

# Teacher Preparation Advocacy Policy

## **Purpose**

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that students understand the support system in place to guide them in responding to decisions affecting certification in which there is a disagreement. In cases of disagreement, a student is always encouraged to work first with faculty to find a shared resolution. However, should such efforts prove unsuccessful, students are encouraged to advocate for themselves. This policy and its procedures are designed: to assist students in this process; to support their development of skills, habits, and dispositions necessary to effectively advocate for themselves in a professional setting; to ensure their educational and programmatic needs are met; to ensure fairness and equity in decision making; to provide opportunities for all sides to be heard; to ensure that decisions are made in a transparent fashion; and to ensure that students' rights and responsibilities are recognized and honored. The role of faculty in this process is to mentor students through the process, to support them in addressing concerns and problems, and to work with students to resolve conflicts involving classes, advising, and policy implementation. The Advocacy Policy is not designed to replace existing College-wide policies. When existing College policy outlines procedures for addressing issues (i.e. grade disputes), the College policy will be followed.

## **Procedure**

### **Step 1: Informal Resolution**

When an issue or problem related to a class or to an individual faculty's interpretation of a policy or procedure or general treatment (including fairness), the first step in Advocacy is for the student to address the issue with the faculty member in a face-to-face meeting. Students and faculty are encouraged to resolve issues through discussion and negotiation when possible. This meeting should take place within 10 regular school days of the student's initial awareness of her/his concern.

### **Step 2: Facilitated Discussion**

If the student determines that a satisfactory resolution has not been reached in the meeting, s/he may meet with the Major Program Coordinator to discuss the issue further. If resolution is not reached through discussion with the Major Program Coordinator, the Coordinator will set a meeting with the faculty member and the student. In this meeting, the Coordinator will act as a discussion facilitator in hopes of reaching consensus in resolution. The student must notify her/his Major Program Coordinator within 5 days of the meeting with faculty in Step 1 should s/he wish to pursue the issue further. Though students may *always* speak with the Teacher Preparation Programs Chair, at this time the Major Program Coordinator will explain the appropriate next step.

### **Step 3: Formal Advocacy**

If resolution cannot be achieved through this facilitated discussion between the student, the Major Program Coordinator, and the faculty member, the student may formalize the Advocacy process by submitting to the Teacher Preparation Programs Chair a written statement that includes an explanation of the disagreement, discussion of Steps 1 and 2 and why these steps did not lead to resolution, and the desired outcome. The student must also include any documents s/he believes will support his/her point of view. The formal statement and documents must be received by the Teacher Preparation Programs Chair within 7 days of the Step 2 meeting.

The faculty member will have seven days to submit a written answer to the student's statement, including a preferred resolution. The faculty member should also include any documents s/he believes will support her/his point of view.

The Chair will study the student and faculty submissions and respond in writing with a recommended resolution within three days from the date all materials are received.

### **Step 4: Appeal of Teacher Preparation Programs Chair's Recommended Resolution**

If the student or faculty does not feel the Teacher Preparation Programs Chair's resolution is satisfactory, either may appeal the decision. The appeal should be submitted in writing to Teacher Preparation Programs Chair and should identify the reasons the Chair's resolution is unsatisfactory. The written appeal must be received within seven days notice of the Teacher Preparation Programs Chair's recommended resolution is received.

### Step 5: Resolution Committee

Within five days of receipt of the written appeal, the Teacher Preparation Programs Chair will appoint a six person Resolution Committee made up of two Education Unit faculty members teaching outside the program in which the student is enrolled, the president and vice president of the Student Advisory Council, the Assistant Vice-President for Student Life and the Teacher Preparation Programs Chair.

Within two weeks from the date of the appeal, the Committee will meet to discuss the material submitted by the faculty member and the student and any notes taken at resolution meetings during the process. Using their best judgment, the committee will make a decision resolving the appeal. If made by vote, a simple majority will suffice. The resolution will be submitted to the faculty member and student in writing within two weeks from the date the appeal was submitted to the Teacher Preparation Programs Chair.

### Step 6: Teacher Education Committee (TEC)

If the student or faculty feels the Committee's resolution is unsatisfactory, either may appeal the decision to the TEC. A written appeal should be submitted to the TEC Chair, received within seven days of the Resolution Committee's written resolution and should include any supporting materials submitted in prior steps.

Within one week of submission of materials to the TEC, the committee will meet to discuss the appeal. Both parties will be able to present any materials they deem necessary to state their case. At this meeting, the TEC will make a decision regarding the appeal. This resolution will be binding and the student and faculty member will receive a written response within seven days.

### Role of the Department and/or Teacher Preparation Programs Chair

When the Major Program Coordinator or the Teacher Preparation Programs Chair is the faculty member involved in the dispute or issue, the student's advisor or another faculty member requested by the student will serve in the Coordinator's or Chair's role in the advocacy process.

