Procedures For Grievance Of The
Rockefeller College Of Public Affairs & Policy
(Revised May 2013)

I. For purposes of this document, a “grievance” shall include complaints made by students against faculty or against other students, complaints by faculty against other faculty or against students, and complaints by students or faculty against administrative officers of the college or its constituent departments and units.

A “grievance” shall include, but not be limited to, matters of academic honesty (such as plagiarism and cheating) and professional ethics; grades assigned for courses; and improper treatment on the grounds of age, color, creed, disability, marital status, veteran status, national origin, race, sex, or sexual preference.

In grievances concerning grades, grievances may be filed only as to any final grade or other final disposition for a course. Dropping of a course shall constitute a final disposition for a course so as to allow grievances over grades or other matters occurring prior to the “drop.”

II. The Grievance Committee shall be composed of three members of the Rockefeller College faculty, appointed by the Chair of the Faculty in accord with the By-Laws of the Faculty, and two student members, including one undergraduate, if the complainant is an undergraduate.

Should a grievance concern a faculty member with respect to intra-faculty or faculty-administration matters, the faculty member may choose to be heard by the full panel or by that part of the panel consisting of the faculty member’s peers.

A teaching assistant against whom a grievance is brought in that person’s capacity as a teaching assistant shall for the purposes of this section be considered a member of the faculty.

In the event a question arises as to whether a matter laid before the Committee falls within the “intra-faculty or faculty-administration matters” indicated above, the entire Committee shall decide the appropriate jurisdiction to apply.

III. Any grievance must be filed within five months of the time the complainant was informed of the matter which is the subject of the grievance.

“File” shall mean a letter of intent from the complainant to either the Dean of the Rockefeller College of Public Affairs and Policy or the Chair of the Rockefeller College of Public Affairs and Policy Grievance Committee that a more complete statement is forthcoming.

IV. If, after a statement alleging a grievance has been filed with the Committee, the Committee determines that the statement does not state a grievance with sufficient clarity to allow the person or unit complained against to prepare a proper response, the Committee may in its discretion return the statement to the complainant with a request for clarification and/or supplementation. The complainant will have three months within which to submit clarification.
If, after a statement alleging a grievance has been filed with the Committee, the Committee determines that a grievance has not been stated or that the grievance is “frivolous,” the Committee may, without further action, make a finding that the statement does not state a grievance and thus terminate the proceedings. In such a case, the Committee will state its reasons for so finding.

**V. The first step in the grievance process** is for the person claiming a grievance to submit to the Grievance Committee a written statement of the grievance which should specify as accurately as possible the facts of the situation leading up to the matters felt to constitute the grievance, and then, as explicitly as possible, what the person considers the nature of the grievance.

The next step is that those against whom the person claims to have a grievance will be given a copy of the statement and supporting data (if the latter are not already available to them) and they will be given the opportunity to respond in writing, together with such documents as they may wish to submit. A copy of their responses to the original complaint will be provided to the complainant.

If the Committee on Grievances decides upon the basis of the statements submitted by both parties that further inquiry is justified and that oral statements supplementing the written statements are desirable, the Committee normally will invite the complainant and those complained against to meet separately with the Committee and augment their written statements with information given orally.

Alternatively, however, if either of the parties has sufficient reason for requesting a hearing at which all concerned parties are present, rather than separately meeting with the Committee, due notice will be given and an informal hearing will be held. In the informal hearing, the complainant and the parties complained against, together with those witnesses for either party whose testimony has relevance to the issues at hand, will be invited to make statements or submit documents to representatives of the Committee on Grievances conducting the informal hearing (a majority of at least four out of six Committee members shall be present). The informal hearing will not entail taking sworn testimony since it is essentially a conference conducted in an orderly manner by the persons in charge of the hearing. Notes of the proceedings will be taken by a representative of the Grievance committee (or an appointed secretary) and the attendance of persons present recorded, but a stenographic record will not be made. Any of the parties attending the hearing may take notes for their own purposes.

If either party wishes to have legal counsel or an advisor present at the hearing, they may do so, but the function of legal counsel or advisor will be limited to advising his/her client and if desired, making a final summing up statement on behalf of the client. His/Her role will not include such formal processes as objecting to statements made in testimony or cross-examination of witnesses.

Following submission of written statement, or after oral statements made, if meetings are held with the Committee, or, if an informal hearing is held following that hearing, the Committee on
Grievances will make findings of fact and recommendations for appropriate action with reasons to the Dean of the Rockefeller College of Public Affairs and Policy, or where appropriate, to the Faculty. A copy of the notes taken and the findings and recommendations of the Committee will be on file and fully available to the complainant and those complained against, and photocopies will be furnished at the cost of photocopying to concerned parties desiring them. The complainant and other parties may, if they wish, submit further written statements commenting on the Committee’s findings and recommendations prior to the Dean’s or Faculty’s review, providing there is notification of intent to do so within a reasonably short time to avoid undue delay.

It should be emphasized that since this is a grievance procedure, with the objective of ameliorating or resolving conflict as simply and quickly as possible while preserving the basic element of fair play or due process, the steps in the above process may be foreshortened at any stage providing there is mutual consent by the parties concerned in the interest of achieving an equitable resolution of the issues within a briefer period of time.

VI. Under the By-Laws, the function of the Committee on Grievances is that of finding the facts through the process outlined above and making a recommendation to either the Dean or Faculty. The Committee does not have the power to reverse or modify a faculty member’s or an administrator’s decision. However, recommendations of the Committee are normally given weight by the parties involved.