

## Standard XI

### Integrity

#### Description

Western Connecticut State University strives to adhere to the highest ethical standards in the conduct of its affairs. Among the documents establishing those standards are the statutes governing public higher education in the State of Connecticut (see Appendix: Standard XI: 1). [Our Mission](#) includes a statement of Principles and Values. The first principle speaks directly to integrity, pledging to empower students to “attain the highest standards of academic achievement, public and professional services, personal development, and ethical conduct.” As an institution our values are “Quality in all that we do,” “Integrity in the process of teaching and learning,” and “Respect for the dignity and rights of each member of our University community.” The third principle addresses academic freedom: “Promoting a rich and diverse cultural environment that allows freedom of expression within a spirit of civility and mutual respect.” The Mission, Principles, and Values are published in a number of publications, including the catalogs and the faculty handbook as well as on-line.

As the DATA FIRST table shows, we have policies in place to address academic honesty, academic freedom, intellectual property rights, privacy rights, and principles of fairness for students, faculty and staff (see Appendix: Standard XI: 2). The University publicizes non-discrimination policies in the areas of admissions, employment, faculty and staff recruitment and evaluation, disciplinary action, and advancement (see Appendix: Standard XI: 3).

WCSU is governed by conflict of interest rules authorized by the State of Connecticut. All University policies are distributed to employees at the time of hire. The employees sign a statement that they have received the policies and a copy of their signed statement is placed in their personnel file.

The Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA) between the Board of Regents for the Connecticut State Colleges and Universities system and the American Association of University Professors sets forth a series of principles of academic freedom and procedures for filing and deliberating complaints. An Academic Freedom Committee has the power to adjudicate substantive issues and to direct a remedy. The CBAs for faculty, professional administrative personnel, and support staffs include standards of conduct as well as procedures the University must follow in addressing alleged violations (see Appendix: Standard XI: 4).

Academic integrity guidelines and plagiarism and cheating definitions may be found in the Undergraduate Catalog and the Student Handbook.

WCSU has a policy statement on Photocopying Materials for Classroom and Research Use. The statement is intended to apprise faculty members of the legal limitations on duplicating

copyrighted materials for research and classroom use, and clearly indicates that compliance is expected.

The Student Handbook contains University policies and regulations on alcoholic beverages, the grade appeal process, parental notification (drug and alcohol violations), public forums, demonstrations, marches, and protests, and student confidentiality, as well as nondiscrimination, affirmative action, multiculturalism, and sexual harassment. The ConnSCU system publishes guidelines that state student rights and responsibilities, create fair and appropriate judicial procedures for the protection of these rights, and provide for the implementation of the stated responsibilities (see Appendix: Standard XI: 5).

To avoid any appearance of conflicts of interest, our [President's biography](#) appears prominently on the WCSU website. This information includes boards and committees with which the president is active and affiliated.

The Office of University Relations is responsible for responding to media inquiries. This process ensures not only timely responses but accurate dissemination of information to internal and external constituencies.

Academic freedom issues are addressed [online](#) and in the [Faculty Handbook](#). Additionally, the University Senate may initiate or review academic freedom issues which may develop.

WCSU is part of the [Connecticut State Colleges and Universities System](#) which is governed by the Board of Regents for Higher Education. The Chair of the BOR is appointed by the State of Connecticut's governor. The BOR is responsible for setting tuition and fee policies, establishing financial aid policies, reviewing and recommending new academic programs, and conducting searches for campus presidents. The BOR grants authority to WCSU to conduct educational activities including the granting of degrees.

