

STANDARD ELEVEN INTEGRITY

Overview

Wheaton's collaborative and collegial community functions properly only if its members follow high ethical standards in conducting the business of the institution, in their interactions with each other and in representing the college to external audiences. The college has a robust set of policies and procedures to communicate ethical standards clearly, including such areas as hiring, evaluation, promotion, and resolution of grievances.

Description

Wheaton was incorporated by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts in 1837 as the Norton Female Seminary. In 1839 the name was changed to Wheaton Female Seminary. In 1912 the institution became Wheaton College and was authorized to grant A.B. degrees. These acts, approved by the legislature of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, constitute our charter.

A significant component of college life has been students' commitment to ethical action, which was codified in the development and ratification of Wheaton's Honor Code. The code, which can be traced back to the honor system adopted in 1921, is incorporated into faculty legislation, and is the basis for all policy concerning the students' academic integrity. Signed by students at the matriculation ceremony during New Student Orientation, the Honor Code affirms:

As members of the Wheaton community, we commit ourselves to act honestly, responsibly, and above all, with honor and integrity in all areas of campus life. We are accountable for all that we say and write. We are responsible for the academic integrity of our work. We pledge that we will not misrepresent our work nor give or receive unauthorized aid. We commit ourselves to behave in a manner that demonstrates concern for the personal dignity, rights and freedoms of all members of the community. We are respectful of college property and the property of others. We will not tolerate a lack of respect for these values. I accept responsibility to maintain the Honor Code at all times.

Students' commitment to this code of conduct has been reaffirmed on a regular basis, through student-initiated efforts. For example, Student Government Association leaders met with faculty at a Teaching and Learning workshop led by Associate Professor of Philosophy Stephen Mathis to discuss the Honor Code and its meaning to academic life at the college.

In May 2005 faculty expressed support for the code by voting to include the Honor Code statement and the criteria for successful completion of the course on their syllabus. Faculty may report violations of the Honor Code to the College Hearing Board, which has a clearly stated protocol on the web. There is some concern that we are not consistently applying appropriate sanctions to students who cheat or plagiarize since action is left to the discretion of the individual faculty member. Some faculty members handle their cases independently while others choose to bring a student to the Hearing Board. In response to these concerns SGA and faculty partnered in a full study of the code, administering a survey for faculty, meeting with departments about the Honor Code and running faculty workshops. The result was a Faculty Handbook to the Honor Code produced by the Honor Code Commission as a guide to best practices in applying and understanding the code. The handbook was approved through faculty vote at the May 1, 2009 faculty meeting. Next year the commission's efforts will continue, with an emphasis on understanding and living the Honor Code by applying it to the entire Wheaton experience.

Honor Code values are further reinforced through the Wheaton College Ethics Code, which includes our Code of Conduct. The Ethics Code provides guidelines for professional conduct by those acting on behalf of the college, including college officers, faculty and staff, as well as those who do business with the college or act as agents of the college. The Ethics Code states:

Wheaton College is committed to the highest ethical and professional standards of conduct as an integral part of its mission, the promotion of learning. To achieve this goal, the college relies on each community member's ethical behavior, honesty, integrity and good judgment.

The Code of Conduct, which is part of the Ethics Code, defines our obligations of respect and fairness and prohibits harassment, illegal discrimination, intimidation, endangering behavior, threats, coercion and unprofessional activities. These beliefs and obligations of our community provide the underpinnings upon which our relationships, practices, policies and programs are created to support and carry out the college's mission.

The high ethical standards to which Wheaton community members hold themselves and each other reflects the responsibilities of intellectual life and the common good that education serves. Wheaton actively cultivates and supports academic freedom, for its students as well as the community that educates them. Faculty legislation states that untenured and tenured faculty members are assured academic freedom as described in the 1940 Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom and Tenure, formulated by the Association of American Colleges and the American Association of University Professors. All members of the faculty are expected to conduct themselves in accordance with the 1966 Statement on Professional Ethics formulated by the American Association of University Professors.

Wheaton faculty members recognize their special responsibilities as teachers as well as researchers. Faculty members model the principles of academic freedom in their classrooms, facilitating lively debate and respectful dissent; and encouraging students to pursue research projects on a breadth of topics. The various faculty-student research partnerships and work on Honors Theses further model principles of academic freedom as students gain firsthand experience in the pursuit of academic inquiry.

Policies

Wheaton's policies for students, faculty and staff articulate and support the college's commitment to managing all of its interactions with integrity. The primary sources for Wheaton's policies are the student, faculty and staff handbooks and Faculty Legislation. The student and staff handbooks and Faculty Legislation are readily available through the college website, and the Faculty Handbook is available in paper copy through the Office of the Provost and will be online as well.

These resources include policies—in addition to the Honor Code and Code of Ethics—that reinforce our core values. These policies explain the college's expectations and requirements, including those related to nondiscrimination, academic freedom, affirmative action, sexual harassment, acceptable use of campus network and computing systems, accommodations for the Americans with Disabilities Act, AIDS/HIV guidelines, abuse of drugs and alcohol, confidentiality, conflict of interest, and intellectual property, as well as others.

The Statement on Sexual Harassment and the Policy against Abuse of Drugs and Alcohol are annually distributed to faculty, staff and student workers to remind them of their responsibilities in these areas.

The college's faculty affirmative action officer and staff affirmative action officer advise and assist search committees and supervisors with search processes, ensure compliance with our affirmative action policy and nondiscrimination statement, and are available to facilitate the resolution of problems. An annual affirmative action plan, coordinated by Human Resources, is completed that outlines the college's progress and initiatives.

