedures by the advisor of their choice, who may be, but is not required to be, an attorney. SCC will not limit the choice or presence of the advisor for either

SOUTHWESTERN COMMUNITY COLLEGE	HUMAN RESOURCES SEX DISCRIMINATION AND HARASSMENT PROCEDURE – TITLE IX	4.03.05.01
-----------------------------------	--	------------

the Complainant or the Respondent in any meeting or grievance proceeding. Advisors, however, are not allowed to disrupt any such meeting or proceeding or to speak on behalf of the Complainant or the Respondent, with the exception of cross-examination during any hearing conducted under these Grievance Procedures, which must be conducted by an advisor and never personally by the Complainant or the Respondent.

Parties must provide the name and contact of their advisor to the Title IX Coordinator in writing as soon as reasonably possible and must provide updated information if their advisor changes. All advisors will be required to assent to SCC’s Expectations for Advisors.

If a party does not have an advisor present at the hearing, SCC will provide, without any charge to that party, an advisor of SCC’s choice who may be, but is not required to be, an attorney, to conduct cross-examination on behalf of that party.

Absent accommodation for a disability, the Complainant and the Respondent may not be accompanied by more than one advisor or by other individuals during meetings or proceedings under these Grievance Procedures.

**2A.07 Amnesty**

The College community encourages the reporting of misconduct and crimes. Sometimes, complainants or witnesses are hesitant to report to College officials or participate in resolution processes because they fear they themselves may be accused of various policy violations. It is in the best interest of this College that as many complainants as possible choose to report to College officials and that witnesses come forward to share what they know. To encourage reporting, the College may offer sexual harassment complainants and witnesses amnesty from minor policy violations.

**2A.08 Timing**

SCC will make every reasonable effort to ensure that the investigation and resolution of a Formal Complaint occurs in as timely and efficient a manner as possible. The timelines set forth in these Grievance Procedures are guidelines and may be altered for good cause with written notice to the Complainant and the Respondent of any delay or extension and the reasons for the action. Good cause may include considerations such as the absence of a party, a party’s advisor, or a witness; concurrent law enforcement activity; natural disasters, pandemic restrictions, and similar occurrences; or the need for language assistance or accommodation of disabilities.

SCC will strive to complete its investigation and resolution of a Formal Complaint (not including an appeal, if applicable) within 90 days of the receipt of the Formal Complaint, absent extenuating circumstances. Hearings generally will take place within 20 days of the conclusion of the investigation. Within seven days of the conclusion of the hearing, both the Complainant and the Respondent will receive a final outcome letter.

SOUTHWESTERN COMMUNITY COLLEGE	HUMAN RESOURCES SEX DISCRIMINATION AND HARASSMENT PROCEDURE – TITLE IX	4.03.05.01
-----------------------------------	--	------------

Either party may request an extension of any deadline by providing the Title IX Coordinator with a written request for an extension that includes reference to the duration of the proposed extension and the basis for the request. The Title IX Coordinator will review the request and will make a determination with regard to the request within three days.

**2A.09 Written Notice of Meetings**

SCC will provide, to a party whose participation is invited or expected, written notice of the date, time, location, participants, and purpose of all hearings, investigative interviews, or other meetings with sufficient time for the party to prepare to participate.

**2A.10 Effect of Corollary Criminal Investigation**

SCC’s investigation may be delayed temporarily while criminal investigators are gathering evidence. In the event of such a delay, SCC will implement any appropriate Supportive Measures and will evaluate the need for other actions necessary to assist or protect the Complainant, the Respondent, and/or the SCC community.

Neither the results of a criminal investigation nor the decision of law enforcement to investigate or decline to investigate a matter is determinative of whether Sexual Harassment has occurred in the eyes of SCC.

**2A.11 Emergency Removal and Administrative Leave**

SCC may remove a Respondent from SCC’s Education Program or Activity on an emergency basis, provided that SCC first undertakes an individualized safety and risk analysis, determines that an immediate threat to the physical health or safety of any student or other individual arising from the allegations of Sexual Harassment justifies removal, provides the Respondent with notice and an opportunity to challenge the decision immediately following the removal, and does so in accordance with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and the Americans with Disabilities Act, as applicable.

Additionally, SCC may place a non-student employee Respondent on administrative leave during the pendency of SCC’s response to allegations of Sexual Harassment provided that it does so in accordance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act.

**2A.12 Effect of Respondent Withdrawal, Graduation, or Resignation During Grievance Process**

At the discretion of SCC, a Respondent who withdraws or resigns from SCC during the pendency of a grievance process under these Grievance Procedures is likely to be barred from SCC property and SCC activities and events and may be ineligible for re-enrollment or re-hire. If a Respondent completes all requirements to graduate during the grievance

SOUTHWESTERN COMMUNITY COLLEGE	HUMAN RESOURCES SEX DISCRIMINATION AND HARASSMENT PROCEDURE – TITLE IX	4.03.05.01
-----------------------------------	--	------------

process, SCC may hold the Respondent’s diploma until full resolution of the Formal Complaint.

