

HIGHLAND COMMUNITY COLLEGE  
GENERAL PERSONNEL POLICY

SUBJECT: Whistleblower Protection Policy  
BOARD OF TRUSTEE APPROVAL: 10/23/2024

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EFFECTIVE DATE: 10/23/2024

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The purpose of this Policy is to provide an avenue for any member of the College community, including students, employees, and visitors, to make a good-faith report or whistleblower complaint of suspected unethical conduct, violations of state and/or federal law or infractions of College policies, processes and/or procedures or workplace rules by College personnel.

This Policy establishes the appropriate reporting mechanism to be used for notification of known or suspected wrongful conduct and provides for protection from retaliation for making a good-faith report under this Policy.

### **Reporting**

College students, employees, and visitors must comply with all applicable state and federal laws, as well as College policies, processes, and procedures. Students, employees, and visitors must not be compelled by a College employee, supervisor, manager, director, administrator, or trustee to violate state or federal law or College policy, process, or procedure.

Any member of the College community, who has knowledge of specific acts which they reasonably believe violate state and/or federal law, or College policy, process or procedure should promptly report those acts to their immediate Supervisor. If the member of College community does not feel comfortable reporting the violation to their immediate Supervisor, they should report the violation to Human Resources or by submitting a report through the HCC Maxient system. When making reports through the HCC Maxient system, reporters may include contact information or remain anonymous. Allegations against the President should be reported to the Board of Trustees. The Board of Trustees can be reached at [hccboardchair@highlandcc.edu](mailto:hccboardchair@highlandcc.edu). Allegations against Human Resources may be taken directly to the President.

### **Examples of Suspected Wrongful Conduct**

The following examples are provided to illustrate potential categories of wrongful conduct covered by this Policy. Such examples include, but are not limited to:

- Theft, fraud or similar inappropriate use of College or HCC Foundation resources and assets, federal financial aid funds, grant funds, or scholarships
- Falsification of contracts, reports, or records
- Improper supplier, vendor, or contractor activity
- Intentional misreporting of financial transactions
- Malicious use of a College technology resource

Administrators, directors, managers, and supervisors are required to promptly report any report of suspected violations to Human Resources, which has specific and exclusive responsibility to investigate all reported violations.

### **Investigation**

Reports and investigations will be kept confidential to the extent possible under law and consistent with the need to conduct an adequate investigation. Maxient Ticket reports will be routed internally so they may be promptly and thoroughly investigated to the extent possible based on the information submitted by the reporter. Human Resources will exercise reasonable care in dealing with suspected misconduct to avoid:

1. publication of baseless allegations;
2. premature notice to persons suspected of misconduct and/or disclosure of suspected misconduct to others not involved with the investigation; and/or
3. violations of a person's rights under law.

### **Enforcement**

If it is determined that a violation to state and/or federal law, or to College policy, process, or procedure has taken place, Human Resources will work with the proper administrator(s) to issue the appropriate accountability up to and including termination.

### **Appeal Process**

The decision by Human Resources and proper Administrator(s), or the board's decision in a case of allegations against the president, will be final.

### **Retaliation**

Highland Community College is committed to providing an environment of integrity that encourages individuals to disclose violations of state and/or federal law, College policies, processes, or procedures and protects an individual who makes a good-faith disclosure of such suspected wrongful conduct.

No individual shall retaliate against another individual for reporting, or causing to be reported, suspected wrongful conduct, or for assisting in an authorized investigation of alleged wrongful conduct. Retaliation includes any action that may have a materially adverse impact on the educational environment or terms or conditions of employment including, but not limited to, increasing discipline, demotion, changes in pay or hours, lowering grades, or material changes in job duties or functions, if such action (whether actual or threatened) is because of the individual's filing of or participation in the review of a complaint under this Policy, whether or not such complaint is determined to be valid.

Any employee who retaliates against a student or employee who has reported a violation in good faith is subject to discipline up to and including termination of employment.

Any person who believes retaliation has taken or is taking place should immediately report the matter to Human Resources or file a report through the [HCC Maxient Ticket System](#).

Accordingly, an administrator, director, manager, or supervisor who receives a report of suspected retaliation:

1. should immediately notify Human Resources of the report;
2. should not discuss the report with anyone other than Human Resources, an internal auditor, or a duly authorized law enforcement officer;
3. should not contact the person suspected to further investigate the matter or demand restitution;
4. should direct all inquiries from an attorney retained by the suspected individual to Human Resources; and

5. should direct all inquiries from the media to college public relations.

**Other Processes**

This policy is not intended to supplant any more specific college policy that would apply to a particular form of misconduct, such as sexual harassment, which is governed exclusively by the college's sexual misconduct policy. To the extent a more specific college policy exists with respect to a particular form of misconduct, that more particular policy will govern in all respects.

**False or Malicious Reporting**

This policy does not protect an employee who files a report or provides information that the employee knows to be false or provides information with reckless disregard for its truth or falsity. An employee who is determined to knowingly have made false accusations or provided false information during an investigation may be subject to disciplinary action up to and including termination.