



Reference: *Accreditation Standard III.A.13*

### Definitions and Standards of Ethics

Ethical behavior is often defined as “right” or “good” behavior as measured against commonly accepted rules of conduct for a society or for a profession. The ethical person is often described as one who is fair, honest, straightforward, trustworthy, objective, unprejudiced, and equitable. The consistent exercise of integrity is the cornerstone of ethical behavior.

### Importance of Ethics

- A. The credibility of all employees depends upon whether they are perceived as honest individuals. If integrity contributes to credibility, then ethical behavior is a singular prerequisite to successful performance of one’s duties.
- B. Statements of ethical standards do not necessarily ensure ethical behavior. Yet, public statements of intent surely create an expression that employees will indeed act with integrity in the public interest.
- C. Although the district’s guiding principles cannot address every issue or provide answers to every dilemma, they define the spirit in which we intend to conduct business and should guide us in our daily conduct.

### Compliance with Laws

Commitment to ethical behavior begins with complying with laws, rules, and regulations. Each employee must have an understanding of the policies, laws, rules, and regulations that apply to his or her specific role including financial conflict of interest laws under the Political Reform Act. If an employee is unsure of whether a contemplated action is permitted by law or District policy, he/she/they should seek advice from the resource expert. Employees are responsible for preventing violations of law and for reporting violations of laws to supervisors.

All employees shall adhere to the following ethical standards:

- Exercise due diligence in the ethical performance of his or her duties and model the highest standard of ethically responsible behavior.
- Facilitate a climate of trust, mutual support, and courteous consideration through actions that demonstrate respect for reason, freedom of expression, and the right to dissent.
- Avoid knowingly making false or malicious statement about other employees or students.
- Use care and integrity in sharing information, follow state and federal guidelines as they relate to privacy, guard privacy rights of all individuals, and avoid disclosing information about selection processes, colleagues, or students

obtained in the course of professional service unless disclosure serves a valid business purpose, or is required by law.

- Avoid entering into or recommending the District enter into contractual relationships that create conflicts of interest and lead to personal gain.
- Avoid permitting the interests of any members of the college community to override the best interests of the public served by the district.
- Avoid accepting business courtesies that attempt to influence District decisions, such as accepting courtesies from a business whose contract is expiring in the near future.
- Exercise great care and good judgment in order to avoid situations that may compromise the District.
- Exhibit mutual respect, cooperation, and promote a team environment.
- Confront issues and people without prejudice.
- Challenge and report unethical behavior in a timely manner.
- Avoid fraudulent activities. Fraud is defined as a deception deliberately practiced in order to secure unfair or unlawful gain.

### Expectations for Ethical Behavior

Employees of the West Hills Community College District shall be committed to the principles of honesty and equity. They shall not seek to abridge, for any purpose, the freedoms of other employees or students. At the same time, they shall not willingly permit the right and privileges of any members of the college community to override the best interests of the public served by the college.

Employees shall exercise judgments that are dispassionate, fair, consistent, and equitable. They shall exhibit openness and reliability in what they say and do as educational leaders. They shall confront issues and people without prejudice. They shall do everything they can to demonstrate a commitment to excellence in education and without compromise to the principles of ethical behavior.

Similarly, students are expected to abide by ethical behavior and decision-making in their treatment of college employees, other students, and members of the public.

### Professionalism and Workplace Civility

The District values professionalism and workplace civility among its employees and students in carrying out the District's mission. Professionalism and workplace civility includes demonstrating integrity, respect, compassion, and accountability in all work interactions and responsibilities.

Employees are expected to exhibit a high degree of personal integrity, ethics, and professionalism at all times while on the job. Employees are expected to be courteous, respectful, and helpful to students, vendors, customers, visitors, and other employees in all their work assignments. Employees are to support the mission of the District and colleges and perform their assigned duties and responsibilities in a manner deserving of the public trust.

Disrespectful, unprofessional, and/or uncivil behavior is inappropriate and unacceptable. This behavior may be face-to-face, online, and/or through imagery, electronic, or digital means such as:

- Offensive language or jokes
- Obscene or indecent gestures
- Engaging in disruptive behavior, including outbursts and explosive behavior
- Shouting, yelling or other aggressive behavior
- Degrading, demeaning, humiliating or insulting comments
- Discriminatory remarks
- Intentionally spreading false information
- Racist, sexist or other slurs or symbols
- Name-calling
- Harassment
- Personal attacks

### Employee Responsibilities

The following statements of responsibilities are intended as guidelines:

- To keep foremost in mind at all times that the college exists to serve students;
- To provide and protect student access to the educational resources of the college;
- To protect human dignity and individual freedom, and assure that students are respected as individuals, as learners, and as independent decision-makers;
- To protect students from disparagement, embarrassment, or capricious judgment;
- To develop a climate of trust and mutual support;
- To foster openness by encouraging and maintaining two-way communication;
- To encourage, support, and abide by the written Board Policies and Administrative Procedures of the West Hills Community College District; and
- To challenge unethical behavior in a timely manner.

### Consequences of Violation

Violations of the Institutional Code of Ethics shall be addressed by the Chancellor (for district level employees) or the President (for college level employees). Violations will be addressed within the scope of applicable regulations, board policies, administrative procedures, working condition manuals, and/or collective bargaining agreements.

Approved: 4/26/11

Reviewed/Revised: 9/22/2020; 03/22/2023