**2A.13 Privacy and Disclosure**

Except as may be permitted by FERPA or as required by law or to carry out any investigation or resolution of sex discrimination or harassment allegations, SCC will keep private the identity of any individual who has made a report or complaint of sex discrimination or harassment (including any individual who has made a report or filed a Formal Complaint of Sexual Harassment, any Complainant, any Respondent, and any witness.

SCC may report alleged Sexual Harassment to local law enforcement if warranted by the nature of the allegations at issue, and SCC administrators will share information regarding alleged Sexual Harassment, as appropriate and necessary, in order to address and resolve the allegation(s) at issue, prevent the recurrence of similar Sexual Harassment, and address the effects of the Sexual Harassment. Additionally, information regarding alleged Sexual Harassment may be used as a statistical, anonymous report for data collection purposes under the Clery Act.

To comply with FERPA, Title IX, and other applicable laws and to provide an orderly process for the presentation and consideration of relevant information without undue intimidation or pressure, grievance processes carried out under these Grievance Procedures are not open to the general public. Accordingly, documents prepared in connection with such processes; documents, statements, or other information introduced in interviews, meetings, and proceedings; and the final outcome letter may not be disclosed outside of those processes except as may be required or authorized by law or necessary for transcript sanction documentation.

As permitted by and subject to the limitations of FERPA, SCC reserves the right to notify parent(s) or guardian(s) of a student Respondent of the outcome of any investigation involving that Respondent, redacting names of any other students who do not consent to the disclosure of their information. At the written request of a party, SCC may include a party’s advisor on communications and share access to documents, including the investigation report. This access is subject to the advisor’s acknowledgment and agreement to maintain the confidentiality of the documents. While SCC strongly encourages parties to maintain privacy in connection with a grievance process, SCC does not prohibit parties from discussing the allegations under investigation or in any way inhibit the parties from gathering or presenting relevant evidence. In addition, SCC’s policy does not prohibit disclosure of the final outcome letter by either the Complainant or the Respondent.

**2A.14 Conflicts of Interest, Bias, and Training**

SCC will ensure that any individual designated by SCC as a Title IX Coordinator, investigator, decision-maker, or informal resolution facilitator under these Grievance Procedures does not have a conflict of interest or bias for or against Complainants or Respondents generally or an individual Complainant or Respondent.

SOUTHWESTERN COMMUNITY COLLEGE	HUMAN RESOURCES SEX DISCRIMINATION AND HARASSMENT PROCEDURE – TITLE IX	4.03.05.01
-----------------------------------	--	------------

If any employee designated to participate in the investigation or resolution of a Formal Complaint is the Respondent or a relevant witness, then the Title IX Coordinator will appoint another employee to perform their duties. (If the Title IX Coordinator is the Respondent, then the President will appoint another employee to perform their duties.)

SCC also ensures that Title IX Coordinators, investigators, decision-makers, advisors, and informal resolution facilitators receive training, as applicable, on the definition of Sexual Harassment; the scope of SCC’s Education Program or Activity; how to conduct an investigation and grievance process, including hearings, appeals, and informal resolution processes; and how to serve impartially, including by avoiding prejudgment of the facts at issue, conflicts of interest, and bias.

SCC further ensures that decision-makers receive training on issues of relevance of questions and evidence, including when questions and evidence about the Complainant’s sexual predisposition or prior sexual behavior are not relevant, and that investigators receive training on issues of relevance to create an investigative report that fairly summarizes relevant evidence. Additionally, SCC ensures that decision-makers receive training on any technology to be used at live hearings.

Materials used to train Title IX Coordinators, investigators, decision-makers, advisors, and informal resolution facilitators will not rely on sex stereotypes and promote impartial investigations and adjudications of Formal Complaints of Sexual Harassment.

**2A.15 Burden of Proof**

At all times, the burden of proof and the burden of gathering evidence sufficient to reach a determination regarding responsibility rest on SCC, not on either of the parties.

**2A.16 Presumption of No Responsibility until Determination**

Respondents are presumed to be not responsible for alleged Sexual Harassment until SCC makes a determination regarding responsibility pursuant to these Grievance Procedures.

**2A.17 Objective Evaluation of All Relevant Evidence; Credibility Determinations**

The investigators and decision-makers under these Grievance Procedures will objectively evaluate all relevant evidence, including both inculpatory and exculpatory evidence, and will not make any credibility determinations based on a person’s status as a Complainant, Respondent, or witness.

**2A.18 Academic Freedom**

SCC affirms its commitment to academic freedom but notes that academic freedom does not allow any form of Sexual Harassment. SCC recognizes that an essential function of education is a probing of opinions and an exploration of ideas, some of which, because they are controversial, may cause students and others discomfort. This discomfort, as a product of free

SOUTHWESTERN COMMUNITY COLLEGE	HUMAN RESOURCES SEX DISCRIMINATION AND HARASSMENT PROCEDURE – TITLE IX	4.03.05.01
-----------------------------------	--	------------

academic inquiry within a faculty member’s area(s) of expertise, shall in no way be considered or construed to constitute Sexual Harassment. Academic inquiry may involve teaching, research and extramural speech. Furthermore, nothing in this document shall be interpreted to prohibit bona fide academic requirements for a specific SCC program or activity. When investigating complaints that a party or the Title IX Coordinator believes may involve issues of academic freedom, the Title IX Coordinator will consult with the Executive Vice President for Instruction and Student Services with respect to contemporary academic practices and standards.

