

**MONITORING REPORT
POLICY 2.2 – TREATMENT OF EMPLOYEES**



JANUARY 2024

I hereby present to the Board of Trustees my monitoring report on your Administrative Parameters policy 2.2 “Treatment of Employees” in accordance with the monitoring schedule set forth in Board policy. I certify that the information contained in this report is true.

Signed: , President

BROADEST POLICY PROVISION: With respect to the treatment of employees, including faculty, staff, and volunteers, the President will not cause or allow conditions that are unfair, unsafe, or undignified.

PRESIDENT’S INTERPRETATION: *No changes.* I submit that the Board’s concerns are comprehensively interpreted in this policy’s subsequent provisions. My interpretations and reporting data are presented with those provisions below.

POLICY PROVISION #1: The President will not operate without ensuring employees are provided with written personnel policies, reviewed by competent legal counsel, that clarify rules for employees, provide for effective handling of grievances, and protect against wrongful conditions.

PRESIDENT’S INTERPRETATION: *No changes.* I interpret “clarify rules for employees” to mean that the organization must have in place, and all employees must be provided with, a comprehensive personnel manual that sets forth the rules and expectations of employment. Rules and expectations regarding issues such as work hours, overtime pay, expense reimbursements, leave, examples of and expected response to unacceptable conduct, dealing with the media, and so forth should be addressed.

I interpret “reviewed by competent legal counsel” to mean that an attorney competent in human resource matters has reviewed and approved the personnel manual and any substantive revisions.

I interpret “provide for effective handling of grievances” to mean that personnel policies must provide a process and assurances that grievances will be addressed professionally and in a fair manner. The process should include all essential elements of a grievance procedure as recommended by counsel, including the manner in which the grievance is to be initiated and what the grieving employee has the right to expect from the procedure. By professional and fair, I mean that while the results of the process may not be satisfactory or pleasing to the grieving

employees, they would agree that their grievance was fully heard, considered and responded to in a timely, courteous and confidential manner.

I interpret “protect against wrongful conditions” to mean that personnel policies must guide actions in a way that will preclude conditions that are illegal or unethical. Examples of such conditions include nepotism, grossly preferential treatment for personal reasons, and sexual harassment. Protecting against such situations means conveying with clarity those circumstances that are not acceptable, and the steps an employee is expected to take if any such conditions are encountered.

REPORT: Personnel policies are compiled in an [Employee Handbook](#) with review and amendments recommended by ACU’s General Counsel. These policies include a grievance procedure (Policy 530) that meets the standards outlined in my interpretation above. Also included are policies that protect against wrongful conditions as described in my interpretation, addressing (among other things) nepotism (Policy 22), nondiscrimination (Policy 21) and sexual misconduct (Policy 412). Each policy in the Handbook is reviewed periodically. All employees are provided with notice of the Employee Handbook upon employment and sign an acknowledgment of receipt and commitment to abide by these policies. Acknowledgments are maintained in personnel files, 100% of which are up-to-date with this requirement. Rules and expectations for employees address (at a minimum) all of the issues listed in my interpretation above and as recommended by ACU’s General Counsel. The Employee Handbook is available for review on the [ACU website](#).

I report compliance.

POLICY PROVISION #2: The President will not allow employees to be unaware of this Treatment of Employees policy, along with the President’s interpretations of employees’ protections under this policy.

PRESIDENT’S INTERPRETATION: *No changes.* I am accountable for making sure that all employees are informed, in writing, of the entirety of the board’s “Treatment of Employees” Administrative Limitations policy. I also must share with employees my interpretations, as shared with the Board in this monitoring report. Any changes to these policies by the board, or in my interpretations, are to be conveyed to employees within one month of the board’s policy actions or approval of the subsequent monitoring report.

REPORT: A copy of this “Treatment of Employees” policy, along with my interpretations of this policy, has been included in the Employee Handbook.

I report compliance.

POLICY PROVISION #3: The President will not retaliate or allow retaliation against an employee for non-disruptive, internal expression of dissent, or for reporting to administration or to the Board acts or omissions by personnel, administrators, or trustees that the employee believes, in good faith and based on credible information, constitutes a violation of state or federal law or a governing policy of the Board.

PRESIDENT’S INTERPRETATION: *No changes.* I interpret “retaliation” to include an adverse employment action such as discipline, firing, salary reduction, or job or shift reassignment. I interpret “expression of dissent” to mean any statement by an employee that indicates disagreement with a decision made by the administration or the Board of Trustees. I interpret “reporting . . . acts or omissions” to include both reporting through traditional channels (e.g., to a supervisor) and anonymous reports made through ACU’s whistleblower hotline or anonymous reporting form.

