Ethical Guidelines

As academic professionals, the faculty of Napa Valley College endorses the “Statement on Professional Ethics” of the American Association of University Professors (AAUP), which has identified five areas of faculty responsibility: 1) to their disciplines; 2) to their students; 3) to their colleagues; 4) to their institutions; and 5) to their communities. In addition, the faculty endorses the Board of Directors’ Statement of the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AACU) – “Academic Freedom and Educational Responsibility,” which clarifies the balance between academic freedom and academic responsibility.

In connection with the principles laid out in the above listed documents, faculty has a primary obligation to take reasonable precautions to respect the confidentiality rights of those with whom they work or consult, i.e., colleagues, staff, students and potential students, recognizing that confidentiality may be established by law, institutional rules, or professional or scientific relationships.

The faculty will adhere to these ethical principles to support the mission and values of the institution.

Process for Addressing Alleged Ethics Violations

Faculty ethics guidelines are designed promote academic integrity and respectful, collegial communication. Any suspected violations will be addressed following these same principles.

Faculty ethics violation complaints will follow a process that is designed to promote collegial conflict resolution at the lowest level possible. That is, the complainant will meet directly with the faculty member to discuss the perceived violation. At that meeting, the complainant will identify the specific behaviors that were problematic, the ethical standards that the behavior appeared to violate, and the specific changes in behavior that the complainant believes would be more appropriate. To protect both parties, a written record of date and outcome of the meeting should be agreed to and maintained by both individuals.

Because of the power differential that may exist between students, staff and faculty, the complainant may access an ombudsman throughout the process. The ombudsman will be selected from the Academic Senate Faculty Ethics Advisors (FEA). The ombudsman may attend any meetings with the complainant, and his/her role will be to clarify the process and facilitate constructive dialogue between both parties.
In cases in which both parties cannot reach agreement, or when a faculty member repeatedly violates one or more standards of ethical behavior, the complainant may take the issue to the Academic Senate Faculty Ethics Advisors (FEA) for review. The FEA will meet with both the complainant(s) and the faculty member in question to review the specifics listed above and facilitate a resolution. The focus of the meeting will be to help ensure that each person’s perspective is heard, to clarify the college’s expectations for ethical behavior, and to reach agreement on future standards for behavior. If an agreement cannot be reached, the FEA will refer the issue to the District, for administrative review under the progressive discipline policy.

Serious infractions involving alleged violations of campus policies, professional responsibilities, Ed. Code, etc. will be addressed by the District through the progressive discipline process described in the Faculty Agreement, or through legal channels.

The Academic Senate Faculty Ethics Advisors will consist of three to four faculty members, at least one of whom will be a Counselor. They will be selected from the entire tenured faculty by vote every five years (or as needed to replace members), and will convene only as needed to review specific complaints. Members will be selected based on their demonstrated record of effective and collegial communication skills, intercultural competence, evidence of critical thinking and problem solving abilities, and overall fairness in dealing with others.

**Timelines**

The complainant has 10 working days from the date of the alleged ethics violation to request a meeting with the faculty member. That meeting must occur within 10 working days of the request to meet.

If the initial meeting does not resolve the issue, either party may contact the FEA to schedule a follow-up meeting with the FEA. That meeting will occur within 10 working days of the request. In the rare circumstance in which not all parties are available to meet during that time period, the FEA may extend the time period to accommodate the needs of the individuals involved.

If the FEA determines that the severity of the alleged ethics violation or a pattern of ethics violations merits a District investigation, they will notify the faculty member, the complainant and the District within five working days of their meeting with the involved parties.

The District will initiate its investigation within 10 working days of the date it was notified of the alleged infraction, and will notify all parties of the outcome of that investigation within 30 working days after initiating the investigation.