**2A.19 Documentation**

SCC will retain documentation (including but not limited to any Formal Complaint, notifications, recording or transcripts of interviews, investigative report, written findings of fact, petitions for appeal, notifications of decisions (including the final outcome letter), audio recordings of hearings, and written communication with the Complainant and Respondent), for no less than seven years.

**2A.20 Consolidation of Formal Complaints**

SCC may consolidate Formal Complaints as to allegations of Sexual Harassment against more than one Respondent, by more than one Complainant against one or more Respondents, or by one party against the other party where the allegations of Sexual Harassment arise out of the same facts or circumstances. Where a grievance process involves more than one Complainant or more than one Respondent, references in these Grievance Procedures to the singular “party,” “Complainant,” or “Respondent” include the plural, as applicable.

**2A.21 Individuals with Disabilities**

SCC will make arrangements to ensure that individuals with disabilities are provided appropriate accommodations, to the extent necessary and available, to participate in SCC’s grievance processes. Student requests for accommodation must be made to Tonya Basse at 828-339-4326. All other requests for accommodation must be made to Lisa Sizemore.

SOUTHWESTERN COMMUNITY COLLEGE	HUMAN RESOURCES SEX DISCRIMINATION AND HARASSMENT PROCEDURE – TITLE IX	4.03.05.01
-----------------------------------	--	------------

## **B. THE INVESTIGATION**

### **2B.01 Appointment of Investigators and Challenging of the Same**

Unless a Formal Complaint is dismissed or the parties elect to participate in informal resolution, the Title IX Coordinator will promptly appoint one or more investigators. These investigators may be SCC employees, non-employees, or a combination of the two. The Title IX Coordinator will contemporaneously share their names and contact information with the Complainant and Respondent and also will forward a copy of the Formal Complaint to the investigators.

Within two days of such appointment, the Complainant or the Respondent may identify to the Title IX Coordinator in writing any alleged conflicts of interest or bias on the part of the assigned investigators. The Title IX Coordinator will consider such statements and will promptly assign different investigators if the Title IX Coordinator determines that a material conflict of interest or material bias exists.

### **2B.02 The Investigators' Activities**

Upon receipt of the Formal Complaint, the investigators will promptly begin their investigation, taking such steps as interviewing the Complainant, the Respondent, and witnesses (including expert witnesses, where applicable); summarizing such interviews in writing; collecting and reviewing relevant documents; visiting, inspecting, and taking or reviewing photographs of relevant sites; and collecting and reviewing other relevant evidence.

### **2B.03 The Investigative Report and Evidence Review**

The investigators will prepare a written investigative report that fairly summarizes relevant evidence and includes items such as the Formal Complaint, written statements of position, summaries or transcripts of all interviews conducted, photographs, descriptions of relevant evidence, and summaries or copies of relevant electronic records.

Prior to the completion of the investigative report, the investigators will send to each party and the party's advisor, if any, an electronic or hard copy of any evidence obtained during the investigation that is directly related to the allegations raised in the Formal Complaint, including (1) any evidence upon which SCC does not intend to rely in reaching a determination regarding responsibility; and (2) both inculpatory and exculpatory evidence.

The parties have ten days from the time that the evidence is provided to submit to the investigators a written response to the evidence. In the response, the parties may address the relevancy of any evidence that the parties believe should be included in or excluded from the investigative report and may also address any further investigation activities or questions that they believe are necessary. If a party wishes to submit additional evidence at this stage, they should explain how the evidence is relevant and why it was not previously provided.

SOUTHWESTERN COMMUNITY COLLEGE	HUMAN RESOURCES SEX DISCRIMINATION AND HARASSMENT PROCEDURE – TITLE IX	4.03.05.01
-----------------------------------	--	------------

The investigators will review and consider the parties’ written submissions and may conduct additional investigative activities as appropriate prior to finalizing the investigative report. The need for additional investigative activities may result in a delay or extension to the timelines set forth in these Grievance Procedures.

At least ten days prior to the hearing, the investigators will send an electronic or hard copy of the investigative report to each party and the party’s advisor, if any. Any response a party wishes to make to the investigative report may be included in that party’s pre-hearing statement, which is discussed more below in Section 2C.05.

Due to the sensitive nature of the investigative report, neither the parties nor their advisors may copy, publish, photograph, print, image, record or in any other manner duplicate the report. Parties who violate these restrictions may be disciplined, and advisors who violate these restrictions may be disciplined and/or be barred from further participation in the grievance process.

Nothing in this document restricts the ability of either party to discuss the allegations under investigation or to gather, preserve, and/or present relevant evidence.

**2B.04 Submission of Evidence; Expert Witnesses**

Any evidence that the parties wish for the hearing officer to consider should be presented to the investigators as early as possible during the investigation process. Evidence that is not submitted in a timely manner and prior to finalization of the investigative report may be excluded from the hearing at the discretion of the hearing officer.

