Policy 4.0(b) Institutional Records of Student Complaints

Compliance Evidence

CSU complies with the Higher Learning Commission’s expectations for maintaining records of student complaints and their disposition.

Students have a variety of avenues available to them to communicate ideas, concerns, and complaints at CSU. This can occur directly between the student and faculty or staff member involved, or at any level (program, department, college or school, institution or system). These processes are outlined in the General Catalog (section 1.6, p.7) and online in several places including the Vice President for Student Affairs office, the Office of Conflict Resolution and Student Conduct Services (CRSCS), and the CSU Policy and Compliance site. A comprehensive University Policy on Student Complaint Reporting was adopted in February, 2013 and includes a complaint reporting form and linked references to both the Colorado Commission on Higher Education and the HLC complaint reporting resources. This policy clearly defines what is a “student complaint,” identifies a number of other types of issues and concerns that may be raised by students, and provides information for contacting the offices and officials when those types of matters arise (e.g., student employment matters to go HR, matters related to curriculum and graduation requirements to the Registrar, etc.).

Examples of campus units where students typically make contact with a complaint include CRSCS, the office of Resources for Disabled Students, the Office of the President, and the Office of the Vice President for Student Affairs (VPSA). These offices work collaboratively to review and respond to student complaints. Pursuant to the new policy, the Dean of Students has primary responsibility for administering the policy.

The Office of the President has developed a tracking system for all student complaints received by the institution (as defined in the policy). This system is an online tool shared by the offices where complaints are typically received. It supplements (and in some cases, replaces) separate, stand-alone methods of tracking complaints in various units. Only those with a legitimate educational interest and responsibility for handling complaints are granted access. The system builds a database of complaints, persons involved, steps taken in response, and resolution of the matter. Each participant in the review process makes notes in the system, and others involved can review and add to the notes to create a complete record.

Typically, a student’s complaint will be referred either to a specific department for response (e.g., the Registrar), as applicable, or to CRSCS. In Spring 2011, CRSCS implemented a tracking system using an Access database. Since that time, the office has been able to report more accurate numbers related to each case. CRSCS submits an annual report each fiscal year (July-June) with data pulled from the Access database. Recent data shows:

- FY 2011: 107 cases/391 contacts
- FY 2012: 246 cases/1258 contacts
- FY 2013 (to date): 201 cases/993 contacts

As used here, “case” refers to the client who initiated the first meeting with CRSCS. A “contact” represents emails, phone calls, or one-on-one meetings with parties (students, staff, parents, faculty or community members) related to the case. Case statistics show the types of cases, the number of contacts within each case type, and the ways students became familiar with the office. Case statistics for 2011 through April 2013 are attached as an exhibit.

CRSCS also solicits feedback from each client at the conclusion of a case. Assessments are given out either in hardcopy or electronically and compiled using the Campus Labs (formerly known as Student Voice) survey tool. Each survey asks parties to identify the type of conflict they are having (i.e. workplace issue, dispute with faculty member, grade appeal, policy question, roommate conflict, etc.) as well as the length of time they’ve had the issue, the efforts made to date to remedy the situation, and whether they believe their issue was resolved. The assessment also asks customer service and learning outcome questions for CRSCS to use in continuously improving its program. Assessment surveys for every year since 2008 are attached as exhibits to this section, as well. CRSCS currently has about a 10% response rate for these surveys, and each assessment is open throughout a fiscal year (July-
In addition, the institution maintains a Compliance Reporting Hotline. The hotline allows any person to file a report, either online, by mail, or by phone, and is designed so that all reports are received directly by appropriate officials in the CSU System offices (e.g., Office of the General Counsel, and Internal Audit). Reports can be submitted anonymously if desired. Since August, 2010, a total of 13 reports were received; of these, only 2 involved (or potentially involved) a student and both were resolved informally at the department level. A copy of the hotline log is attached.

In sum, students at CSU have many resources and personnel at their disposal to hear, help with and resolve complaints and problems of all kinds. The University tracks these complaints, responds promptly and appropriately, and has designed a system that best meets these needs.

Sources

1. 6 - Policies and Guiding Principles (Page 7)
2. Compliance Reporting Hotline
3. Compliance Reporting Hotline Log
4. Conflict Resolution Services Survey FY08
5. Conflict Resolution Services Survey FY09
6. Conflict Resolution Services Survey FY10
7. Conflict Resolution Services Survey FY11
8. Conflict Resolution Services Survey FY12
9. Conflict Resolution Services Survey FY13
10. Student Complaint Case Statistics 2011 to Present
11. Student Complaint Reporting policy