

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 (Connecticut General Statutes 10a-1 and 10a-87), 1-83 (the “Ethics Statutes”), 10a-6 (the Freedom of Information Act), and the federal Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA), which protects students’ privacy.

The University’s 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, WestConn is committed to: “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.

Policies and procedures are described in widely disseminated documents, including the *Faculty Handbook 2001-2005*, *Personnel Policies for Management and Confidential Professional Personnel*, *The Western Connecticut State University Policies and Programs Manual*, the undergraduate and graduate catalogs, and the student handbook. Instructions on how to file complaints and/or grievances are available in print (the faculty and student handbooks, e.g.) and also online. A pamphlet, “Sex Offenses: What To Do If It Happens To You,” prepared by the Division of Student Affairs and the University Police Department, was widely distributed in Fall 2002.

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 Schools 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 (baccalaureate level), and the Council for Accreditation of Counseling & Related Educational Programs (CACREP). The music program is awaiting final word on accreditation by National Association of Schools of Music (NASM). Accreditation is being sought by the Ansell School of Business from the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB). The Justice and Law Administration Division is seeking approval for its paralegal program from the American Bar Association (ABA).

The University 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, or physical disability. The Executive Assistant to the President for Multicultural Affairs and Disability Services is involved throughout the search process for faculty and administrative positions (this process is clearly described in the President’s

Affirmative Action Policy Statement, January 29, 2002). The policy statement affirms the “policy of the leadership of Western Connecticut State University to advance social justice and equity by exercising affirmative action to remove all discriminatory barriers to equal employment opportunity and upward mobility.”

The Affirmative Action Plan incorporates and lists federal and state constitutional provisions, laws, regulations, guidelines, and executive orders that prohibit or outlaw discrimination. Protections extend to the areas of race, color, religion, creed, age, sex, marital status, sexual orientation, national origin, ancestry, present or past history of mental disability, genetic information, mental retardation, physical disability including, but not limited to, blindness, learning disability, veteran status, and prior conviction of a crime (except for bona fide occupational qualifications).

Persons who wish to file a discrimination complaint are advised to contact the Executive Assistant to the President for Multicultural Affairs and Disability Services. The University ombudsman is also available to assist. The University submits an annual Affirmative Action plan directed toward developing and maintaining a diversified workforce with the Connecticut Human Rights Office. Funds to support the recruitment and retention of protected groups are set aside under the faculty and administrative staff collective bargaining agreements (CSU-AAUP and CSU-SUOAF).

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 will not be tolerated. Persons who feel they have been sexually harassed may contact the Executive Assistant to the President for Multicultural Affairs and Disability Services. Confidential counseling is also available. Administrators at the vice presidential, dean, and director levels have all participated in training on sexual harassment and diversity issues.

The Collective Bargaining Agreement between the Connecticut State University, the American Association of University Professors and the Board of Trustees for the Connecticut State University System 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 Committee’s decision shall be final and binding on all parties.” A pamphlet (“Important University Policies Students Should Know About”) in the section on Guidelines for Public Forums and Demonstrations contains a preamble that speaks to freedom of expression: “Western Connecticut State University is committed to providing an educational community that disseminates knowledge by means of teaching, research, and service. To fulfill these functions, a free exchange of ideas is encouraged both within its walls and between the University and the outside world. Western is committed to doing everything possible to insure the greatest degree of intellectual freedom. These rights apply to all members of the Western community. Few institutions in our society have this same vital purpose; accordingly, few assign such high priority to the freedom of expression.”

The collective bargaining agreements for faculty, professional administrative personnel, and support staffs also include standards of conduct as well as procedures the University must follow in addressing alleged violations.

WestConn has adopted a Policy on Scientific Misconduct in Research in accordance with regulations outlined by the National Science Foundation (45 CFR 689) and Public Health Service regulations (42 CFR Part 50, Subpart A). The University also has a policy on conflict of interest pertaining to sponsored projects in accordance with regulations outlined by the National Science Foundation and the Public Health Service (42 CFR, Part 50). An Institutional Review Board reviews protocols for research with human subjects for compliance with federal and state regulations. The Institutional

Animal Care and Use Committee performs a similar function for the vertebrates used in laboratories and research. (Please see *Faculty Handbook 2001-2005*.)

Guidelines on academic integrity and definitions of plagiarism and cheating may be found in the *Undergraduate Catalog* and the *Student Handbook 2002-2003*.

The University has a “Policy Statement on Photocopying of Materials for Classroom and Research Use” (*Faculty Handbook*, 128-135). 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.

WestConn also has campus-wide policies and guidelines in place for computer use (*Faculty Handbook 2001-2005*, 240-241, *Student Rights and Responsibilities*, 17-20, *Student Handbook 2002-2003*, 44). Policies on software ownership were adopted in 1985 and revised in 1987 by the Board of Governors for Higher Education. These policies, general guidelines, and penalties for misuse are published. The CSU System has also issued a policy statement on student use of university computer systems and networks (*Faculty Handbook 2001-2005*; *Student Rights and Responsibilities*). The statement spells out rules of computer conduct that require students to use “University computer resources in an efficient, ethical, and lawful manner.” The University reserves the right to define what constitutes unauthorized student uses. Procedures for dealing with offenses are clearly spelled out.

The student handbook for 2002-2003 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 Connecticut State University System has published 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.

Appraisal

While no single entity is charged with evaluating the effectiveness of the University’s ethical policies and procedures, the University Senate reviews academic policies. Various committees (including standing committees of the University Senate), offices, and organizations review areas that relate directly to them, and the Board of Trustees ultimately holds the president accountable for implementation of Board policies in an annual evaluation of his performance.

University policies and procedures are consistent with NEASC standards and in general appear to be working effectively at every level.