Similarly, all relevant witnesses should be identified to the investigators as early as possible during the investigation. The hearing officer generally will not call or consider written statements from witnesses who were not identified to investigators and interviewed during the investigation. However, in their discretion and for good cause, the hearing officer may choose to consider information from witnesses who were not interviewed during the investigation.

Any party who wishes to present testimony from an expert witness should identify that witness by providing the witness’s name, contact information and a summary of (1) the witness’s qualifications to offer expert testimony; and (2) any opinions the witness expects to offer related to the allegations or evidence. Any evidence upon which the witness relies must be provided to the investigators and will be made available to the other party and their advisor, as well as to any expert witness the other party has identified. This information must be provided as early as possible in the investigation and in no event later than finalization of the investigative report. The parties must make any expert witnesses available to be interviewed by investigators and to testify at the hearing. If an expert witness is not available to provide live testimony at the hearing, the hearing officer must disregard any information submitted by that expert.

SOUTHWESTERN COMMUNITY COLLEGE	HUMAN RESOURCES SEX DISCRIMINATION AND HARASSMENT PROCEDURE – TITLE IX	4.03.05.01
-----------------------------------	--	------------

**2B.05 Treatment Records**

SCC will not access, consider, disclose, or otherwise use in a grievance process any party's treatment records that are maintained by a physician, psychiatrist, psychologist or other recognized professional or paraprofessional acting in their professional/paraprofessional capacity unless the party provides voluntary, written consent.

SOUTHWESTERN COMMUNITY COLLEGE	HUMAN RESOURCES SEX DISCRIMINATION AND HARASSMENT PROCEDURE – TITLE IX	4.03.05.01
-----------------------------------	--	------------

## **C. HEARING AND APPEALS**

### **2C.01 Respondent’s Acknowledgement of Responsibility**

If, at any time prior to a responsibility determination by the hearing officer, a Respondent accepts responsibility for the allegations, and if the Title IX Coordinator determines that the matter is appropriate for informal resolution, the Title IX Coordinator will ask both parties if they wish to suspend the formal resolution process and engage in an informal resolution process to resolve the allegations without a hearing.

If both parties wish to engage in the informal resolution process, the Title IX Coordinator will propose sanction(s) for the Respondent. If the Complainant and the Respondent agree in writing to such proposed sanctions(s), then the Formal Complaint will be resolved without a hearing and without any further rights of appeal by any party.

If either the Complainant or the Respondent objects to such proposed sanction(s), then the hearing officer will determine sanctions, which are subject to appeal as set forth below.

### **2C.02 The Formal Resolution Process**

Unless a Formal Complaint is dismissed or the parties elect to participate in informal resolution pursuant to section 2D.01 below, following the investigation the appointed hearing officer will conduct a hearing in which they may question the Complainant, the Respondent, and any witnesses whose testimony the hearing officer deems relevant. During the hearing, the hearing officer and the parties may also question the investigators as necessary to clarify information provided in the investigative report.

### **2C.03 Appointment of the Hearing Officer and Challenging of the Same**

The Title IX Coordinator will appoint a hearing officer, who will administer the hearing, serve as the decision-maker regarding responsibility, and (as applicable) recommend sanctions. The hearing officer may be a SCC employee or non-employee. The Title IX Coordinator will contemporaneously share the hearing officer’s name and contact information with the Complainant and the Respondent. The Title IX Coordinator will provide to the hearing officer the Formal Complaint, all evidence directly related to the allegations, the parties’ written responses to the evidence, and the investigative report.

Within two days of such appointment, the Complainant or the Respondent may identify to the Title IX Coordinator in writing any alleged conflicts of interest or bias on the part of the hearing officer. The Title IX Coordinator will carefully consider such statements and will promptly assign a different hearing officer if the Title IX Coordinator determines that a material conflict of interest or material bias exists.

SOUTHWESTERN COMMUNITY COLLEGE	HUMAN RESOURCES SEX DISCRIMINATION AND HARASSMENT PROCEDURE – TITLE IX	4.03.05.01
-----------------------------------	--	------------

**2C.04 Notice of the Hearing**

Promptly after the appointment of the hearing officer and no less than seven days prior to the hearing, the hearing officer will provide concurrent written notice to the Complainant and the Respondent setting forth the date, time, and location of the hearing. Any modifications to the hearing date, time, or location will be provided in writing to both parties prior to the date of the hearing.

**2C.05 Pre-Hearing Submissions**

Each party may submit a written statement to the hearing officer that includes any response the party wishes to make to the investigative report. Each party’s pre-hearing statement must be submitted at least five days prior to the hearing. The hearing officer will share the statement with the other party, who may submit a response within two days.

**2C.06 Failure to Appear**

If any party, advisor, or witness fails to appear at the hearing after having been provided proper notice of the hearing as set forth above, then absent of any extenuating circumstances the hearing officer will proceed with the hearing and issuance of their responsibility determination and, as applicable, sanction recommendation. SCC will provide an advisor to any party who attends the hearing unaccompanied.

**2C.07 Evidentiary Matters**

A Title IX hearing does not take place within a court of law and is not bound by formal rules of evidence.

