



## Policy # 53034.6

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### PREVENTING AND ADDRESSING RETALIATION

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**Effective Date:** March 28, 2014

**Revised Date:** May 5, 2022

**Responsible Office:** Office for Civil Rights and Title IX

**Division:** Operations

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#### I. PURPOSE/OBJECTIVE

The Grambling State University is committed to maintaining an educational and workplace environment free of retaliation against persons who, in good faith, complain of discrimination and or harassment, or who assist or participate in the complaint process. Retaliation against an individual for making a good faith complaint of unlawful discrimination, harassment, or other unlawful practice, or for using or participating in the complaint process, is a violation of University of Louisiana System and University policy and is strictly prohibited.

#### II. STATEMENT OF POLICY

This policy is maintained on the University campus including but not limited to the Human Resources Department and the campus website. Certification of such action will be required.

#### III. APPLICABILITY

This policy shall comply with related UL System Memoranda, and in accordance with Federal and State laws and related guidelines of the Equal Opportunity Employment Commission.

#### IV. REVISION/REVIEWED

#### V. DEFINITIONS

- A. Complaint: Allegations of discrimination, harassment and or retaliation, filed in good faith and in accordance with established procedures.
- B. Discrimination: Inequitable treatment of an individual based on protected characteristics or status rather than individual merit.
- C. Harassment: Unwelcomed conduct directed against a person based on one or more of a person's protected characteristics or status which is so severe or pervasive that it creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive environment.
- D. Protected Characteristic/Status: race, color, gender, religion, sexual orientation, national origin, disability, genetic information, age, veteran status, or retirement status.
- E. Retaliation: any adverse action taken against an individual who has complained about discrimination, harassment, or other unlawful practice, or who may have participated in a court or administrative investigation, hearing or litigation relating to workplace conduct of discrimination or harassment by filing a charge

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or acting as a witness. This includes overt or covert acts of reprisal, interference, restraint, penalty, discrimination, intimidation, or harassment against an individual or group exercising rights under this policy. To establish a claim of retaliation, the individual need not be a member of a protected group or class. Employees who assist others in raising a complaint of prohibited discrimination or harassment by offering advice and moral support, or by giving testimony or evidence in support of a complaint, are similarly protected. This protection exists even if the complaint is eventually dismissed or found to be lacking in merit.

**VI. PROTECTED CONDUCT AND ACTIVITIES****A. Protected individual conduct falls into three broad categories.**

1. Individuals who take part in protected conduct or activities in their personal life are protected from retaliation for such protected activities.
2. Individuals who raise concerns in the workplace about harassment or discrimination based on protected status are protected from retaliation for such activities.
3. Individuals who cooperate in an investigation, proceeding or hearing regarding harassment, discrimination or retaliation involving protected activity are protected from retaliation.

**B. Protected activity covers a wide spectrum of conduct. Generally, this involves taking some action that is permitted or protected by state and/or federal laws.**

1. Some common retaliation claims arise in situations where an individual has:
  - a) initiated an internal complaint of discrimination or harassment;
  - b) filed a claim of discrimination;
  - c) requested an accommodation for a disability;
  - d) filed a worker's compensation claim following a work-related injury;
  - e) requested leave under the Family and Medical Leave Act;
  - f) filed a safety or environmental related complaint with state and/or federal oversight agencies;
  - g) filed a "whistleblower's" claim alleging that the employer engaged in fraud, corruption, or other suspected wrongful activity.
2. Individuals may state their opposition to a specific practice or activity which they believe constitutes discrimination.
  - a) The person claiming retaliation does not necessarily need to be the person engaged in the opposition.

Example: an individual who alleges retaliation under the Age Discrimination in Employment Act of 1967 (ADEA) or any of the laws enforced by the EEOC, including, but not limited to Title VII and the Americans With Disabilities.

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- b) Practices challenged in prior proceedings may give rise to a claim of retaliation.

Example: a violation would be found if it were determined that an applicant was not hired because he/she had filed discrimination charges against a former employer.

3. Individuals may participate in an investigation, proceeding, hearing or litigation without fear of retaliation.

- a) Participation is protected regardless of whether the allegations in the original charges were valid or reasonable. So, a violation of retaliation policy could be found whether the challenge is found to be unlawful.

- b) The person claiming retaliation may not necessarily be the one who participated in the original complaint.

Example: it would be unlawful to retaliate against a spouse or relative of an employee who filed an EEOC charge.

**VII. ADVERSE ACTIONS****A. General Actions**

The most obvious types of retaliation are denial of promotion, refusal to hire, denial of job benefits, demotion, suspension, and termination. Other actions include threats, reprimands, negative evaluations, salary reductions, change in job assignments, unjustified evaluations or reports, acceleration of disciplinary action, sudden enforcement of previously unenforced policies, abolishing a position, or other harassing or hostile behavior or attitudes toward the complainant.

