Proposed Changes to the 2019-20 Student Handbook

Enclosed please find two proposed changes to the Student Handbook for 2019-20. Your comments are welcome and invited. Please submit your comments by Friday, October 11, 2019 via email to studentaffairs@wm.edu.

PROPOSAL #1 – Modify the Interim Suspension Policy

Background/Rationale
Our interim suspension policy currently only addresses suspension of an individual student; while we have used the policy for application to student organizations, we have had to cater the “individual” policy to suit such situations. Proposal #1 below more clearly applies the policy to both students and organizations. The policy also references interim “measures” to capture the range of actions the university can take, short of full suspension, to mitigate risk of further escalation while the university investigates the matter.

Interim Measures (Student Handbook)

In certain circumstances, the Dean of Students or designee may impose interim measures including, but not limited to, a university or residence hall suspension prior to the resolution of a conduct case before the appropriate hearing body.

Interim measures may be imposed to ensure the health or safety of the student or of other members of the university community, or if the student or recognized student organization poses an ongoing threat of disruption of, or interference with, the normal operations of the university.

Interim Suspension of a Student:
During an interim suspension, the student must leave the campus immediately and shall not participate in academic, extracurricular, or other activities of the university except as may be authorized by the Dean of Students or designee. During the period of interim suspension, a student is not permitted on the campus without prior written consent from the Dean or designee.
**Interim Suspension of a Student Organization:**
During an interim suspension, the organization shall not participate in any activities of the university except as may be authorized by the Dean of Students or designee.

After an interim suspension is imposed, the student/organization will be provided an opportunity to speak with the Dean of Students or designee to present information as to why the circumstances do not warrant interim suspension. When requested, the Dean/designee will schedule an administrative hearing regarding the interim suspension decision within ten working days or as soon as the student’s/organization’s condition permits. This hearing will be limited to consideration of whether the imposition of the interim suspension is appropriate. Following the hearing, the Dean/designee may uphold the interim suspension decision, modify the interim actions to allow resumption of limited activities, or lift the interim suspension entirely. The Dean/designee’s decision regarding interim suspension is final and not appealable.

Community Values & Restorative Practices will schedule the student/organization for an Information Session as soon as practicable following the interim suspension decision. See also “Medical and Emotional Emergencies,” pp. 18-19.

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**PROPOSAL #2 – Modify Suspension Practices to eliminate the dichotomy between “indefinite suspension” and “suspension.”**

**Background/Rationale**
As suspension is designed as a developmental sanction, continued structured engagement between the student and the university is essential to further the student’s growth, to foster reflection upon the behavior that led to the suspension, to develop an action plan for the future, and to provide a smooth transition back to the university community. By formalizing a program for suspended students, we aim to create a structured framework most likely to create the impetus for optimal growth.

Further, suspended students often experience a period of disorientation and disconnection from the university that is antithetical to positive progress while away from the university and the prospect of a successful future return to the university. While boards and hearing officers often attempt to create conditions that encourage the student to remain actively engaged while away, at present this tends to be completed in a non-systematic fashion. This results in a “hit or miss” dynamic and does not provide for consistency in approach and outcome from one student to the next.

Currently the university employs two forms of suspension: indefinite suspension and suspension. Indefinite Suspension is a suspension through at least a particular future date, after which the student may request consideration for the lifting of suspension and return to good standing (via a reinstatement hearing) whereas Suspension does not require a reinstatement hearing and ends at a definitive point in time regardless of the student’s action or inaction.
Hearing boards and case administrators are trained to view the two forms of suspension as equivalent, the difference being the requirement for a reinstatement hearing and an indefinite end date in the case of an indefinite suspension. In reality, many times panels view indefinite suspension as a harsher sanction than suspension. This can result in a panel employing “standard” suspension when it does not want to impose what it perceives as a “more substantial sanction” in the form of indefinite suspension. While this act may not seem significant, it results in some students who arguably could benefit from the enhanced engagement of an indefinite suspension receiving “standard” suspension and missing out on the positive aspects of regular contact with the university and guidance as to how to reflect on the student’s previous actions and prepare for the future. In addition, creating the formal engagement program will set the student up for a successful return to the university and is more likely to lead to perseverance to degree.

As is current practice, the student would petition for reinstatement to good standing and would receive a hearing before the case administrator or panel that issued the initial suspension. When the administrator/panel grants reinstatement, CVRP removes the notation on the student’s transcript.

**Disciplinary Suspension** is an involuntary separation of an indefinite duration from the university during which the student must leave the campus and is not eligible to participate in classes or any university-sponsored or university-related activities. During the period of separation, the student is not permitted on campus without prior written permission granted by the Director of Community Values & Restorative Practices or designee.

a. Suspension requires the student to petition for reinstatement to good standing. In such instances, the student must first satisfy the committee or administrative officer by the student’s conduct and record that the student is entitled to reinstatement. The university notes the sanction of suspension on the student’s transcript and removes the notation if the student is reinstated to good standing at the university.

i. Reinstatement Hearing

a) When a Board assigns the sanction of disciplinary suspension, a similar Board of five persons will be appointed by the Director of Community Values & Restorative Practices or designee at the appropriate time to determine whether the respondent has met the conditions necessary for reinstatement.

b) The Board will have access to all file materials from the original hearing, may require the respondent to make a personal appearance before the committee, and may solicit other information to reach a decision. The Board will follow the same general procedures employed in the original hearing with the same rights assured for reinstatement.

c. Requirements to Complete Suspension

In order to complete suspension successfully and be returned to Good Standing, the student will:
• Engage with a mentor from William & Mary Connects or designated Student Affairs staff
• In consultation with the mentor, develop of a formal plan for activities while suspended (including work, service, taking courses elsewhere, personal development activities, etc.)
• In consultation with the mentor, develop an academic plan for implementation upon return to the university
• In cases of academic dishonesty, complete at least one formal university workshop/program of the student’s choice (from the choices provided by Community Values & Restorative Practices) such as time management, study skills, writing workshop, effective citation, and the academic integrity seminar.
• Complete community service in the form of direct service to others as determined by the Case Administrator or hearing panel
• Complete a reflection paper to be submitted as a basis for consideration for reinstatement to good standing and clearance to return

d. The university usually imposes Disciplinary Suspension immediately following the completion of the appeal process/period; however, the Director of Community Values & Restorative Practices/designee, in consultation with the case administrator or panel chair, may withhold immediate imposition of suspension in some circumstances. If the university does not impose the sanction immediately, the student will not be considered in good standing and will be subject to the same restrictions as students with Deferred Suspension status (see below) while enrolled prior to the imposition of the suspension.

Submitted by: ________________________________
Virginia M. Ambler, VP for Student Affairs

September 10, 2019

Date