Evidence of and questions about the Complainant’s sexual predisposition or prior sexual behavior are not relevant and will not be permitted at the hearing, with the following exceptions: (1) if the questions and evidence about the Complainant’s prior sexual behavior are offered to prove that someone other than the Respondent committed the conduct alleged by the Complainant; or (2) if the questions and evidence concern specific incidents of the Complainant’s prior sexual behavior with respect to the Respondent and are offered to prove Consent.

Evidence regarding the past sexual activity of the Respondent (regardless of whether the Respondent was formally investigated or found responsible for such conduct) may be permitted to show that the Respondent has engaged in a pattern of behavior similar to the alleged Sexual Harassment at issue before the hearing officer, provided that the Respondent has not been found “not responsible” by SCC in a proceeding related to such conduct.

SCC will not access, consider, disclose, or otherwise use in a grievance process any party’s treatment records that are maintained by a physician, psychiatrist, psychologist or other recognized professional or paraprofessional acting in their professional/paraprofessional capacity unless the party provides voluntary, written consent. Questions and/or evidence that

SOUTHWESTERN COMMUNITY COLLEGE	HUMAN RESOURCES SEX DISCRIMINATION AND HARASSMENT PROCEDURE – TITLE IX	4.03.05.01
-----------------------------------	--	------------

constitute or seek disclosure of information protected under a legally recognized privilege are not permitted, unless the person holding the privilege has waived the privilege in writing.

SCC will make the evidence that the investigators provided to the parties for their review and inspection prior to finalization of the investigative report available at the hearing to give each party equal opportunity to refer to such evidence during the hearing, including for purposes of cross-examination.

## **2C.08 Conduct of the Hearing and Questioning of Witnesses and Parties**

The hearing will be conducted with parties in separate rooms, using technology to ensure that each party can see and hear any party or witness answering questions. At the discretion of the hearing officer, the hearing may be conducted partially or entirely remotely, with any or all participants participating virtually.

The Complainant and the Respondent will have equal opportunity to address the hearing officer, if desired, and both the hearing officer and the parties’ advisors will have the opportunity to question the other party and any witnesses, including investigators and expert witnesses. The hearing officer will first ask any questions of each party and each witness through direct examination. After the hearing officer has completed direct examination, the advisor for each party will have an opportunity to conduct a cross-examination of the other party and/or the witnesses. Any questions that a party has for a witness or the other party must be posed by the party’s advisor. A party’s advisor will not have the opportunity to question the party for whom they serve as advisor.

Before a party or witness answers a cross-examination question, the hearing officer will determine whether the question is relevant and allowed under these Grievance Procedures. For example, the hearing officer may exclude as not relevant duplicative questions or questions posed solely to harass a witness or the other party. The hearing officer will explain any decision to exclude a question.

If a party does not have an advisor present at the hearing, SCC will provide an advisor, at no cost to the party, to conduct cross-examination on behalf of that party.

Members of the SCC community are expected to provide truthful testimony, and any member of the SCC community who knowingly provides false information during this process is subject to discipline.

## **2C.9 Unavailability or Refusal to Testify or Submit to Cross-Examination**

The Respondent and/or the Complainant may choose not to testify at the hearing; however, the exercise of that option will not preclude the hearing officer from making their responsibility determination and, as applicable, sanction recommendation regarding the Formal Complaint. Also, if a party or witness does not submit to cross-examination at the hearing, the hearing officer will not rely on any statement of that party or witness in reaching a determination regarding responsibility or, as applicable, recommendation regarding sanctions. The hearing

SOUTHWESTERN COMMUNITY COLLEGE	HUMAN RESOURCES SEX DISCRIMINATION AND HARASSMENT PROCEDURE – TITLE IX	4.03.05.01
-----------------------------------	--	------------

officer will not draw an inference regarding responsibility or sanctions based solely on a party's or witness' absence from the hearing or refusal to testify or submit to cross-examination.

**2C.10 Recording**

SCC will record the hearing. This recording will be the only recording permitted of the proceedings and will be the property of SCC. The parties and the appeal officer may use the recording as part of the appeal process. Reasonable care will be taken to ensure a quality recording; however, technological problems that result in no recording or in an inaudible one will not affect the validity of the outcome of a hearing.

**2C.11 The Determination of the Hearing Officer Regarding Responsibility**

Following the hearing, the hearing officer will determine if the evidence is **clear and convincing** that the Respondent committed Sexual Harassment. The hearing officer will render a finding of “Responsible” or “Not Responsible” and will provide the rationale for the decision. If the Respondent is found “Responsible,” the hearing officer will specify the specific type(s) of Sexual Harassment for which the Respondent is found “Responsible” (for example, Sexual Assault, Stalking, etc.). When feasible, the hearing officer will orally communicate the finding of “Responsible” or “Not Responsible” to the parties on the day of or day following the hearing. Additional information regarding the decision, including the rationale and sanctions (if applicable) will be communicated in the final outcome letter (as described below).

**2C.12 The Recommendation of the Hearing Officer Regarding Sanctions**

If the hearing officer determines that the Respondent is “Responsible,” they will recommend appropriate sanctions to be imposed on the Respondent.

Sanctions following a finding of responsibility depend upon the nature, **gravity and totality** of the misconduct, any record of prior discipline, or both. Sanctions for employees may include, but are not limited to, withholding a promotion or pay increase, reassigning employment, terminating employment, temporary suspension without pay, compensation adjustments, written warning, mandated counseling, completion of an intervention program, and completion of violence risk assessment, as deemed appropriate by the hearing officer.

