



Heading in the Right Direction Policies and Procedures as Map and Compass

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Introduction

The Office of Student Rights and Responsibilities views the student discipline process as an important component in the education of the whole student. To achieve this, the OSRR regularly provides information to students on policies and procedures in the disciplinary process, adjudicates student misconduct in a manner that is fair, consistent and respectful of the rights of all students, includes and encourages student involvement in self-governance and policy development and review, and provides educational opportunities to both prevent and remediate violations.

This workbook contains guided exercises designed to enhance student success. **The assignment is not based on a finding of responsibility for a violation and is required as an opportunity to analyze and synthesize the student discipline process experience.**

If you have any questions during this assignment, you may contact the Office Student Rights and Responsibilities at 936-468-2703 or email Dr. Peggy Scott, Director, at pscott@sfasu.edu.

AN ALTERNATIVE TEXT FORMAT OF THIS MATERIAL IS
AVAILABLE ONLINE AT: <http://www.sfasu.edu/judicial/policies.asp>

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Knowing how to locate, understand and apply university policies and procedures can make navigating the academic journey much easier. Think of these as a map and compass to chart your course to graduation. These policies and procedures establish academic expectations and set boundaries on behavior to allow the university to fulfill its major function – to educate students. Rules, particularly the SFA Student Conduct Code, define the acceptable

community standards for our campus. Becoming familiar with and adhering to the code can prevent behavioral violations and the disciplinary sanctions that accompany them and, most importantly, enhance the quality of our campus community.

This workbook is designed to help you locate and examine the university policies and procedures dealing with student behavior and student discipline and to assist you in reflecting on the purpose and usefulness of rules and laws in society. **Students who have received an official summons must bring this workbook, already completed, to their initial disciplinary meeting.**

Part I – The Compass

The Student Conduct Code

Complete the following exercises by filling in the correct answer.

1. To find the SFA Student Conduct Code, begin on the SFA homepage (<http://www.sfasu.edu/>). Click on the A-Z List located near the upper right hand side up the page. Scroll down and click on ‘Policy Manual’ to open a search page for the manual. Enter “student” in the box and click the “Search Policy Manual” button. Of the listed results, click on Student Conduct Code (D-34.1). Write the web address of this policy on the line below:

2. Read through the code and find the alleged violation(s) with which you have been charged and write that number(s) in the following blank: _____.

Discussion



Laws exist in all civilized societies. Their purposes are the orderly functioning of nations, cities and institutions and the protection of citizens' rights and freedoms. When we follow laws, whether traffic laws, tax laws or even city ordinances regulating noise and trash-disposal, we are helping our community run in an orderly manner and respecting the rights of others. Consider laws as the collective "moral compass" of a society in that they help citizens know "which way to go."

We are all expected to follow federal, state and local laws on our campus. Additionally, we are also expected to follow all university rules and policies. The intent of the Student Conduct Code is to establish a positive living and learning environment free from disruptive

behaviors. You might say that the code "points students in the right direction."

Now that you have located the Student Conduct Code, you can find any other university policy in the same manner. The search page you used allows searching of the entire policy manual using either keys words or a policy number. There will probably be many times when referring to the policy manual will be helpful to you. For example, you may need information on grade appeals, the class absence policy, discrimination or sexual harassment.

As a quick reference list, you will also find a menu of university policies of particular interest to students on the OSRR homepage. To find the OSRR homepage, start on the SFA homepage, click on Students, then click on Student Rights and Responsibilities listed under the [Help & Services](#) heading. A link to the policies are listed on the right-hand side menu of the OSRR homepage.

Time for Reflection

Consider the questions below and write a short response. Use the backs of pages if needed. If you feel you are not responsible for the alleged violation with which you have been charged, you must still complete the questions – it is not an admission of guilt or responsibility on your part. If this is your situation, answer the questions from an "imagine if" viewpoint. The purpose of the workbook is for you to gain a greater understanding of the student discipline process.

1. Why are laws and rules important to society in general and to the university campus specifically?

2. What were your specific personal actions or behaviors that violated the SFA Student Conduct Code? **If you feel you did not violate the code, what are some behaviors that would have caused the same infraction?**

3. Every student violation impacts the university community in some way. Often, students feel their actions did not impact anyone, even themselves. At the very least, every alleged infraction causes the expenditure of time to process the incident – time that could have been spent by everyone involved in other more productive ways. Consider the violation(s) with which you are charged. Specifically, state how your actions impacted others and how this made you feel and how you think it made others feel. **If you feel you did not violate the code, try to imagine the impact and how it would make you feel and provide that information.**

Part II – The Map
The Student Discipline Procedures

Complete the following exercises by filling in the correct answer.

