Curricular Approach to Student Conduct

UPDATED SEPTEMBER 8, 2020
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Student conduct at the University of Washington is rooted in law and policies, specifically Washington Administrative Code (WAC) 478-121, and Student Governance and Policies, Chapters 209 and 210. These legal frameworks govern the expectations for students on campus, as well as the processes for holding students accountable for behaviors inconsistent with institutional expectations. These documents reflect the institutional process for managing student behavior.

At its core, student conduct work reflects institutional priorities of learning and growth. Where the process is framed with the above documents, the practice reflects the way that conduct practitioners engage in their work. This practice also more closely aligns with student development theories and best practices. The following material provides clarity regarding the educational priority of student conduct, the pillars that support this work, and educational narratives that inform what learning can and should be for students. Subsequent learning outcomes provide conduct practitioners at the University of Washington with guideposts for assessing this work and continuous improvement.

For the University of Washington community, the following offers a companion to the process documents which reinforces how student conduct aligns with institutional values. This practice includes identifying educational opportunities, discussing contextual experiences that lead to misconduct, and partnering with students in their own learning. Humanizing these experiences offers space for conduct practitioners to better understand student narratives and speaks to the care and compassion with which they do this difficult work with and for students.
THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS

HIGHER EDUCATION AND THE CO-CURRICULAR EXPERIENCE

Research demonstrates that student learning occurs within the co-curricular experience, particularly in developing “interpersonal skills, cognitive abilities, and critical thinking skills” (Stimpson & Janosik, 2011). Baxter Magolda (2004a) presents a framework for considering how students develop towards effective citizenship, which she indicates is a model that requires cognitive maturity, mature relationships, and integrated identity. How individuals make meaning of their experiences, termed self-authorship, consists of “(1) becoming critically aware of one's own composing of reality, (2) self-consciously participating in an ongoing dialogue toward truth, and (3) cultivating a capacity to respond - to act - in ways that are satisfying and just” (Parks, 2000). The ensuing model of self-authorship provides space for higher education professionals to impact student learning by partnering with students to enhance their ability to understand knowledge and context, engage in authentic and interdependent relationships, and understand their own identity and sense of self (Baxter Magolda, 2004a, p.8). The resulting learning partnerships model (Baxter Magolda, 2004b) scaffolds the responsibilities of higher education professionals to provide challenge and support to students while following three principles: validate learners’ capacity to know, situate learning within the learners’ experiences, and mutually construct meaning (pp. 42-43). Building on the concept of actively producing learning opportunities for students, Kerr et al. (2017) offer a curricular approach to framing student learning in the cocurricular setting. Their work, building on earlier models, emphasizes the use of learning outcomes and assessment tools throughout programs and services. These learning outcomes and the ensuing educational strategies offer structured guidance to practitioners about how to promote learning and growth for students. This model is the framework for the below curricular approach to student conduct at the University of Washington.

STUDENT CONDUCT AND STUDENT LEARNING

As a function of most student affairs areas, student conduct provides students with opportunities for learning in the higher education context (Stimson & Janosik, 2011; Stimpson & Janosik, 2015; Nelson, 2017). Within the student conduct literature, the focus has mainly been on the efficacy of more traditional conduct processes and the learning (or lack thereof) that occurs for students. King (2012) identifies a correlation between “perceived fairness and educational value” (p. 563) in the disciplinary process. King seeks to determine how much learning the students reported from their experiences in systems that are increasingly interested in compliance with legal frameworks over education and development. Karp and Sacks (2014) engage in a quantitative study about students at eighteen institutions and focuses on the gathering of information both about the student (race/ethnicity, gender, year in school) and their experiences in the conduct process. Stimpson and Janosik (2015) engage in a quantitative analysis of the Student Conduct Adjudication Processes Questionnaire to evaluate the responses from nearly 4,000 students on the impact of the conduct process itself on student learning. They focus on system efficacy, conceptualized as due process and fundamental fairness, as a way of evaluating effectiveness based on student understanding. In a subsequent article, Janosik and Stimpson (2017) perform an analysis attempting to understand the relationship between student learning and the system of adjudication itself. They depict a model of student learning being “a function of the combined influence of student perception of conduct system efficacy (CSE) + student perception of the campus environment (CE) + student background characteristics (SBC) + other unexplained influence (UI) or error” (p. 35). Through this analysis, the authors conclude that, while there is statistical significance on the variance of student learning based on identities of the students, it was not
enough to suggest a link between this minoritized student group membership learning. The conduct process at the University of Washington is rooted in compliance with the Administrative Procedures Act and the Washington Administrative Code, and largely does not inherently include educational components.