In addition to the availability of written policies, workshops and information sessions are regularly scheduled for staff and faculty to explain and discuss sexual harassment prevention. Other recent workshop topics have included diversity, positive dialogue, conflict resolution, discrimination, and respect in the workplace.

Students regularly have opportunities to discuss and learn about policies and community and civic responsibilities through the programming efforts of our offices of Student Life; Advising; Marshall Center for Intercultural Learning; and Service, Spirituality and Social Responsibility. As part of their First Year Seminar, students learn about acceptable computer and information protocol from Library and Information Services advisors. All students who enroll in English 101, required of most first-year students, also learn about responsible use and attribution of secondary sources.

Practices

Wheaton has practices and active committees in place to support our values of ethical behavior, honesty and integrity. These include procedures to review possible violations: the College Hearing Board and Judicial Procedures (for students), the Appeals and Hearing Committee and the Advisory Committee (for faculty) and the Unsatisfactory Conduct procedures (for staff).

The protocol and procedures through which faculty may address grievances are outlined in faculty legislation, which is available online through a link to the Office of the Provost.

Faculty, staff and students may also initiate and bring forward issues of concern, and seek resolution through the Office of the Dean of Students (for students), the Office of the Provost, the Advisory Committee, and Wheaton's AAUP chapter (for faculty), and the problem-solving and grievance process (for staff).

In addition to the procedures mentioned above, Wheaton implemented a Whistleblower Policy in 2005 to provide for the anonymous reporting of employee concerns related to ethics violations and accounting complaints through a confidential hotline.

In 2008, Wheaton and several other member colleges and universities of The Boston Consortium jointly hired an internal auditor to review processes and recommend changes based on sound accounting principles and general best practices. The internal auditor has reviewed student accounts receivables and medical and dental benefits billing, and is currently reviewing the student housing process. An earlier collaboration in 2003 resulted in the completion of two specific audit reviews (Advancement processing and procurement-to-pay/purchasing card) through an outside firm. These audits and reviews are conducted in addition to the annual financial statement and federal grants and contract audit conducted by external auditors.

Wheaton strives for transparency in its planning processes as well. For example, the financial challenges that emerged during fiscal year 2009 caused by declining endowment growth, and concerns about the college financial state, resulted in the creation of a task force to complement the existing Budget Advisory Committee. The task force was charged with recommending budget reductions and revenue enhancements to ensure a position of strength for fiscal year 2010. The task force of faculty, staff and students not only successfully accomplished its charge, but also, very importantly, engaged the community in open and transparent conversations.

In addition, a major community initiative at Wheaton is the President's Action Committee on Inclusive Excellence (PACIE). The work of this committee is related directly to the 2014 Strategic Plan, Goal 5: "Diversity and inclusive excellence distinguish Wheaton's learning experience, community, and academic culture." The committee includes members of the student body, faculty and staff. In October 2007, a Campus Climate Survey was conducted. The themes emerging from this study have and will continue to serve as the basis for future discussions and programming. For example, in 2008–2009, faculty, staff and students participated in several Discussion Action Teams (DATs), a facilitated group process that spans multiple weeks with the purpose of engaging participants in conversations about difficult topics. The intended end

result of a DAT is greater understanding and appreciation of the issue as well as defined actions to help the community address related problems.

Wheaton is undertaking a records and information management program to provide guidance on the retention of records in order to ensure compliance with applicable laws and regulations as well as to ensure the integrity of college records.

Appraisal and Projection

Communication

Communication of policies and practices is critical, and is an area that needs continuous review and attention. For example:

- An updated faculty handbook is being planned for online viewing, the staff handbook is available online, and is being reformatted to make it easier to link to the sections.
- The need to distribute a whistleblower policy reminder on a regular basis has been identified.

Compliance

The college will continue to comply with changing federal and state regulations, and will change or create new policies and practices, as required. For example:

- Some of our required OSHA compliance training is available as web-based training, and all sessions are available through regularly scheduled classroom training.
- Our OSHA policies will soon be available on the web, and through collaboration with other schools, we will also have risk management best practices and templates available online.
- Wheaton's purchasing as well as its travel and entertainment policies have recently been revised.

The ADA/504 Committee recently reviewed disability-related policies and procedures resulting in the addition of the "Notice under the Americans with Disabilities Act" and the "Grievance Procedure under the Americans with Disabilities Act." A self-evaluation to prioritize improvements of the campus's accessibility has been conducted and several projects are underway.

Process Review and Best Practices

The internal auditor hired through the college's participation in The Boston Consortium will continue to review processes and practices throughout the college, and will provide best practices and suggestions for improvement. For example, she is currently leading a review of student housing policies and procedures.

Reaffirming the Honor Code

In recent years, the college has been tested, and it will continue to be challenged, by public calls to divulge confidential information related to its disciplinary and personnel actions, including those concerning faculty members and administrators. Members of the college community—including alumnae/i and parents, in some cases—have been vocal in demanding confidential information regarding several such decisions. Indeed, the community discussion has included unfounded speculations and charges that adherence to confidentiality would damage the community and its commitment to open discourse. We have resisted the impulse to disclose confidential information in the face of significant pressure, in order to safeguard the integrity of our personnel and disciplinary processes. However, we anticipate that this conflict will persist, particularly as society demands great levels of disclosure from all institutions.