1. To find the SFA Student Discipline Procedures, begin on the SFA homepage (<http://www.sfasu.edu/>). Click on the A-Z List located near the upper right hand side up the page. Scroll down and click on ‘Policy Manual’ to open a search page for the manual. Enter “student” in the box and click the “Search Policy Manual” button. Of the results, click on Student Discipline Procedures (D-34). Write the web address on the line below:

Browse the policy’s table of contents to quickly find the answers to the questions below. The discussion following these questions may also contain useful information.

2. How many rights are listed for charged students in disciplinary proceedings? _____
3. Victims of what two types of violations have special rights in the SFA student disciplinary process?
 - a. _____
 - b. _____
4. In a student disciplinary hearing:
 - a. Who bears the burden of proof?: _____
 - b. By what standard?: _____
5. The most extreme punishment resulting from the student discipline process calls for the permanent removal of a student from the university. What is it called?

6. Explain the differences between the formal and informal student discipline process for **student conduct code violations** (Section IX) regarding (a) who hears the case and (b) use of evidence and/or witnesses.

HEARING TYPE:	FORMAL	INFORMAL
Who hears the case?		
What evidence is used?		

Discussion



As discussed earlier, knowing policies and where to find them can make navigating the academic journey

much easier. Policies also explain processes and procedures by outlining the steps necessary to accomplish a task. Think of these types of policies as maps – they show how to get from one place to the other. A good example is the university student discipline policy (Student Discipline Procedures (D-34)) that outlines all the student discipline procedures in great detail – a map of every possible route or option available to a student. This policy includes the procedures for alleged violations of the student code and residence hall community guidelines. These procedures were created to provide a set and definite process that protects the rights of charged students in the university discipline process. There are several key concepts and elements included in the procedures to ensure this protection.

There are subtle differences between the procedures for student code and residence hall community guidelines violations. Most of these differences are based on the key concept of “due process.” The student discipline procedures were specifically developed to ensure that every student receives the necessary level of “due process” when charged with an alleged violation. Due process refers to the formality and stringency of the procedures used in a hearing. The level of process that is “due” in a particular case is related to what the student stands to lose. Some examples are loss of a privilege or to participate in an organization or activity or, at the extreme, loss of the right to continue enrollment at the university for either a specified period of time or permanently. The more the student stands to lose, the more the process. As another example, a residence hall

hearing for a noise violation, which could end in a warning, does not require the procedural formality of an illegal drug hearing by the Student Conduct Committee that could result in a suspension or expulsion. Expulsion is the permanent removal of a student from the university community.

The SFA student disciplinary process is designed to provide charged students a fair and impartial procedure. Along with due process, two other important elements in any student disciplinary system are notice and the opportunity to respond. For conduct code violations, a student receives notice from the Office of Student Rights and Responsibilities in a letter that describes the date, time and place of the infraction, a description or categorical listing of the infraction in relation to the conduct code, and the date by which the student must make an appointment to see the judicial officer for an initial meeting. The charged student’s opportunity to respond comes through the hearing process where the student can offer an explanation of the incident or other evidence on the student’s behalf. A decision is then made about the student’s responsibility for the violation and an appropriate sanction, if needed, is assigned.

It is important to remember that the student disciplinary process is not a legal proceeding; it is an educational and administrative process. There are no rules of evidence, no courtroom and no jury. Cases are resolved either informally or formally. There are two important differences between the two types of hearings. One is who hears the case and the other is how evidence is used. Informal cases are resolved between the charged student and one hearing officer. Formal cases are resolved between the charged student and a hearing board with faculty/staff and student representation. In a formal hearing, the board serves as a fact-finding body and there is the presentation of evidence, witnesses and the

opportunity for the board and the charged student to ask questions. Both processes offer the student a right to appeal the hearing outcome and to have an advisor with them in the hearing.

Whichever process is used, the goal is the same: to provide the student with an

opportunity for personal growth. To facilitate this goal, sanctions usually have an educational element, such as community service, reflection writings or educational modules. Sanctions are designed to meet the personal growth needs of an individual student and the severity of the sanction is in relation to the severity of the violation.