Although information on academic integrity, including definitions of plagiarism and cheating, may be found in the 2002-2003 *Undergraduate Catalog* and the *Student Handbook*, this information is not included in the *Graduate Catalog 2002-2003* or in the booklet “Important University Policies Students Should Know About,” distributed for academic year 2002-2003. Access to the Internet has vastly increased opportunities for plagiarism (see also Standard VII); the process of investigating suspected cases of plagiarism has become much more difficult and time-consuming.

The processes in place for resolving grievances are working effectively. Since 1993, relatively few grievances have been filed by AAUP faculty. As of Fall 2002, only two grievances filed by full-time faculty (none by part-time faculty) were still pending. Of the grievances filed by members of other

bargaining units during this period, all have been resolved but one, and a single arbitration is currently under way.

Since 1993, several complaints were filed with the Connecticut Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities/Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (CHRO/EEOC). Five cases were dismissed, one has been stayed because a federal lawsuit has been filed, and one is pending. The CHRO issued a Release of Jurisdiction letter in one case after a suit was filed in US District Court.

Two recent cases (October 2000) involving student protests and subsequent arrests were discussed at length in the University Senate and an *ad hoc* committee was established to study the cases. In March 2002, the Senate passed the following four resolutions:

- To urge the Administration to approve and put into force the “Guidelines for Public Forums and Demonstrations” drafted by the *ad hoc* committee, and to urge the Vice President for Public Safety to monitor and provide WestConn police officers with training in conflict resolution, similar to the training given to their counterparts in the larger community
- To urge the President to encourage robust debate in the University community, and to ensure that all members of the Administration, especially those likely to be involved in policing protests and demonstrations be trained in constitutional issues surrounding freedom of speech
- To urge the Administration to ensure that the police officers’ code of conduct/ethics exclude activities that might be construed as “conflict of interest”
- To request the University President to designate one person in the University who will receive and record complaints from all members of the University community about protests and demonstrations and initiate appropriate referral. That person’s contact address and phone number must be made available to everyone in the University community

Although information on fair use in copying copyrighted materials is not included in either the current student handbook for 2002-2003 or in the CSU System’s pamphlet on student rights and responsibilities, librarians include information on copyright in bibliographical instruction sessions; librarians have also posted the policy near each copy machine.

There was a period of several years between the retirement of the previous Director of Research and Grants and the hiring of a Director of Grant Programs when there was no one person serving as liaison to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) and the Institutional Animal Care and Use Committees. The present Director of Grant Programs has worked with the chair of the IRB (formerly the Human Subjects Review Committee) to familiarize members of the committee with new federal regulations on research with human subjects and to arrange professional development for both the members of the committee and the faculty in general to assure that the University is in full compliance. The IACUC is being reconstituted, and the members of this committee are also involved in professional development activities that will keep the members current on federal and state regulations related to animal care and use.

The annual affirmative action plan, prepared by the Executive Assistant to the President for Multicultural Affairs and Disability Services, serves as a vehicle to assess the effectiveness of the University’s non-discrimination and equal opportunity principles. The University’s *Fifth Year Report* described significant progress in systematically addressing diversity, including the hiring of a full-time affirmative action and diversity officer, additional staffing in the affirmative action office, prejudice reduction workshops on campus, a diversity forum, and a series entitled *Dialogues on Race*.

WestConn also reported that it was able to retain minority faculty (with only one resignation), and an improvement in minority representation at the management and administrative level from 10% in 1993 (when there were no black females in the group) to 13% in 1998 (with a black male associate

vice president, a black female dean of student affairs, and a black female director of affirmative action and multicultural affairs). As of Fall 2002, there are two black male deans, a black male associate vice president, and a black female Director of Public Relations. There is now a white female serving as associate vice president for academic affairs (a new position) and four white female deans. The University has continued to make progress on these issues. Affirmative action and disability services are now the responsibilities of the Executive Assistant to the President for Multicultural Affairs and Disability Services, who reports directly to the President; the Coordinator for Minority Affairs now reports to the Executive Assistant.

Basic standards of integrity and civility apply regardless of the time and place. New technologies (e-mail, the Internet, voicemail) have greatly enhanced communication (synchronous and asynchronous) among the University's various constituencies, but they have also vastly increased the potential for abuse. The University has procedures in place to reduce the likelihood of misuse. For example, messages that are broadcast to all faculty or to the entire campus go through the President's Office or the office of a vice president, a safety feature that works well. Only the web master can post pages to the University website, another gate-keeping procedure that appears to work effectively. Access to the Internet, however, increases opportunities for plagiarism exponentially; detecting and proving literary theft is both very difficult and time-consuming. Privacy issues and security are also of great concern. The University has been very diligent about protecting these rights while respecting the openness that must characterize a university environment. (See Standard VII for additional information on University network security.)

Projection

The University will continue its commitment to integrity, honesty, and accuracy in the management of its affairs and in its dealings with all members of the University community and its external constituencies.

Although the University conscientiously distributes information about policies and procedures, it will endeavor to disseminate these documents even more widely by posting all of them online to ensure that everyone has easy access to information about rights and responsibilities, as well as procedures for filing grievances and reporting violations.

The University will ensure that information on academic integrity appears in all appropriate publications (in print and online) and that this information is widely distributed.

The Institutional Review Board and the Institutional Animal Care & Use Committees will continue to collaborate with other appropriate groups (the Center for Excellence in Learning and Teaching, e.g.) to educate faculty and staff about federal and state regulations with regard to research with human subjects and the care and use of vertebrates.

Modern technologies present special advantages for rapid, asynchronous communication, but they also carry risks. The University will continue its efforts to ensure that privacy and security are protected.