

## **BOARD OF GOVERNORS' STUDENT COMPLAINT PROCEDURE**

Provided In Response to U.S. Department of Education Final Rules Published October 29, 2010, regarding Program Integrity issues.

### **Summary of Program Integrity Rules**

The United States Department of Education Regulation 34 CFR 600.9, the "Program Integrity Rule," as part of its State authorization provisions, requires states to provide a process for students to file complaints relating to programs offered by postsecondary educational institutions authorized under Title IV of the Higher Education Act of 1965, as amended. The specific types of complaints covered by these regulations are:

- Allegations of state consumer protection violations, including, but not limited to fraud and false advertising;
- Allegations that state laws or rules addressing the licensure of postsecondary institutions have been violated; and
- Allegations regarding the quality of education or other accreditation requirements.

In compliance with the Federal Program Integrity Rule, the Rhode Island Board of Governors for Higher Education, the University of Rhode Island, Rhode Island College, and the Community College of Rhode Island have listed the following alternatives for individuals who wish to submit complaints regarding URI, RIC and CCRI, as well as the other institutions that are under the jurisdiction of the Board of Governors. It is expected that any student complaint will be first filed in accordance with any student complaint procedures currently in place at the student's institution before resolution is sought from the Board's Office of Higher Education or the institution's accreditation body. In the absence of a specific procedure, a student's complaint should be filed with the institution's President.

### **Recommended Content of the Complaint**

Initial complaints should include the complainant's full name, address, and contact information, including e-mail address and telephone number. Complaints should specify enrollment status- whether the student is a current, former or prospective student; and they should be specific in describing the nature of the complaint and relevant information: the name of the parties involved, including witnesses, dates, the name of the institution, the policy or procedure violated (if known), and contact information. Any supporting material that substantiates the complaint should also be included.

### **Student Complaints Regarding the University of Rhode Island, Rhode Island College, and the Community College of Rhode Island**

***For complaints alleging consumer fraud, false advertising, and deceptive trade practices:***

Commissioner of Higher Education  
RI Office of Higher Education  
80 Washington Street, Suite 524  
Providence, Rhode Island 02903

Written complaints and supporting documentation should be filed with the Commissioner of Higher Education at the Rhode Island Office of Higher Education, and they will be reviewed accordingly. In addition, students or other individuals with complaints involving an allegation of criminal activity will be referred to their campus police department, their local police department, or the Rhode Island State Police.

***For complaints regarding state licensing of postsecondary institutions:***

Commissioner of Higher Education  
RI Office of Higher Education  
80 Washington Street, Suite 524  
Providence, Rhode Island 02903

Written complaints and supporting documentation should be filed with the Commissioner of Higher Education at the Rhode Island Office of Higher Education, and they will be reviewed accordingly.

***For complaints relating to quality of education or accreditation requirements:***

Commissioner of Higher Education  
RI Office of Higher Education  
80 Washington Street, Suite 524  
Providence, Rhode Island 02903

Written complaints and supporting documentation should be filed with the Commissioner of Higher Education at the Rhode Island Office of Higher Education, and they will be reviewed accordingly.

Complaints involving quality or accreditation requirements may also be filed directly with:

New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC)

Commission on Institutions of Higher Education

209 Burlington Road, Suite 201

Bedford, Massachusetts 01730

(781)541-5413

<http://cihe.neasc.org/information> for the public/comments and complaints

In addition, complaints involving programs at the institutions that are accredited by a specific accrediting entity may be filed with that accrediting entity.

The University of Rhode Island's accreditation documents may be viewed at:

<http://www.uri.edu/accreditation/>

Rhode Island College's accreditation documents may be viewed at:  
<http://www.ric.edu/oirp/accreditation.php>

The Community College of Rhode Island's accreditation documents may be viewed at:  
<http://www.ccri.edu/neasc/>

For other types of student complaints involving URI, RIC or CCCRI, pursuant to Rhode Island law, §16-59-4(3), the Rhode Island Board of Governors for Higher Education may not intervene in the internal procedures of the university and colleges under its supervision (URI, RIC, and CCRI). As such, the Board's review of such student complaints will be limited to a determination that the institution's internal complaint procedures have been utilized and followed, and that the institution has complied with its own applicable policies. Such review by the Office of Higher Education will be summary in nature and it will not involve the submission of any information or documentation that was not submitted at the institution level. Any student who has not yet used or completed the complaint processes available to him/her at his/her institution will be referred back to the institution. The Board, however, through its Office of Higher Education, does respond to complaints regarding allegations that raise significant questions about these institutions' compliance with the Board's policies and procedures as well as compliance with Rhode Island and federal law.