In recommending sanctions, the hearing officer will consider whether a sanction will bring an end to, prevent a recurrence of, and remedy the effects of the Sexual Harassment. The hearing officer also will consider the impact of separating a student from their education. The appropriate sanctions for Sexual Assault generally will include at a minimum a period of separation from SCC.

**2C.13 Review of Sanctions**

The hearing officer will forward their sanctions recommendation to the appropriate Title IX Coordinator, Cheryl Contino-Conner (in cases involving student Respondents), or Lisa Sizemore (in cases involving faculty or staff Respondents). These individuals will consider

SOUTHWESTERN COMMUNITY COLLEGE	HUMAN RESOURCES SEX DISCRIMINATION AND HARASSMENT PROCEDURE – TITLE IX	4.03.05.01
-----------------------------------	--	------------

the recommendation in the context of the sanctioning guidelines, the Respondent’s disciplinary history, the institution’s handling of similar cases, and other relevant factors.

**2C.14 Implementation of Sanctions**

Sanctions generally are effective immediately upon issuance of the final outcome letter described below. However, if necessary to protect the welfare of the Complainant, Respondent, or SCC community, the hearing officer may recommend and/or the Title IX Coordinator may determine that any sanctions are effective at any time after the conclusion of the hearing and continue in effect until the issuance of the final outcome letter.

**2C.15 Final Outcome Letter**

Within seven days after the hearing, the hearing officer will issue a final outcome letter through the Title IX Coordinator to the Respondent and Complainant simultaneously.

The final outcome letter will (1) name the Respondent; (2) identify the allegations potentially constituting Sexual Harassment; (3) describe procedural steps taken from the filing of the Formal Complainant through the determination; (4) provide findings of fact in support of the hearing officer’s determination; and (5) provide a statement of rationale for the result as to each allegation, including the responsibility determination and any sanctions.

**2C.16 Appeals**

The Complainant or the Respondent may appeal the decision of the hearing officer regarding responsibility and/or the sanction(s) imposed on the Respondent.

The following are the only permissible grounds for an appeal of the hearing officer’s responsibility determination: (1) procedural irregularity that affected the outcome; (2) new evidence that was not reasonably available at the time of the determination and that could affect the outcome; and (3) the Title IX Coordinator, an investigator, or the hearing officer had a conflict of interest or bias that affected the outcome.

Sanctions may only be appealed on the ground that the severity is incommensurate to the gravity of the Sexual Harassment for which the Respondent was found responsible.

Appeals must be submitted in writing to the Title IX Coordinator within five days from the date of the final outcome letter. The Title IX Coordinator will promptly inform the other party of the filing of the appeal. The other party will have three days from such notification to submit a written response to the appeal.

**2C.17 Appointment of the Appeal Officer and Challenging of the Same**

Upon receipt of an appeal, the Title IX Coordinator, in consultation with the Executive VP for Instruction and Student Services (if the Formal Complaint involves students), the Vice

SOUTHWESTERN COMMUNITY COLLEGE	HUMAN RESOURCES SEX DISCRIMINATION AND HARASSMENT PROCEDURE – TITLE IX	4.03.05.01
-----------------------------------	--	------------

President for Finance and Administrative Services (if the Formal Complaint involves faculty or staff) will appoint an appeal officer.

Within two days of such appointment, the Complainant or the Respondent may identify to the Title IX Coordinator in writing alleged conflicts of interest or bias posed by assigning that appeal officer. The Title IX Coordinator will carefully consider such statements and will promptly assign a different appeal officer if the Title IX Coordinator determines that a material conflict of interest or material bias exists.

**2C.18 Appellate Review**

The Title IX Coordinator will share the Formal Complaint, the investigative report, the hearing recording, all statements introduced at the hearing, any other evidence considered by the hearing officer, the hearing officer’s written findings, and the written appeal submissions with the appeal officer. In addition, if an appeal raises procedural issues, the Title IX Coordinator may provide the appeal officer additional information relevant to those issues.

Within ten days of the receipt of the appeal the appeal officer will determine (a) that the decision of the hearing officer should stand; or (b) that the decision of the hearing officer should be overturned and will issue a written explanation of that result and the rationale behind it.

In the event that the appeal officer determines that the decision of the hearing officer should be overturned, the appeal officer will specify, after consultation with the Title IX Coordinator and other SCC administrators as necessary, the appropriate steps to be taken to come to a final resolution of the Formal Complaint (which may include another hearing before the same hearing officer or a different one).

SOUTHWESTERN COMMUNITY COLLEGE	HUMAN RESOURCES SEX DISCRIMINATION AND HARASSMENT PROCEDURE – TITLE IX	4.03.05.01
-----------------------------------	--	------------

## **D. INFORMAL RESOLUTION**

### **2D.01 Determination of Formal Versus Informal Resolution**

At any time before the issuance of the hearing officer’s responsibility determination, the parties may elect to resolve the Formal Complaint through the informal resolution process, provided that (1) the parties both voluntarily consent in writing to such resolution; (2) both parties are students or employees of SCC; and (3) the Title IX Coordinator determines that informal resolution is an appropriate mechanism for resolving that specific Formal Complaint. Otherwise, a Formal Complaint that is not dismissed will proceed to a hearing. Informal resolution is not an appropriate mechanism for resolving a Formal Complaint by a student against an employee.

