

11. INTEGRITY

DESCRIPTION

Mohegan has established a broad array of policies and procedures which 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, provides a grievance committee for students within the Student Senate, distributes a Code of Ethics for Public Officials to all staff, and includes an orientation to relevant contractual matters for all new employees. The College's stated policies pertain to fairness in the balance between the institution and individual students and faculty/staff.

Fairness in promotion and evaluation are spelled out in four contracts; American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees (AFSCME), Administrative and Residual (A & R), Maintenance and Service Unit, and Congress of Connecticut Community Colleges (4 C's). Additionally, management personnel is covered by separate Management Personnel Policies. Contracts are negotiated by unions representing employees throughout the community college system and employees from other state agencies. An elected Promotions Committee recommends professional staff candidates for

promotion to the President. Management policies are negotiated by a Management Committee with the Board of Trustees.

Mohegan 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. The specific rights of faculty on academic freedom are delineated in the 1991-1992 contract as follows:

1. Each member of the professional staff is entitled to full freedom in research and in the publication of the results, subject to the adequate performance of his/her other professional duties; but research for pecuniary return should be based upon an understanding with the authorities of the institution.
2. Each member of the professional staff is entitled to freedom in the classroom in discussing his/her subject, but he/she should be careful not to introduce into his/her teaching controversial matter which has no relation to his/her subject.
3. The professional staff member is a citizen, a member of a learned profession, and an officer of an educational institution. When he/she speaks or writes as a citizen, he/she should be free from institutional censorship or

discipline but his/her special position in the community imposes special obligations. As a person of learning and an educational officer, he/she should remember that the public may judge his/her profession and his/her institution by his/her utterances. Hence he/she should at all times be accurate, should exercise appropriate restraint, should show respect for the opinions of others, and should make every effort to indicate that he/she is not an institutional spokesperson.

In addition, the College has an especially thoughtful and recent Policy on Racism and Acts of Intolerance that further defines constitutionally protected expression in a collegiate environment:

Students are entitled to an atmosphere conducive to learning and to impartial treatment in all aspects of the teacher-student relationship. The student should not be forced by the authority inherent in the instructional role to make particular personal choices as to political action or his or her own part in society. Evaluation of students and the award of credit must be based on academic performance professionally judged and not on matters irrelevant to that performance, whether personality, race, religion, degree of political activism, or personal beliefs. Students are free to take reasoned

exception to the data or views offered in any course of study, but they are responsible for learning the content of the course of study as defined by official college publications.

Community and technical college students are both citizens and members of the academic community. As citizens they enjoy the same freedom of speech, peaceful assembly, and right of petition that other citizens enjoy, and as members of the academic community they are subject to the obligations which accrue to them by virtue of this membership.

Students are guaranteed fairness and due process through a series of policies, including: 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, and Policy on Student Discipline.

The College recently reviewed the Policy on Academic Dishonesty and drafted new language which explicitly 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 of 1974 and attendant Federal regulations.

The open admissions policy is a fundamental characteristic of the College, non-discriminatory on the basis of age, race and previous educational preparations. Mohegan is also nondiscriminatory in its programs and services such as tutoring, financial aid, and child care.

Further, Mohegan's Mission Statement notes that "the College attempts to develop in students an appreciation for the past and a regard for ethical behavior that will better prepare them for practical life realities, while being receptive to change and accepting of social responsibility."

Mohegan Community College adheres to a policy of nondiscrimination and equal opportunity for all persons regardless of race, color, religion, sex, age, national origin, or physical or emotional disability. This Affirmative Action Policy from the Board of Trustees is applicable to all employment practices and procedures at Mohegan 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). Mohegan's activities are governed by numerous policies and procedures developed by the State of Connecticut, the BOT, and the BOG. The spirit by which Mohegan manages its administrative operations can best be evidenced by the institution's policies and procedures which 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 key governance committee (PPAC) and the administration of the College for consideration. Additionally, PPAC's composition ensures College-wide representation in all planning and policy matters. Mohegan's policies and procedures dealing with ethical concerns are periodically reviewed by PPAC and the College's administrators. Recently changes and/or additions have been made in the policies on Racial Intolerance, Student Discipline (including classroom behavior and academic dishonest), and Persons with Disabilities.