**FRAMING A CURRICULAR MODEL FOR STUDENT CONDUCT**

The curricular model for student conduct practice at the University of Washington is rooted in the Kerr et al. (2017) model detailed above. Additionally, student conduct practice relies on two different models to guide how professionals engage with their students. First, motivational interviewing techniques outlined by Miller and Rollnick (2013) offer insight into supporting behavior change. Defined as “a collaborative conversation style for strengthening a person's own motivation and commitment to change”, this technique emphasizes collaboration, compassion, evocation, and acceptance as principles for promoting change (p.12). Second, when considering the concept of behavior change, conduct professionals utilize a transtheoretical model that frames growth and behavior change within the context of stages (Prochaska and Norcross, 2007). Students move through stages including precontemplation (no intention to change) and contemplation (awareness of a problem), preparation (intention and intention) and action (overt behavioral change), and resolve with either maintenance (working to prevent relapse) or relapse and recycling (engaging in previous behaviors). This allows conduct officers at the University of Washington to consider incremental changes to student behavior to be signs of learning, recognizing that a brief intervention like an investigative interview may not have the same impact as a quarter-long course or regular therapy.

**References**


A CURRICULAR APPROACH TO STUDENT CONDUCT AT THE UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON

EDUCATIONAL PRIORITY

Student conduct at the University of Washington challenges students to reflect on their actions, decisions, and impacts in an educational and developmental experience that promotes integrity in an inclusive environment.

EDUCATIONAL PILLARS AND LEARNING OUTCOMES

ENGAGE: Students can engage with the conduct process in order to share their experiences, explore options, learn about expectations, and connect with supports and resources. Through these actions, students can be able to move through the process with honesty, integrity, and respect.

> Students will be able to explain the expectations of academic integrity and behavioral conduct at UW.
> Students will be able to demonstrate understanding of the process.

REFLECT: Students can reflect on their choices in order to better understand the impact on others and themselves regardless of responsibility. By examining their actions from a global perspective, students can alter their future decision-making.

> Students will be able to articulate how their behavior impacted others.
> Students will be able to articulate their decision-making process.
> Students will be able to articulate connections between their values and decision making.

DEVELOP: Students can develop a greater understanding of their decisions and create a plan where they can access support and resources to work toward future success.

> Students will be able to identify resources available to them to promote future success.
> Students will be able to articulate new skills to inform future success.
EDUCATIONAL STRATEGIES

RESOURCES AND INFORMATION

DOCUMENTATION AND EDUCATION Staff throughout the conduct proceeding will provide information to students in the form of written documents, fact sheets, and presentations of material in order to ensure students understand their experience. This includes “know your rights” booklets, presentations provided by the Hearing Officer in full hearings, and information included in communications regarding the conduct process sent to students.

RESPONDENT RESOURCE PROGRAM Respondents in the student conduct proceeding have access to the Respondent Resource Coordinator. Located on the Seattle campus, this individual provides guidance and information to students on all UW campuses named as respondents in a student conduct proceeding.

INDIVIDUAL INTERVENTIONS

DURING INVESTIGATIVE INTERVIEWS Conduct officers use motivational interviewing techniques to gain a holistic understanding of a students’ experiences. During the investigative interviews, conduct officers will seek to understand the context for behaviors, and offer opportunities for reflection and growth while applying a transdisciplinary approach to behavior change.

EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES When students are found responsible for violations of the student conduct code, conduct officers will issue an initial order detailing those findings as well as sanctions the student must complete. When possible, students will be asked to complete educational interventions including reflection papers, personalized assignments, workshops, or other opportunities geared to promote continued learning and skill building. Conduct officers intentionally craft these outcomes to match each students’ needs and interests, while ensuring consistency across similar cases.

REFERRAL AND DIRECT FOLLOW UP When appropriate, conduct officers refer students to campus partners for specialized support, including counseling, academic support, and health & wellness needs. Conduct officers sometimes serve in this consultative capacity, and will continue to meet with students over the period of up to a year or more in order to engage in intentional conversation about how the students’ decision making has changed or grown.

SYSTEM INTERVENTIONS

PROACTIVE EDUCATION Information regarding the student conduct code and process is provided to the University community in several ways: during first year experience programs and curriculum, orientation programs, and at programs targeted at student groups. Furthermore, students are provided with additional material and education during targeted orientation sessions, such as FIG groups, classroom presentations, and international student orientation.

FACULTY EDUCATION Conduct offices work closely with academic partners, including faculty, to ensure that information regarding academic integrity is shared with students. This includes meeting directly with academic departments, as well as providing model syllabus language via the UW Registrar website.

While the above interventions are common across the UW system, each campus and office may engage in unique interventions based on their respective campus population as well as capacity and resources.