Informal resolution may not be selected for less than all of the misconduct alleged in the Formal Complaint. If the parties agree to informal resolution (and informal resolution is appropriate for all of the allegations at issue), then all of the allegations must be resolved according to the informal resolution process.

Either party has the right to terminate the informal resolution process at any time and proceed with formal resolution (i.e., a full investigation and hearing). Furthermore, the Title IX Coordinator may, where appropriate, terminate informal resolution and proceed with the formal resolution process instead.

### **2D.02 Confidentiality of Information Shared**

**Any information that the parties share during the informal resolution process may not be used in any other investigation or proceeding at SCC**

### **2D.03 Notice of Allegations and Notice of Informal Resolution and Facilitator**

The Title IX Coordinator will provide the parties a written notice disclosing the Formal Complaint’s allegations and the requirements of the informal resolution process, including any circumstances under which SCC would preclude the parties from resuming a Formal Complaint arising from the same allegations.

When the Formal Complaint is to be resolved according to the informal resolution process, the Title IX Coordinator will designate a trained individual to serve as the informal resolution facilitator. The Title IX Coordinator will contemporaneously share the name of the informal resolution facilitator with the Complainant and the Respondent.

Within two days of such notification, the Complainant or Respondent may identify to the Title IX Coordinator in writing alleged conflicts of interest or bias posed by assigning that facilitator. The Title IX Coordinator will carefully consider such statements and will promptly assign a different facilitator if the Title IX Coordinator determines that a material conflict of interest or material bias exists.

SOUTHWESTERN COMMUNITY COLLEGE	HUMAN RESOURCES SEX DISCRIMINATION AND HARASSMENT PROCEDURE – TITLE IX	4.03.05.01
-----------------------------------	--	------------

## **2D.04 Facilitated Resolution**

The informal resolution facilitator will meet separately with each party to review the informal resolution process and the allegations in the Formal Complaint and to identify the outcome that each party seeks from the informal resolution process. If the facilitator determines that it would be productive for both parties to attend a resolution meeting, the facilitator will provide written notice to the Complainant and the Respondent setting forth the date, time, and location of that meeting. At the request of either party or at the discretion of the informal resolution facilitator, the meeting may occur with the parties in different locations or meetings with parties may take place on different dates.

Both the Complainant and the Respondent are expected to participate in the informal resolution process. If either party fails to participate, the Title IX Coordinator may direct that the Formal Complaint be resolved using a full investigation and hearing or may reschedule the meeting.

During informal resolution, the parties may: (1) engage one another in the presence of, and/or facilitated by, the informal resolution facilitator; (2) communicate their feelings and perceptions regarding the incident and the impact of the incident (either by communicating directly with one another or by communicating indirectly through the informal resolution facilitator); (3) relay their wishes and expectations regarding the future; and/or (4) come to an agreed-upon resolution of the allegations in the Formal Complaint.

## **2D.05 Resolution**

The informal resolution facilitator will attempt to facilitate the parties' resolution of the Formal Complaint. If this process results in a resolution between the parties and the Title IX Coordinator finds the resolution to be appropriate under the circumstances (giving consideration to factors including the extent to which the resolution will protect the safety of the Complainant and the entire SCC community), the resolution will be reduced to writing, which will conclude the process and close the Formal Complaint.

## **2D.06 Written Resolution Agreement**

To be effective, any agreement reached during the informal resolution process must be memorialized in writing and signed by the parties, the informal resolution facilitator, and the Title IX Coordinator. If a Respondent completes all measures agreed to in the written resolution agreement, no further process is available with regard to the allegations in the Formal Complaint.

Measures that parties agree to in the informal resolution process may include (but are not limited to):

- 1) Completion of online sexual harassment training;
- 2) Completion of an intervention program;

SOUTHWESTERN COMMUNITY COLLEGE	HUMAN RESOURCES SEX DISCRIMINATION AND HARASSMENT PROCEDURE – TITLE IX	4.03.05.01
-----------------------------------	--	------------

- 3) Scheduled meetings with the SCC counselor;
- 4) Permanent or temporary no contact order;
- 5) Restrictions for participation in activities, organizations, programs or classes;
- 6) Restriction of participation in academic honor societies and academic recognitions.
- 7) The Respondent’s completion of an educational or behavioral plan.

**2D.07 Termination of Informal Resolution Process**

Participation in the informal resolution process is completely voluntary, and either party, the informal resolution facilitator, or the Title IX Coordinator may terminate the process at any time PRIOR to completing a written resolution agreement. Should any party exercise the right to withdraw from the informal resolution process or if SCC determines the informal resolution process is no longer appropriate, the formal resolution process outlined above will promptly resume.

**2D.08 Timeframe**

The informal resolution process generally will be completed within 20 days of the parties’ agreement to the informal resolution process.