APPRAISAL

The policies and procedures cited above promote a pervasive 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 Institutional Plan and the ongoing Institutional Assessment process.

The College has made extensive provision for fairness and honesty. All of its relevant policies are well and frequently publicized and spring from a strong legal and ethical base. Of particular importance, they build in safeguards for faculty, staff and students with the assurance of rights and clear channels for resolution and appeal. For faculty and students, both informal and formal processes are provided.

Grievances brought by students have remained confidential and have been 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 Services. In appealing grades (Review of Academic Standing), students have easy access to instructors and the Dean of Instruction. They utilize the prescribed appeal procedures. The number of grade appeals moving beyond the Dean's level to the President's level average only one or two per semester. Issues of academic dishonesty are handled by instructors, and occasionally involve the Dean of Instruction.

Every two years, the College is audited by a group of independent auditors. As part of the audit, opinions are rendered concerning compliance with the laws and regulations. In all material respects, Mohegan has been in compliance every year audited. No major audit exceptions were noted in the recent report which covers July 1987 through June 1989.

Mohegan has shown slow but steady growth in the number of minority students enrolled (Black and Hispanic), as well as rapid growth in the number of students with learning and other disabilities. Following the State's first Strategic Plan to Ensure Racial and Ethnic Diversity (1985-1990), Mohegan met the access and retention goals for minority students. Mohegan's second Five Year Plan (1991-1995), including new goals for access, retention, and graduation of minority students, has been approved by Connecticut's Department of Higher Education Office of Educational Opportunity.

In support of further cultural diversity and access and retention of students from under-represented minorities, the College's President recently appointed a college-wide Racial and Ethnic Diversity Task Force to focus on the implementation of specific strategies. The College's Affirmative Action Plan, which describes employment practices for protected groups at the College, has demonstrated our commitment in this area and has been accepted annually by the State's Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities. It is anticipated that these sound practices of nondiscrimination and affirmative action will continue and that Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, reinforced by the Disabilities Act of 1991, will continue to provide guidelines for the full integration and support of disabled individuals.

Finally, the College has made provision throughout its policies to insure free expression and pursuit of knowledge for all of its constituencies which are clearly stated, well publicized and followed consistently. Fostered by faculty preference, Mohegan's small class size and diverse student body, create an atmosphere of reasoned argument, challenge, and open debate. As community college faculty, Mohegan instructors are guided by current research in their specialized fields, information on instructional techniques, and community/agency expertise.

PROJECTION

The subcommittee believes that the present policies and procedures relevant to matters of integrity are contemporary,

equitable, and result in an institution which operates within a sound ethical culture. However, there are two broad areas for future consideration. The first is the need for college-wide dialogue, explicit explanation of expectations, and perhaps policy development on the sensitive topics of faculty/staff-student relationships and student organization advisor-student relationships. We may also want to explore the concept of an impartial "ombudsperson" for additional student recourse.

The second concern is the increasing discrepancy between our mission statement and the ability of the institution to deliver instruction and student services as resources diminish. Our mission emphasizes the community college's role in providing universal access to higher education. While still committed to universal access, Mohegan has been forced to take the following measures during the past two years.

- * Limit the schedule of classes offered and eliminate programs, thereby turning away an estimated 600 students during 1989-91.
- * Substantially raise tuition without a proportionate increase in financial aid.
- * Curtail classes and support services at off campus locations.
- * Reduce the number of part-time faculty hired while increasing the number of courses offered at the higher Extension Fund tuition rate.

The cumulative impact of these measures is significant and raises the serious ethical question of whether Mohegan can continue to fulfill its stated mission.

Faced by the difficulties of budget cuts, the College has demonstrated its integrity by deciding not to offer more courses to meet demand than could be properly supported or for which it could not guarantee academic quality.