WCSU is an affirmative action/equal opportunity educator and employer, fully committed to the goal of providing equal opportunity and full participation in its educational programs, activities, and employment without discrimination because of race, color, religious beliefs or association, sex, age, national origin, marital status, sexual orientation, genetic information, or physical disability. A statement of the University's affirmative action policy appears on all position announcements as well as on event notices, invitations, and other distributed material. The University's affirmative action policy is disseminated to the University community annually. It is available on-line and stresses the importance of embracing non-discriminatory policies in all aspects of collegial interactions as well as hiring processes. The Chief Diversity Officer is involved in all searches for faculty, administrative, and support staff positions. This process is clearly described in the President's Affirmative Action Policy Statement. The policy statement affirms the policy of the leadership of WCSU to advance social justice and equity by exercising affirmative action to remove all discriminatory barriers to equal employment opportunity and upward mobility. Additionally, non-discrimination policies are addressed in the appropriate

contexts, including recruitment and admissions, employment, evaluation, disciplinary action, and advancement. The University submits an annual Affirmative Action Plan directed toward developing and maintaining a diversified workforce with the Connecticut Human Rights Office (CHRO). Funds to support the recruitment and retention of protected groups are set aside under faculty (CSU-AAUP) and administrative (CSU-SUOAF/AFSCME) staff collective bargaining. In keeping with efforts to establish an environment in which the dignity and worth of all members of the institutional community are respected, sexual harassment of students and employees at the University is unacceptable conduct and is not tolerated. All university staff have participated in training on sexual harassment and diversity issues (see Appendix: Standard XI: 6).

In 2009, WCSU established the Veterans' Support Center dedicated to helping student veterans achieve academic and personal success. A dedicated hotline (203-837-8587) and e-mailbox have been established to respond to veterans' questions about financial aid, admissions, etc. These efforts are the result of the Veterans' Task Force which works to identify and resolve potential problem areas for vets. While the members of the Task Force are drawn primarily from the Student Affairs area of the University, the Task Force does have representation from several offices which can assist vets with making a smooth transition to the University community.

WCSU strives to maintain transparency in its interactions with faculty, staff, students, and prospective students. This was evident in the Strategic Planning process begun in 2005. Multiple opportunities were provided for individuals and groups to contribute to the document. A draft was made available on the university's website, with a feedback button; open forums were held on campus and meetings were held with external stakeholders to receive feedback and comments. The plan was unanimously endorsed by the Senate in March 2007.

A more recent example occurred in September, 2012 when a [vulnerability](#) was discovered in WCSU's computer systems. While it is believed that no confidential data was accessed via this vulnerability, WCSU disclosed this information through the national media as well as informing nearly 250,000 individuals whose personal data may have been compromised. In addition to fixing the problem, WCSU is offering two years of identity theft protection as a precaution to those who were potentially impacted. When the president was made aware of this vulnerability, he immediately notified the appropriate authorities in the Board of Regents' Office. An investigation was launched and appropriate disciplinary measures were taken. In addition to notifying potentially impacted individuals via letters mailed to home addresses, the University's website carries the information about the incident in English, Spanish, and Portuguese out of respect to the populations that the university community serves.

WCSU believes that conferences and workshops enhance education, professional development, and the learning environment. To that end, recent conferences have included a Creativity and Compassion Conference in conjunction with a 2012 visit from His Holiness the 14<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama. Participants in the conference included faculty, students, and members of the local Buddhist

community. In 2009, following the arrest of Dr. Henry Louis Gates, the University held a panel discussion on Race in America. Among others, the panel featured the Police Chief of the City of Danbury as well as an Emmy-award winning news producer for CBS's *Early Show*. Other conferences and workshops include an annual Tri-state Weather Conference and a Young Writers Conference for local high school students. Most conferences are free; however, in cases where a fee is charged, accounting statements are available from Fiscal Affairs and any advertising includes a brief reason for the fees (to cover lunch and/or training materials, for instance).

Policies and procedures for filing grievances or complaints are described in widely disseminated documents, including the Faculty Handbook, Personnel Policies for Management and Confidential Professional Personnel, collective bargaining agreements, the Western Connecticut State University Policies and Programs Manual, the Undergraduate and Graduate Catalogs, and the Student Handbook. In addition to print versions of these documents, all of them are available via the University's website (see Appendix: Standard XI: 7).

