DESCRIPTION
Three Rivers has established a broad array of policies and procedures that exemplify high ethical standards in the management of its affairs and in its relationships with students, employees, external agencies, and the public. The College annually publishes a strong statement of Student Rights and Responsibilities and provides a grievance process for students. The College’s stated policies pertain to fairness in the balance between the rights of the institution and individual students and faculty/staff. A document stating The Code of Ethics for Appointed Public Officials and State Employees is available in the President’s Office.

Fairness in promotion and evaluation are spelled out in six Contracts: American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees (AFSCME - Clerical), American Federation of Teachers (AFT), American Federation of State, County, Municipal Employees (AFSCME - Administrators), Administrative and Residual (A & R), Maintenance and Service Unit, and Congress of Connecticut Community Colleges (4 C’s). Additionally, management personnel are covered by separate Management Personnel Policies. Unions representing employees throughout the community college system and employees from other state agencies negotiate contracts. Elected Promotions Committees recommend professional staff candidates for promotion to the president. A Management Committee with the Board of Trustees negotiates management policies. Grievance procedures for faculty and staff are articulated in the respective collective bargaining agreements.

Three Rivers is committed to the free pursuit and dissemination of knowledge. Both published policies and teaching practices assure faculty and students the freedom to teach and study in a given field and to question assumptions. Three Rivers is committed to maintaining academic freedom, both in teaching and research. This commitment to academic freedom is formalized in the respective contract agreements.

In addition, the College has a Policy on Racism and Acts of Intolerance that further defines constitutionally protected expression in a collegiate environment.

Students are guaranteed fairness and due process through a series of policies, including: Aids and Other Communicable Diseases, Policy on Drugs and Alcohol, Policy on Persons with Disabilities, Policy on Racism and Acts of Intolerance, Policy on Sexual Harassment, Policy on Student Rights and Responsibilities, Weapons on College Campus Policy, and Policy on Student Discipline.

The Policy on Academic Dishonesty defines academic dishonesty and the standards for fairness, due process, and penalties for violations. In the Student Rights and Responsibilities Policy, the College publishes a clear statement on student privacy and the confidentiality of transcripts and other student records. All college procedures are in compliance with the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) of 1974 and pertinent Federal regulations.

The open admissions policy is a fundamental characteristic of the College’s Affirmative Action/Non-discriminatory policy. This policy prohibits admission denial on the basis of age, race, color, religious creed, ancestry, past or present history of mental disorder, marital status, sex, national origin, mental retardation, physically disability, sexual orientation, learning
disability, physical disability, or prior conviction of a crime. This policy also applies unless the provisions of sections 46a-60 (b), 46a-80(b), or 46a-81(b) of the Connecticut General Statutes are controlling or there is a bona fide occupational qualification excluding persons in one of the above-protected groups. Three Rivers is also nondiscriminatory in its programs and services such as tutoring, financial aid, and childcare.

The Affirmative Action Policy from the Board of Trustees is applicable to all employment practices and procedures at Three Rivers including recruitment searches, evaluation, and advancement.

The authority to grant degrees and certificates is bestowed by the Board of Trustees for Community-Technical Colleges (BOT) and the Board of Governors of Higher Education (BOG). Three Rivers activities are governed by numerous policies and procedures developed by the State of Connecticut, the BOT, and the BOG. The spirit by which Three Rivers manages its administrative operations can best be evidenced by the institution’s policies and procedures that insure equity for all staff/faculty members. The College regularly communicates changes in policies, procedures, and system or state level decisions (e.g., budget related layoffs) to all members of the College community. Any person may submit a policy recommendation or amendment to a current policy to the Governance Council and the administration of the College for consideration. Additionally, the Governance Council composition ensures College-wide representation in all planning and policy matters. Three Rivers policies and procedures dealing with ethical concerns are periodically reviewed by Governance Council and the College’s management team.

**APPRAISAL**

The policies and procedures cited above promote an ethical culture within the institution. The College’s leadership regularly reinforces the mission and values of the institution during the annual process of reviewing and updating the short and long term Institutional Plans and a periodic review of the Institutional Assessment process.

The College has made extensive provision for fairness and honesty. All of its relevant policies are well and frequently publicized and originate from a strong legal and ethical base. They reflect built-in safeguards for faculty, staff and students with the assurance of rights and clear channels for resolution and appeal. Both informal and formal processes are provided.

Grievances brought by students have remained confidential and few in number.

Most instances of student discipline have been resolved equitably at the lower levels between the student and the instructor or informally by the Dean of Student Development and Services and/or Academic Dean.

In appealing grades (Review of Academic Standing), students have access to instructors and the Academic Dean. Rarely do grade appeals go beyond the Dean’s level to the President’s level. Issues of academic dishonesty are handled by instructors, and occasionally involve the Academic Dean.

The College is audited by groups of independent auditor, as part of the audits, opinions are rendered concerning compliance with laws and regulations. Three Rivers has been in
compliance every year audited. No major audit exceptions were noted in the recent report that was issued in the summer of 2001.

In general, Three Rivers has shown steady growth in diversity in student enrollment and in particular in non-traditional career programs. There has also been growth in the number of students with learning and other disabilities.

The College’s Affirmative Action Plan, which describes employment practices for protected groups at the College, has demonstrated our commitment in this area. The State’s Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities has accepted it annually. These practices of nondiscrimination and affirmative action will continue and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, reinforced by the Americans With Disabilities Act of 1991, will continue to provide guidelines for the full integration and support of individuals with disabilities.

The College has made provisions throughout its policies to insure free expression and pursuit of knowledge for all of its constituencies. These policies are clearly stated, well publicized and followed consistently. Three Rivers’ small class size and diverse student body, create an atmosphere of collegial discussion, challenge, and open debate. Three Rivers faculty are guided by current research in their specialized fields, information on instructional techniques, and community advisory boards expertise.

The college provides an excellent adjunct faculty handbook. However, no handbook exists for full time faculty or staff. Although the Center For Teaching has begun a program for faculty development and orientation, there remains no consistent orientation program for new staff members. In addition, the college catalog is misleading regarding the number of credits required for degree completion in some engineering technology programs. A multi-faceted concern is the lack of effective internal communication. Finally, the Ethics Committee has not convened for several years.

Although progress has been made in aligning the contracts, the continued existence of two separate faculty collective bargaining units with different standards in promotion, tenure and overload credits presents difficulties for the merged institution. Further, copies of faculty contracts were not available for approximately three years in the recent past, adding to an atmosphere of confusion and at times negative morale.

**PROJECTION**

The present policies and procedures relevant to matters of integrity are for the most part contemporary, equitable, and result in an institution that operates within a sound ethical culture. However, the concerns cited above require consideration. The following initiatives are aimed at addressing these concerns:

- Implementing a procedure for new employee orientations and conducting them on a regular and consistent basis.
- Making continuously available, current copies of the faculty collective bargaining agreements.
- Creating and periodically updating a full-time faculty handbook and a staff handbook. These should be distributed to all employees and staff. In the absence of this initiative, the adjunct faculty handbook should be distributed to all new full-time faculty.
The College should re-evaluate how engineering technology program requirements are presented in the college catalog and on plans of study sheets. This would help clarify the actual number of credits required for completion of technology programs.

The interim report raised concerns regarding student workers and privacy issues. In response, student workers are not utilized in the Registrar’s office. However, the possibility of appointing student workers with tasks that expose them to access to academic records remains, and Three Rivers is committed to allocating resources to address and remedy this critical ethical issue.