**B. Actions affecting the terms, conditions, or privileges of employment**

Other adverse actions that may or may not be intentionally motivated, but which result in negative treatment of an individual can also be considered retaliatory, such as exclusion from activities the employee may have participated in previously, denial of employment benefits, or changing the shift of a female employee who complains of sexual harassment by her supervisor. Such actions could be considered retaliatory, even if the employee expresses a preference regarding the new arrangement.

**C. Post-Employment Actions**

Actions that are designed to interfere with an individual's prospects for employment, such as negative job references and informing prospective employers of the individual's protected activity also constitutes retaliation.

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Negative job references based on a retaliatory motive may also constitute retaliation.

**VIII. ESTABLISHING AND INVESTIGATING COMPLAINTS****A. Evidence**

1. Direct Evidence: In order to establish direct evidence of retaliation, there must be proof that the adverse action was taken as a result of a protected activity. Such evidence is any written or verbal statement by an official that he/she took actions against an individual for engaging in protected activity.
2. Circumstantial Evidence: A violation can also be established if there is circumstantial evidence of retaliation. Typically, this link can be demonstrated if the adverse action took place shortly after the protected activity or if the entity undertaking the adverse action was aware of the individual's activity before taking the action.
3. Non-Retaliantory Reason: Retaliation can be established if the entity fails to provide evidence of a legitimate and non-retaliatory reason for the action. Common non-retaliatory reasons for adverse employment actions include poor job performance, inadequate qualifications for the position sought, and violation of work rules or insubordination.
4. Pretext to Motive: Even if an entity produces evidence of a legitimate reason for the adverse action, a violation can still be found if the reason is a pretext to hide actual motive. This can be proved through evidence that an individual was treated differently from similarly situated employees or subjected to heightened scrutiny after engaging in a protected activity.

**B. Reporting and Investigation Process**

The Office for Civil Rights has the responsibility of receiving and investigating complaints of retaliation at the University.

The Office for Civil Rights serves in other capacities or roles within the University but reports directly to the respective University Compliance Officer regarding all complaints of unlawful retaliation.

If a complaint of unlawful retaliation is against the Office for Civil Rights and/or staff member, the complainant shall complain directly to the Office of University Compliance. Complaints of unlawful retaliation by the University President shall be made directly to the UL System EEO Coordinator/Officer whose name and contact information is:

Bruce Janet  
Interim EEO Coordinator/Officer  
UL System  
Claiborne Building  
1201 N. Third, Suite 7-300  
Baton Rouge, LA 70802  
225-342-6950

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**Complaint Procedures** - Complaints, whether informal or formal, should be reported as soon as possible after any alleged retaliation incident has occurred. There is no deadline or required timeframe within which unlawful retaliation must be reported. However, a large proximity of time in between the alleged retaliation and the reporting may negatively affect the investigation.

**Informal Complaint:** A complaint of unlawful retaliation does not have to begin at the Informal Complaint stage. However, use of the Informal Complaint process may allow a matter to be resolved quickly if the complainant believes that the circumstances make the Informal Complaint process appropriate for a particular situation. Informal complaints should be made in writing within 10 business days of the date that the employee knew or had reason to know of the alleged retaliation. Although attempts will be made to address all complaints of harassment, discrimination, and retaliation, complaints that are made more than 30 calendar days after the complainant knew or should have known about the alleged conduct will be more difficult or impossible to investigate depending on the facts involved.

Informal complaints can be resolved through informal meetings (either separate or together) with the complainant and person engaging in the alleged conduct and informal information gathering. Supervisors and department heads, and other administrators may be involved in resolving an informal complaint. If the Complainant is not satisfied with the results of an informal complaint, a Level 1 Complaint can be filed to begin the Formal Complaint Process. The Office for Civil Rights may document the resolution of an Informal Complaint.

**Formal Complaint** - Formal complaints of unlawful retaliation must be submitted in writing or [here](#).

Details concerning the incident(s) or conduct giving rise to the complaint; and

1. Dates and locations of incident(s); and
2. Any witnesses to the alleged incident(s) or conduct; and
3. Any previous actions of retaliation reported. If so, to whom and when; and
4. Action requested to resolve the complaint and prevent future violation of the policy.

A complaint shall not be dismissed for failure to include any or all of the above information. However, complaints with little or no substance will be difficult to investigate. As much substance as possible within the complaint will assist the EEO Coordinator in conducting the investigation.

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**Formal Complaint Process**

**Level 1** - Written complaints of retaliation should be submitted to the University's Office for Civil Rights within 10 business days of the alleged incident if the complainant does not wish to use the informal complaint process. This is not a deadline that will prevent a claim of unlawful retaliation from being heard by the Office for Civil Rights. However, complaints that are made more than 30 calendar days after the complainant knew or should have known about the alleged conduct will be more difficult or impossible to investigate depending on the facts involved. The Office for Civil Rights will either investigate or authorize an investigation and will issue a written summary of the outcome of the investigation within a reasonable timeframe. A copy of the Office for Civil Rights' written summary of the investigation will be accessible to both parties.