WCSU has been accredited by NEASC since 1954. The University believes that accreditation reviews and studies are opportunities for collaborative assessment and evaluation of department, program, and institutional integrity and adherence to established standards. In addition to the New England Association of School and Colleges, the University is accredited by the Connecticut Board of Governors for Higher Education and the Connecticut State Department of Education. Departmental accreditations include the American Chemical Society (ACS), the National League for Nursing (NLN), the Council on Social Work Education, the Council for Accreditation of Counseling & Related Educational Programs (CACREP), and the National Association of Schools of Music (NASM). In 2011, a Steering Committee and teams of faculty and staff members were established to address the eleven standards of accreditation and to prepare for the self-study. A website was established to make the entire University community aware of the re-accreditation process and progress (see Appendix: Standard XI: 8).

WCSU continues to advocate high ethical standards in the management and communication of its dealings with students, faculty, staff, governing board, external organizations and the general public. Integrity is incorporated into our mission and strategic planning. It is encompassed in the execution of academic programs, information resources, fiscal management, technology, and design and use of space. The university expresses this commitment to high ethical standards in personal conduct, public statements, and published documents.

Our institutional integrity benefits from periodic and episodic assessments of its policies, procedures, and institutional climate. Annually the University submits an Affirmative Action Plan to the State's Commission of Human Rights and Opportunities (CHRO). This plan provides a detailed, result-oriented set of procedures that blueprint a strategy to combat discrimination and achieve affirmative action while fostering a climate conducive to the success, retention, promotion and equal treatment of all peoples as prescribed by federal and state laws. The Plan

not only states the University's future goals, but it also offers an assessment of the University's multicultural achievements for the past year. In addition to the University's Affirmative Action Plan, WCSU benefits from collective bargaining negotiations, the dissemination of rulings from the State Ethics Board, Faculty/Staff surveys, and the Fifth Year Report. These types of assessments provide vehicles by which the university takes stock of its progress as well as identifies areas that need to be addressed, goals set, and action taken in order to support WCSU's commitment to providing an integrity-based education.

### **Appraisal**

Basic standards of integrity and civility apply regardless of time and place. While e-mail, instant messaging, and social networking (i.e. Twitter, Facebook, etc.) have enhanced the immediacy of communication, the potential for abuse has also been increased. The University has procedures in place to reduce the likelihood of misuse. For example, all messages that are mass broadcast to the WCSU community must be placed through the President's Office, a Vice-President's Office, or the Human Resources Department. University Departments are able to update information pertaining to their specific departments, but the WCSU webmaster is the only one who can post information to the University's primary website, which is helpful to the University's ability to present a cohesive message, but slows down the ability to present accurate information in a timely manner.

While no single entity is charged with evaluating the effectiveness of the University's ethical policies and procedures, the University Senate reviews academic policies and various committees, offices, and organizations review areas that relate directly to them. The Board of Regents ultimately holds the president accountable for implementation of policies in an annual evaluation of his performance. University policies and procedures are consistent with NEASC standards and appear to be working effectively at every level. 87.6% of the respondents to the 2012 Faculty Staff survey believe that the University demonstrates integrity in the management of its affairs.

WCSU's annual [Affirmative Action Plan](#) prepared by the Chief Diversity Officer serves as a vehicle to assess the effectiveness of the University's non-discrimination and equal opportunity principles. The University is making consistent and significant progress in systematically addressing issues in diversity. This progress includes campus-wide workshops, speakers, and training sessions. The University is able to retain minority faculty and improve female and minority representation at the management and administrative level. In 1998, minority representation at the management and administrative level was 13%. As of Spring 2012, there has been an increase in female and minority representation to 21%. However, despite this increase in female and minority representation on campus, our faculty and administrators do not fully reflect our student population. This is particularly reflected by the lack of faculty for whom English is a second language. The greater Danbury area has a significant, Brazilian population, but there are few teaching faculty of Brazilian descent on campus.

Several complaints have been filed with the Connecticut Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities (CHRO) and the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) since 2003. Most cases have been dismissed, but four cases are pending. Despite the occurrence of two incidents involving homophobic behavior in 2010 and 2012, students describe the University environment as “very accepting.” The aforementioned incidents prompted immediate action by the President’s Office. In addition to the University Police Department’s investigations of these incidents for potential criminal prosecution, e-mails clearly stating the University’s “zero tolerance” for harassment or bullying activities were sent to all users. In 2012, the Gay Straight Alliance was voted “Best Student Organization” by the WCSU Student Government Association.