Written complaints and supporting documentation should be filed with the Commissioner of Higher Education at the Office of Higher Education, and they will be reviewed accordingly. In addition, students or other individuals with complaints involving an allegation of criminal activity will be referred to their campus police department, their local police department, or the Rhode Island State Police. Complaints involving allegations of discrimination will be referred to the institution's Affirmative Action Office and /or Rhode Island Commission for Human Rights (or the applicable federal EEOC office).

Before submitting a complaint, a student is encouraged to try to address and reconcile his/her complaint by meeting with the appropriate official(s) at their institution, or by initiating a review through the school's internal dispute resolution/complaint process and/or academic grievance procedure.

## **Student Complaints Regarding Degree Granting Institutions and Proprietary Schools Operating in Rhode Island**

**Complaints Regarding Brown University, RI School of Design, Providence College, Bryant University, Johnson & Wales University, Roger Williams University, Salve Regina University, and New England Institute of Technology**

The Rhode Island Board of Governors for Higher Education does not supervise Brown University, RI School of Design, Providence College, Bryant University, Johnson & Wales University, Roger Williams University, Salve Regina University, or New England Institute of Technology. As such, any complaints regarding these specific institutions should be filed with the individual institution.

**Complaints Regarding Degree Granting Institutions Authorized to Operate in Rhode Island by the Board of Governors for Higher Education**

Complaints regarding degree granting institutions authorized to operate in Rhode Island by the Board of Governors for Higher Education are addressed in the same manner as student complaints regarding proprietary schools, and as described below.

**Complaints Regarding Proprietary Schools Operating in Rhode Island**

Student complaints regarding a non-degree granting proprietary school are handled by the Board of Governors through its Office of Higher Education.

***For complaints alleging consumer fraud, false advertising, and deceptive trade practices:***

Commissioner of Higher Education  
RI Office of Higher Education  
80 Washington Street, Suite 524  
Providence, Rhode Island 02903

Written complaints and supporting documentation should be filed with the Commissioner of Higher Education at the Rhode Island Office of Higher Education, and they will be reviewed accordingly. In addition, students or other individuals with complaints involving an allegation of criminal activity will be referred to their campus police department, their local police department, or the Rhode Island State Police.

***For complaints regarding state licensing of postsecondary institutions:***

Commissioner of Higher Education  
RI Office of Higher Education  
80 Washington Street, Suite 524

Providence, Rhode Island 02903

Written complaints and supporting documentation should be filed with the Commissioner of Higher Education at the Rhode Island Office of Higher Education, and they will be reviewed accordingly. Complaints regarding programs that are also subject to approval by any other state agency will also be referred the applicable state agency (the RI Department of Health, for example).

***For complaints relating to quality of education or accreditation requirements:***

Commissioner of Higher Education  
RI Office of Higher Education  
80 Washington Street, Suite 524  
Providence, Rhode Island 02903

Written complaints and supporting documentation should be filed with the Commissioner of Higher Education at the Rhode Island Office of Higher Education, and they will be reviewed accordingly. The Office of Higher education will attempt to resolve the matter with the school and student, however, if it is unable to do so, the student will be referred to the school's accrediting agency.

All students and /or third party individuals who file the above and other types of complaints with the Office of Higher Education will be initially directed to follow the school's internal complaint procedure. If that procedure fails to resolve the complaint, the Office of Higher Education will then refer student and/or third party individuals with complaints related to federal or state laws or regulations to the appropriate federal or state agency. In addition, students or other individuals with complaints involving an allegation of criminal and/or illegal activity will be referred to their campus police department, their local police department, or the Rhode Island State Police. Complaints involving allegations of discrimination will be referred to the institution's Affirmative Action Office and /or the Rhode Island Commission for Human Rights (or the applicable federal EEOC office).