Time for Reflection

Consider the following questions and write a short response. Use the backs of pages if necessary.

1. How do the student discipline procedures safeguard your rights as a student charged with a violation? In your answer, you may want to consider the role of due process, the opportunity to respond and the different types of hearings available to students.

2. Now that you have completed this workbook and had the opportunity to review the SFA Student Conduct Code and the university's student discipline procedures, what would you consider to be an appropriate sanction (punishment) for your alleged infraction and why? If you feel you did not violate the code, what do you think would be an appropriate sanction for someone who did?

3. Living a satisfying and productive lifestyle requires making healthy choices that balance physical, emotional and spiritual wellbeing. Being a student, that can mean juggling academics, work, student organization activities and family obligations. **List one of your personal wellness goals and describe how the behaviors associated with your alleged infraction impacts these goals.** If you feel you did not violate the code, imagine and describe how you see the impact of these behaviors on someone's personal wellness.

Part III – Charting the Course

Planning for Action



As a result of this guided exercise, what behavioral changes do you need to make to prevent future violations or to enhance your life? For example: “I will find at least one new activity a week that does not involve alcohol.” Or, “I will attend counseling to get help with finding new ways to deal with the way I express my anger.” Or, “I will not go out on school nights.”

Think about your personal values as you plan your statement. Values are beliefs that are very special to each of us. Values are not so much about what we say as what we do. Our values are demonstrated in our behaviors.

If you say that you value your opportunity for a college education, then your behaviors should reflect that. Think of some of your behaviors that others could observe. What do those actions communicate about what you value? Do you prepare for class? Are you on time for class? Do your free-time pursuits foster a healthy lifestyle?

Only you can choose your values. Raths, Harmin and Simons (1979, *Values and Teaching*, 2nd ed. Columbus: Merrill) define values within a framework of choosing, prizing and acting. This system states that your choice must be made freely and with an awareness of other possible alternatives and their consequences. You should be proud of what you value and willing to publicly recognize your choices. What you value should be positive, enriching and visible in all areas of your life.

Claiming our values is one of the things that makes college life both exciting and challenging. For many of us, leaving for college means leaving behind our families whose values we have reflected all our lives and suddenly being faced with a multitude of choices. You will be surrounded with classmates in the same situation – so many options! Pressure to try new alternatives will be all around you.

Make your choices carefully and with great consideration. Values are the things you’re willing to stand up for. And while standing up to your peers is particularly hard, think about what’s really important to you and where you want to be 10 years from now. Will what you “value” today get you there?

CONTINUE TO NEXT PAGE FOR QUESTIONS ON THIS SECTION

1. What one or two things do you value most? How were these reflected in this incident?

2. Write a brief statement describing the behavioral changes you plan to make as a result of your experiences related to the violation(s) with which you were charged and/or the student discipline process. Here's your opportunity to begin "charting your own course!"

Setting Sail



Now take this statement and turn it into a goal. Goals that are stated in measurable terms with definite timelines are easier to meet. A goal stated as “I’ll try not to be tardy for class” lacks a certain specificity – not to mention a lack of conviction. Here’s a more refined example: “I will be on time for every class for the fall semester.” This example describes a very measurable behavior (being on time for class) with a definite time frame (the fall semester).

Objectives are the actions that help you meet a goal. These should also be stated in very measurable terms with deadlines or timeframes. For example: “I will buy a new alarm clock today to help me wake up on time to get ready for class.” Or “I will go to bed each school night by 11 o’clock so I will be rested and able to get up on time.” Each measurable action you can take that gets you closer to meeting your goal is an objective.

Let’s not forget the best part – the reward for meeting the goal. Rewards can be spread out along the way, such as when you meet an objective, or saved for meeting the goal in its entirety. It needs to be something that really motivates you. It can be something really simple, for example, spending time watching a sports event on the weekend only if you’ve made it to class on time for the entire week. Or it can be really big such as a special purchase of electronics or clothing – just make sure you can afford it! In reality, meeting the goal should be enough of a reward in itself – but a little treat can keep you going.

Write a goal for yourself with at least two objectives in the space below. Don’t forget it to make it measurable and specific.

Goal: _____

Objective 1: _____

Objective 2: _____

Reward: _____