

## **The Purpose and Philosophy**

The development of Biblical self-discipline, moral reasoning and prosocial behavior is the goal of this accountability process. Our judicial process is designed to be positive and developmentally-oriented in nature with focus on reconciliation, restoration and restitution.

The community accountability process is designed to assist both individuals and our corporate learning community as a whole mature in intrapersonal and interpersonal relationship and further student Christian Spiritual formation. This sort of accountability enhances the student University experience by encouraging healthy living and learning.

## **Integrity Initiative**

Students who have violated University behavioral expectations or community handbook policy are encouraged to quickly and voluntarily "come in" to acknowledge their missteps and seek the advice and counsel of his/her Area Coordinator. This will allow a truly repentant student to voluntarily discuss his or her violation and may keep judicial action to a minimum. In many cases, a "come in" meeting will only result in rehabilitative strategies.

If a student chooses to avoid accountability, then members of the Residence Life staff or the Dean of Student Development will assume the responsibility to confront and call in anyone falling short of community expectations.

## **The Responsibility to Help Each Other**

With Matthew 18:15-17 as our guide, we believe that personal growth and maturity is encouraged most when each member of the University community accepts responsibility to care enough about others to confront them when appropriate. This responsibility to confront one another in a loving manner should flow out of natural relationships with friends, peers, faculty and staff. When encouraging students to come forward seeking help, remember that sincere effort will be made by the University staff to bring healing, wholeness and reconciliation.

If a student is having difficulty with an issue in his/her life, even if it involves a violation of the Community Expectations he/she is strongly encouraged to seek help from some member of the campus community. If adopted by all members of our community, this approach would enable the majority of inappropriate behaviors to be corrected on a personal, rather than judicial, level.

## **Communication with Parents or Guardians**

In that each parent plays a uniquely supportive role in their student's lives, students will be encouraged at all levels of the accountability process to share information with their parents or guardians. The Federal Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) places specific limitations on student education record information University employees may share with parents or guardians. In many cases, the student retains the right to disclose or not disclose education record information to their parents or guardians. However, University employees may disclose education record information without written prior consent from the student to parents

1. if the student is claimed as a dependent by the parents for income tax purposes
2. if the student is experiencing a health or safety emergency
3. if the student (as long as they are under 21) has violated any law or policy concerning the use or possession of alcohol or a controlled substance
4. if the disclosure is in connection with a judicial proceeding conducted by the University against their student who is an alleged perpetrator of a crime of violence

The complete University [FERPA policy](#) is available in the registrar's office.

### **Foundational Principles**

The Student Development staff seeks to combine a biblical and developmental approach to the student care process. It is important that all community members see themselves as growing intellectual and interpersonal persons, as well as fellow sinners in need of God's grace and ongoing transformation. This balance is the foundation for providing a healthy living-learning community for our entire student body. Also in balance is the understanding of a just God and a merciful Father. This is referred to directly in Micah 6:8.

*What does the Lord require of you? To act justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with your God.*

At times employing one principle may appear to create a conflict with the other. In fact, this apparent tension is often a **both-and** application. We are offered forgiveness for the transgression but are accountable for the action. The purpose of the following principles is to provide a series of benchmarks that seek to maintain this delicate balance and coexistence of mercy and justice.

### **Developmental Approach**

Students benefit from being treated in a way that acknowledges their growing responsibilities as adults and contributes to their development and education. It is important that developmental considerations be made when considering judicial decisions (e.g., students' occasional failure to connect their behavior with what they believe). The judicial process can be helpful in guiding students to better decision-making as they move through the maturation process.

### **Different Backgrounds**

Students come to Northwest University from a variety of socio-economic, denominational, ethnic and parenting cultures. As a result, students subscribe to various understandings of what it means to live a Christian life. Some of the Lifestyle Standards involve behavior that is considered by some students to be biblical moral mandates and other students as only campus community mandates. While all Northwest University students agree to abide by the community expectations, judicial matters involving moral implications should be discussed with sensitivity to differing student backgrounds. The intent is to hold our students accountable to the commitments they have made as students at Northwest and as Christians.

### **Learning Opportunity**

Judicial proceedings should be seen and used as a significant learning opportunity. Often students learn more about themselves in these settings than in many other settings while in college.

### **Reconciliation, Restoration and Restitution**

The accountability process is intended to provide a way for our students to learn from their mistakes, to be forgiven and restored to the community. Judicial sanctions should reflect these goals.

*Brothers and sisters, if someone is caught in a sin you who are spiritual should restore him or her gently. But watch yourself or you also may be tempted. Carry each other's burdens, and in this way fulfill the law of Christ. (Gal 6:1-2)*

### **Unconditional Worth**

As fellow heirs with Christ, all members of the judicial process should strive to ascribe unconditional worth to students at all times. It is also important to attempt to develop an understanding of each student's story for the purpose of viewing him or her as a person and not simply a "rule breaker."

### **Fairness, Consistency and Predictability**

If the judicial process is to remain trustworthy, it is important that those involved strive for fairness, consistency and predictability. *Fairness* speaks to the appropriateness of the sanctions to the violation. The principle of *consistency* acts as a guide when handling a student who has carried more or less favor with various members of the faculty or the staff. *Predictability* speaks to the reputation of the judicial process. While students may not always enjoy the process, our goal is that students ultimately are able to respect the experience whatever the outcome.

### **Confidentiality**

Confidentiality is another essential element of a trustworthy judicial process. Whenever possible, the judicial officers will protect the identity of any third parties who may have provided information pertaining to the judicial case. The information shared by a student during the judicial process is used only for investigatory or mandated reporting purposes, and is otherwise held in the strictest of confidences.

### **Commitment to a Positive Learning Community**

Northwest University endeavors to provide a safe and orderly environment, insofar as possible, in which all students are able to pursue their academic and social development. Disrupting the educational environment can be cause for student judicial action. Disrupting the environment is defined as any disruptive act, within reason, that impedes another student's functioning within an academic or community life setting. This may include a single disruptive act or ongoing acts and will usually involve complaints from students, faculty, or staff.