

# STUDENT FORMAL COMPLAINT PROCESS

In support of our students, Silver Lake College have established a formal student complaint process as an avenue of communication with students and to identify any problems so they may be appropriately addressed. Additionally, the College has a federal obligation to track significant student complaints so we may monitor the quality of our services.

Students have multiple means to express concerns or complaints and many faculty and staff with whom concerns can be shared. Established appeals and grievance processes are available for students to address many common issues and these can be found on both the SLC webpage and the Student Handbook under Grievance Procedures.

To assist the College in identifying patterns of concerns and to comply with our obligations, the following Student Formal Complaint Process is defined:

*Documented student complaints of significance are those that meet the below definition and that come to the attention of the Dean of Student Affairs for follow-up and resolution. The College employee receiving the complaint determines whether a concern meets the definitions offered below and is of sufficient substance to be tracked.*

## Definitions for this Process

- **Complaint:**
  - in writing: hand-delivered, via mail, by email, or by fax
  - signed/identified by student (not anonymous)
  - addressed to/submitted to an institutional employee and forwarded to the Assistant Dean for Student Development or submitted directly to the Assistant Dean for Student Development
  - not a request for a routine decision (e.g., grade change, requirement waiver, etc.)
  - not an appeal or a grievance for which a defined process already exists
- **Student:**
  - an individual currently enrolled full-time or part-time
  - a person recently enrolled at the institution in the previous two semesters/academic year
  - an alumnus/a who earned a degree from the institution in the past 12 months
  - not a parent, relative, employer, member of the public, etc. – even if related to a student

## Process for Filing a Complaint

### *Informal Complaint*

**Step One:** Silver Lake College requires that you first make every effort to informally resolve a complaint or concern. It is important that you talk directly with the staff, faculty or administrator with whom you have a complaint in order for them to have an opportunity to hear your concerns and work with you to resolve the issue. As a professional courtesy, you are advised to:

- Contact college employees by phone or email to schedule an appointment
- Be clear about what your concern is and how you would like the issue resolved

If your complaint or concern has not been resolved to your satisfaction, you may move into the Formal Complaint process listed below. If you have questions or would like assistance with this process, please contact [complaints@sl.edu](mailto:complaints@sl.edu).

### *Formal Complaint*

**Step Two:** You may utilize the formal complaint process after exhausting the informal complaint process directly with the person with whom you have a complaint or concern. To submit a formal complaint, you must submit the complaint in writing; if you choose to submit it in person, please submit it to the Office of the Assistant Dean for Student Development in Main Hall Room 138A. The complaint may also be submitted electronically to [complaints@sl.edu](mailto:complaints@sl.edu).

After your Student Formal Complaint has been submitted, you will receive notification via your SLC email account that it has been received; this notification will normally occur within five (5) business days. You will be provided information regarding next steps in the process and may be asked for additional information, if necessary.

Within this step of the process, complaints that involve the faculty or staff may be forwarded to that member's Dean/Assistant Dean or Supervisor for resolution.

If your complaint or concern has not been resolved to your satisfaction, you may appeal the decision made by the Dean or Supervisor by continuing the complaint process into Step Three listed below. Questions can be directed to [complaints@sl.edu](mailto:complaints@sl.edu).

**Step Three:** To appeal a decision made by the Dean or Supervisor with whom you worked to resolve your complaint or concern, you need to submit an email to [complaints@sl.edu](mailto:complaints@sl.edu) stating your desire to appeal the current decision and providing the following information:

- Brief outline of steps you have taken toward resolving the issue
- Decision given by the Division Chair or Staff Supervisor
- Reason for appealing this decision
- Possible solution(s) you see to the issue
- Contact information (phone, email, etc.)

After your email requesting an appeal has been submitted, you will receive notification via your SLC email account that it has been received; this notification will normally occur within five (5) business days. You will be notified of the next steps in the process and be given information as to who will contact you in the near future.

Within this step of the process, complaints involving the faculty or staff may be forwarded to that member's Vice President. Decisions of the Vice President are final and cannot be appealed.

If you have any questions or would like assistance with any portion of this process, please contact [complaints@sl.edu](mailto:complaints@sl.edu).

### **Complaint Info That Is Tracked:**

- Date complaint received
- Student(s) identified with complaint
- Nature of the complaint
- Office assigned to address the complaint
- Steps taken to resolve complaint and final decision or College action taken
- External actions by complainant (e.g., lawsuit, EEOC, OCR)

In accordance with our federal regulatory and accreditation standard requirements in this area, the College will annually review student complaints tracked in accordance with this process and will look to identify patterns in types of complaints and their resolution. The review will also include an assessment of what, if any, modifications or improvements the College needs to make as a result of information identified in handling student complaints and a process for implementing appropriate institutional enhancements accordingly.

### **REGULATORY REFERENCES**

- Federal Regulations 34 CFR 602.16(a)(1)(ix)
- The Higher Learning Commission (HLC), Assumed Practice A.4.

*Adopted June 2017*