The processes in place for resolving grievances are working effectively. Since 2003, twelve grievances have been filed by AAUP faculty. As of Fall 2012, there is only one grievance filed by a fulltime faculty member that is still pending. Of the grievances filed by members of other bargaining units during this period, all have been resolved. 82.2% of respondents to the Faculty/Staff Survey believe that the faculty and staff evaluation process is uniform.

WCSU is aware of changing student demographics and has responded with appropriate services. Student Veterans are a rapidly growing campus constituency. In addition to providing an Office of Veterans’ Affairs within Student Financial Services, the University’s website has dedicated pages that provide WCSU information and a link to federal VA benefit information. In 2010, a Veterans’ Lounge was opened in the Midtown Student Center.

With widespread use of the Internet for research, opportunities for plagiarism have increased. As a result, the number of complaints filed by faculty to the Student Judicial Committee has increased. Information on academic integrity, including definitions of plagiarism and cheating, may be found in both the Undergraduate and Graduate Catalogs as well as on the University’s website. The 2007 creation of the University Judicial Board provides students accused of violating the Student Code of Conduct, the opportunity to be heard by a board consisting of faculty, staff, and students instead of a single hearing officer. While the inclusion of diverse perspectives may occasionally provide the opportunity for diffusion of responsibility, more often than not, it provides the opportunity for more equitable measures. Of the respondents to the Faculty/Staff Survey, 84.5% believe that WCSU’s educational policies and procedures are equitably applied to all students.

Privacy and security issues continue to be an ongoing concern. Despite the difficulty of keeping up with rapidly changing technology, WCSU has been diligent about protecting these rights while respecting the openness that must characterize a university environment (17).

Since 2004 and the arrival of the current president, WCSU has made concerted efforts to be inclusive and to communicate in a transparent manner. Development of the University’s Strategic Plan is a fine example of the University’s methodology. The Plan was developed with the input of a variety of constituencies and after several “town hall” style meetings were held. As

a result, 77% of respondents to the Faculty Staff Survey indicate that they believe the Strategic Plan, Mission and Values are used to develop and advance enrollment and staffing goals. The president conducts Opening Semester meetings for faculty and staff during which he gives a “state of the University” address. He and his Cabinet welcome questions and comments from the audience. For students, the President conducts “Pizza with the President” forums twice each semester. These are listening opportunities for the President to hear and respond to student concerns. These sessions are felt to be worthwhile by both the students and the President as evidenced by student attendance and enthusiasm. Notes are taken during these forums and are distributed to those who can best respond to, or follow-up on, specific issues.

### **Projection**

The vulnerability to WCSU’s computer networks is resulting in reorganization. In addition to new staff, the department has been renamed Information Technology & Innovation. Within 18-24 months, the architecture of the network will have been re-designed. This re-design will provide greater information security and a disaster recovery program.

Our Office of Multicultural Affairs will continue to promote diversity and multiculturalism across campus. Faculty recruitment efforts will include outreach to non-traditional, higher education resources that target under-represented populations. The Director of Multicultural Affairs will re-join in 2013 the New York Southern Connecticut Higher Education Recruiting Consortium, an organization whose mission is to assist higher education institutions with recruiting a talented and diverse workforce, particularly among dual-career couples.

As issues arise, the Office of the President, as well as the Department of Finance & Administration, will continue to hold regular town hall forums to keep the University informed about recent challenges, answer questions, listen to concerns, and accept advice from the WCSU community. A recent example of this is the Open Forum held on April 4, 2013 to discuss the university’s budget for FY14 and FY15.

### **Institutional Effectiveness**

The ongoing effort of institutional integrity is supported by the Board of Regents as well as WCSU’s HR policies, procedures, handbooks, accessibility, and continuous education and training. We value collaborative effort and shared governance. This is demonstrated through transparent communications with its students, faculty, staff, and community. This open communication supports a framework of academic freedom, high ethical standards, and commitment to integrity.