**Level 2** - If either party to a complaint of unlawful retaliation wishes to appeal the Level 1 decision, an appeal of the written decision must be made in writing within 10 business days of the receipt of the Level 1 Complaint determination. The appeal should be sent to the Office of the President who will forward the appeal to the University Office for Civil Rights Advisory Committee for a review and determination.

**Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

**The University Office for Civil Rights Advisory Committee – Grambling State University** will establish an Office for Civil Rights Advisory Standing Committee composed of members of the faculty and staff from various departments. The Office for Civil Rights Committee should include individuals representing the interests of classified and unclassified staff and should reflect the diverse workforce on the campus. The Office for Civil Rights Committee will communicate regularly regarding issues related to policy implementation including University climate and systemic concerns. In addition to its other responsibilities, a sub-group of between three (3) to five (5) of the Office for Civil Rights Advisory Committee shall serve as the Level 2 appeal review committee for this Retaliation Complaint process.

Grambling State University shall maintain a pool of trained investigators who are employees of the universities who have had formal training in investigation techniques, policies, and procedures for purposes of resolving administrative complaints and actions within the campus environment. Such individuals should have knowledge in interviewing, evidence collection, and report writing, and will be the primary individuals responsible for making initial inquiries of complainants and respondents in a variety of administrative proceedings.

Prior to the Office for Civil Rights Advisory Committee's review, a trained investigator appointed by the President of the University (or appointed by the UL System President in the case of the UL System) will:

1. Review and investigate the Level 1 complaint decision;

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2. Collect and clarify additional available facts about the alleged incident;
3. Meet with the complainant and the accused individual, separately, if appropriate.

The trained investigator will provide a report to the Office for Civil Rights Advisory Committee. The Office for Civil Rights Advisory Committee will review the Level 1 decision and the appeal as well as the investigator's report and will make a determination regarding the Level 1 decision and will provide detailed findings along with any recommendations for appropriate action to the President of the University for consideration. Recommendations may include: uphold the Level 1 decision in full or in part or render an alternative decision in full or in part. The President of the University will review the report submitted by the Office for Civil Rights Advisory Committee and, depending upon the nature and severity of the charge(s), the President may approve the recommended action or may recommend an alternate resolution.

The complainant and the accused individual will be notified of the decisions at each level. The complainant will also be notified of all elements of the decision that directly relate to the complainant, involve general campus wide changes, or are otherwise required by state or federal law. To the fullest extent practicable and consistent with a thorough investigation, all complaints will be kept confidential, considering the specific circumstances of the allegations, to protect the rights of both the complainant and the individual accused.

**IX. SANCTIONS**

The merits of the complaint giving rise to the retaliation claim are irrelevant. As stated above, retaliation gives rise to a separate claim from the underlying complaint. Consequently, anyone violating the policy may be in violation of federal laws protecting retaliation for protected activity and this policy regarding retaliation even if the original complaint of discrimination or harassment is not proven, is dismissed, or is withdrawn and held responsible for such conduct. Following an investigation, if a faculty, student, or staff member is found in violation of this policy, that individual may be subject to disciplinary actions, and the sanctions may include reprimand, probation, suspension, demotion, reassignment, termination, and expulsion. If personnel action is determined necessary and appropriate with respect to the accused, the University will use its appropriate personnel policies after a determination regarding the allegations.

**X. TRAINING**

The Office for Civil Rights shall identify the human resources personnel as well as the managerial and supervisory personnel on campus each year. These individuals shall be provided annual training by the Office for Civil Rights or designee on the Anti-Retaliation Policy and shall have access to the Office for Civil Rights to address any questions or concerns that arise with respect to this policy. The Office for Civil Rights

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shall have access to and shall use the UL System EEO Officer as a resource as needed to ensure compliance with this policy.

The EEO Committee shall also receive training with respect to how to carefully review and analyze complaints of retaliation as part of their annual EEO Training.

**XI. ANNUAL REPORTING**

The Office for Civil Rights will provide an annual report to the UL System EEO Coordinator/Officer. Such a report will include information such as instances of informal and formal complaints regarding retaliation as well as resolutions of such complaints. The report will also include information regarding any identified systemic concerns regarding unlawful retaliation such as identified areas within the campus such as employment areas or colleges as well as recommended solutions to ensure that unlawful retaliation does not continue within the University.

[University Grievance, Harassment, Discrimination and Retaliation On-Line Complaint Form](#)

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*Grambling State University is an Equal Employment Opportunity/American with Disabilities Act /Affirmative Action Compliance Program Employer. We recruit, select, employ and promote without regard to race, sex, religion, age, disability, national origin, or any other protected class.*

**XII. REVISION/REVISED HISTORY**