REPORT: ACU has adopted a whistleblower policy that expressly prohibits retaliation, harassment, or adverse employment consequences for any employees who make good faith reports regarding a violation of law or policy. In the last year, no employees have internally reported experiencing retaliation either as a result of a whistleblower report or as a result of an expression of dissent, as defined above.

I report compliance.

POLICY PROVISION #4: The President will not operate without appropriate policies addressing faculty tenure, promotion, and due process.

PRESIDENT’S INTERPRETATION: *No changes.* I interpret this to mean those appropriate policies addressing faculty tenure, promotion, and due process will be readily available to faculty and should be regularly reviewed and updated as appropriate. Due process procedures and timelines should be clearly identified.

REPORT: ACU maintains and makes readily available appropriate policies addressing faculty tenure, promotion, and due process. These policies are regularly reviewed and updated, and a current version of each policy is published in the ACU Faculty Handbook. Per ACU Faculty Handbook specification, the Tenure and Promotion Policy undergoes a comprehensive review of guidelines and procedures every five years. The University Tenure and Promotion Committee (UTPC) conducts the review and proposes recommendations that follow a prescribed faculty and administration approval process. The UTPC, Faculty Senate, and deans participated in the most recent review in Fall 2021

I report compliance.

POLICY PROVISION #5: The President will not operate without appropriate support and investment in faculty development.

PRESIDENT’S INTERPRETATION: *No changes.* I interpret “appropriate support and investment in faculty development” to mean a level of support that appropriately enables our faculty to maintain expertise in their respective disciplines and to experience continued growth as teachers and scholars.

REPORT: ACU provides multiple venues and funding sources in support of faculty development, including the Provost's Office, college dean's office and within the academic department. The Adams Center for Teaching and Learning partners with faculty and faculty groups, including the Faculty Enrichment Committee and the Faculty Senate, to address broad areas related to teaching, learning and technology. Multiple faculty development presentations and workshops on a number of important topics are held in the Adams Center each semester. All new faculty participate in an intensive three-day orientation, followed by two years of mentored professional development. Funding is distributed annually to each college in support of individual faculty development. The addition of a VP for Research provides additional support for faculty to apply for external grants and contracts. Faculty are also eligible to apply for competitive internal grants, and every six years, tenured faculty members may apply for an extended period of faculty development via the University faculty renewal leave plan. On the ACU Dallas Campus, a Professional Learning Community (PLC) provides training and collaborative learning for online faculty, and the Faculty Development Initiative (FDI) hosts monthly synchronous discussions on andragogy, online instruction, and quality student engagement. The Director of the PLC reports to the Dean of the College of Graduate and Professional Studies, and the FDI is driven by a committee formed from the ACU Dallas Faculty Council.

I report compliance.

POLICY PROVISION #6: The President will not allow employees to be unprepared to deal with reasonably foreseeable emergency situations.

PRESIDENT’S INTERPRETATION: *No changes.* I interpret this to mean that there must be plans in place to deal with reasonably foreseeable emergency situations and that employees must be adequately acquainted with such plans to be ready to implement them at a moment’s notice. My interpretation of reasonably foreseeable emergency situations includes on-site injuries, evacuation events (e.g., fire, flood, tornado), how to respond to intruders and/or weapons, and so forth.

REPORT: The Office of Institutional Compliance & Risk Management (ICRM), with the assistance of the City of Abilene’s Emergency Manager, designed, developed, and facilitated an active assailant tabletop emergency preparedness exercise in December of 2023 for both ACU’s Emergency Operations and Crisis Management Teams. An after-action report is currently being drafted.

The Office of ICRM also provided an annual update for all of the university's building-specific emergency action plans (EAPs). The EAPs are used to develop employee emergency preparedness and put into effect in case of fire, extreme weather, or some other form of attack or crisis event. EAPs are reviewed annually with respective Facility Emergency Managers (FEMs) and FEMs are provided annual training over their EAP. The Facility Emergency Manager is the person responsible for coordinating and training the response of people inside each university building. The annual EAP process demonstrates that staff is trained in, and aware of a planned response to threats to their safety as well as to the safety of students and visitors. In addition, two fire drills are successfully conducted in all of the residence halls each Spring and Fall semesters.

The Office of ICRM continues to work directly with the Chief of the ACU Police Department on emergency management initiatives. The ICRM director hosted FEMA's Homeland Security Exercise and Evaluation Program on campus in October of 2023. The two-day course equipped emergency management at ACU and a few dozen emergency managers from across Texas and Oklahoma with the knowledge, tools, and resources necessary to design, develop, and facilitate valuable emergency preparedness exercises for their respective communities. Additionally, the ICRM director visited and toured the emergency operations centers at Texas A&M while visiting with key emergency management stakeholders at the university and the Texas A&M Engineering and Extension Service's National Emergency Response and Recovery Training Center. These initiatives help the administration further develop its emergency management capabilities.

I report compliance.