**2D.09 Appeal**

A resolution reached pursuant to the informal resolution process is final and not subject to appeal.

**2D.10 Records**

A resolution reached through the informal resolution process will not be included in a student Respondent’s student conduct record or in an employee Respondent’s personnel record, unless the inclusion of such information is agreed to as part of the informal resolution of the matter. The Title IX Coordinator will retain a record of the written resolution agreement for no less than seven years.

SOUTHWESTERN COMMUNITY COLLEGE	HUMAN RESOURCES SEX DISCRIMINATION AND HARASSMENT PROCEDURE – TITLE IX	4.03.05.01
-----------------------------------	--	------------

Cross Reference: 4.03.02 – Employee Code of Conduct  
4.03.05 - Sex Discrimination and Harassment Policy (Employee policy)  
6.03.01 – Campus Safety Reporting – Clery Act  
6.03.01 – Standards of Student Conduct; Administrative Procedures  
6.03.02.02 – Discipline and Appeal Procedure for Non-Academic  
Violations

Adopted: April 1999

Revised: April 28, 2015  
July 28, 2015  
August 14, 2020

SOUTHWESTERN COMMUNITY COLLEGE	HUMAN RESOURCES SEX DISCRIMINATION AND HARASSMENT PROCEDURE – TITLE IX	4.03.05.01
-----------------------------------	--	------------

**EXHIBIT A**

**Suggested Actions for People Who Have Experienced Sexual Harassment**

If you have experienced Sexual Harassment, SCC’s first priority is to help you take steps to address your safety, medical needs and emotional well-being. You are encouraged to take the following actions, as applicable, regardless of whether you have made a decision about whether to pursue a criminal or SCC complaint.

**1. Ensure Your Physical Safety.**

You may seek help from **local law enforcement agencies** or by contacting an SCC Resource Office who can assist you with contacting local law enforcement. SCC Resource Officers are on duty during normal SCC business hours and can be reached at 339-4294 (Jackson) 306-7015 (Macon).

**2. Seek Medical Assistance and Treatment.**

It is crucial that you obtain medical attention as soon as possible after a sexual assault, for example, to determine the extent of physical injury and to prevent or treat sexually transmitted diseases (such as HIV). Medical facilities can also screen for the presence of sedative drugs such as Rohypnol or GHB (date-rape drugs).

If you choose to have an evidence collection kit (or “rape kit”) completed, it is important to do so within 120 hours.

Even if you have not decided whether to file charges, it is advisable to have the evidence collection kit completed so that you can better preserve the options of obtaining a protective order and/or filing criminal charges at a later date.

**Important Contact Information**

**SCC Resources for Parties**

**Title IX & Coordinators**

Cheryl Contino-Conner (students)  
828-339-4245

[Cheryl@southwesterncc.edu](mailto:Cheryl@southwesterncc.edu)

Lisa Sizemore (employees)  
828-339-4280

[Lsizemore@southwesterncc.edu](mailto:Lsizemore@southwesterncc.edu)

**Campus Resource Office**

828-339-4294

**Counseling Office**

Peter Buck 828-339-4243

[Pbuck@southwesterncc.edu](mailto:Pbuck@southwesterncc.edu)

**Community Resources for Parties**

REACH hotlines:

Macon County - 369-5544

Jackson County - 526-8969

Swain/Qualla - 488-6809

Eastern Band of Cherokee –  
488-5572

Harris Regional Hospital - 586-7000

Angel Medical Center – 524-8411

Highlands-Cashiers Hospital –  
526-1200

Swain Community Hospital -  
488-2155

SOUTHWESTERN COMMUNITY COLLEGE	HUMAN RESOURCES SEX DISCRIMINATION AND HARASSMENT PROCEDURE – TITLE IX	4.03.05.01
-----------------------------------	--	------------

It is advisable to avoid showering, bathing, going to the bathroom, or brushing your teeth before an evidence collection kit is completed. You should also wear (or take with you in a paper – not plastic – bag) to the hospital the same clothing that you were wearing during the assault. An evidence collection kit can still be completed even if you have showered or bathed.

### 3. Obtain Emotional Support

**The SCC Counselor** can help students sort through their feelings and begin the healing process. The professional counselors are trained to provide crisis intervention on short-term and emergency issues. The Counselor can also provide referral services for outside providers and law enforcement. Counseling is free of charge to all students. In some instances, the law may require the disclosure of information shared by students with counselors. However, absent a legal mandate to the contrary, counseling services are strictly confidential, are not part of students' records, and will not be reported to other SCC personnel.

Students may also contact the Student Assistance Program (SAP) 24/7 for counseling support at 1-800-633-3353. The link to "request an SAP appointment" is for non-emergency contact only. A clinician will reply within the next business day to schedule an appointment. <https://www.mygroup.com/porta/student/request-sa-appointment>.

Employees may contact the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) to obtain counseling support at 1-800-633-3353 or <https://www.mygroup.com>.

### 4. Obtain Information/Report Misconduct

You are encouraged to report incidents of sexual assault to SCC's Title IX Coordinator (even if you have filed a report directly with law enforcement). The Title IX Coordinator can help you access resources and can provide you with support and information, including information on SCC's procedures for investigating and addressing instances of sexual assault.