

## **Rice University Policy No. 701**

### **WRITTEN STUDENT COMPLAINTS**

#### **General Policy**

Rice University is committed to receiving and addressing, in a fair and timely manner, all written student complaints filed with the University regarding the University itself or its faculty or staff. Students wishing to file a written complaint under this policy should follow the procedures described below. This policy applies to all currently enrolled and formerly enrolled students who wish to file a complaint that falls within the definition of “written student complaint” below and relates to actions or matters that affected the student while the student was enrolled at Rice University. An enrolled student is one who has officially matriculated into the University. Individuals taking non-credit courses at the University have not matriculated into the University and are not considered enrolled students.

#### **Definitions**

Not every written inquiry or request from a student for University assistance or University action constitutes a written student complaint. Written student complaints typically involve requests for relief or redress after a student has been denied an action or service that the student believes is merited and after the student has exhausted the established procedures (if any) available for addressing the issue.

For purposes of this policy, a “written student complaint” is one that the student or former student submits in writing (in either paper or electronic format) describing a problem or concern involving some action or inaction by the University, its faculty or staff and requesting a remedial action by the University. The written student complaint should explain the circumstances fully, including specifying: (i) the action, practice or decision being challenged by the student, (ii) the names of individuals involved in or knowledgeable about the issue, (iii) the impact of the action, practice or decision on the student, (iv) the resolution or action requested and an explanation of why it should be granted, and (v) current contact information of the student filing the complaint. The written student complaint should also include any relevant documentation that is available.

The definition of “written student complaint” does not include: (i) the allegation or processing of student disciplinary charges, (ii) routine requests for review of a financial aid package or a determination of satisfactory academic progress for purposes of financial aid eligibility, (iii) routine requests for review of educational records, and (iv) petitions or appeals of academic, disciplinary or administrative decisions that already have a defined appeal process.

#### **Policy Implementation**

The University encourages students to pursue written student complaints as close to the source of the issue as possible, such as through the department or school from which the issue arises or through specialized processes already in place to address the concern. For example, specialized

processes exist for challenging academic decisions and these are explained in the General Announcements and Student Handbook. Specialized processes also exist for students wishing to make discrimination complaints, which can be raised with Title IX Coordinators or the Office of Affirmative Action/Equal Employment Opportunity Programs. Complaints by students against University employees generally should be raised with the Director of Employee Relations in the Human Resources office (for staff issues) or the Vice Provost for Academic Affairs (for faculty issues). These specialized complaint processes are often the fastest way to obtain a response from University personnel with expertise in the area relating to the complaint.

If a student is unsure about which office should receive the written student complaint, he or she may submit it to the administrative head of any of the following offices which the student believes is most closely related to the subject matter of the complaint:

- Dean of Undergraduates,
- Dean of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies,
- Dean of the Glasscock School of Continuing Studies,
- Registrar,
- Cashier,
- Director of Financial Aid,
- Associate Vice President for Housing & Dining,
- Director of Athletics,
- Associate Vice President for Human Resources,
- Chief of the Rice University Police Department,
- Director of Compliance, or
- The Office of General Counsel.

If the receiving office is not the appropriate place for the written complaint, the official receiving the complaint will forward it to the appropriate office, and the University will notify the student about which office has responsibility for the complaint.

Once received by the appropriate office, the written student complaint will be reviewed and a response made. After the written student complaint is received in the appropriate office, a decision on the complaint will be provided as soon as feasible (within 30 days in most cases).

As part of Rice's commitment to fairly administer a process for resolving written student complaints, the University will maintain a log of written student complaints received under this policy and their resolutions; the log will be available for review by the University's regulators and accreditors.

The log will include elements such as the following:

- Identification of student submitting written complaint,
- Student status (Undergraduate, Graduate, Professional, Other),
- Type of complaint (Academic, Nonacademic),
- Date received,
- Responsible office for resolving complaint,
- Name of person entering record,

Nature of complaint,  
Status of complaint,  
Resolution/Outcome/Decision,  
Date complaint closed,  
Confirmation of written notification of disposition, and  
Other comments.

Each office that receives written student complaints must keep records of these complaints and their resolutions, as well as ensure that summary data is timely entered in Rice University's "Official Record of Written Student Complaints" maintained by the Office of Institutional Effectiveness.

As an alternative, and if a student has exhausted available grievance, complaint or appeal processes, a complaint may be submitted to the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board. More information may be found in the Rice General Announcements, or at <http://www.theccb.state.tx.us/studentcomplaints>.

#### **Cross References to Related Policies**

Students should consult the Student Handbook, Rice General Announcements, specific graduate programs' handbooks, and University policies and procedures published online and in print.

#### **Responsible Officer**

The Associate Vice President for Institutional Effectiveness is the responsible University officer for this policy.

#### **Key Offices to Contact Regarding the Policy and its Implementation**

The Office of Institutional Effectiveness should be consulted for issues regarding the implementation and scope of this policy.



David W. Leebron  
President

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