The Student Conduct at K: What to Expect

The Student Conduct process at Kalamazoo College is an educational one. It is premised on using the best available information to lead to the best possible decisions.

An incident becomes a matter for the student conduct process as the result of a descriptive incident report (documentation) received from any member of the College community or, occasionally, the Kalamazoo Department of Public Safety. The most common sources of documentation are residential life staff and security staff members, although students and faculty and staff members also provide documentation.

Once received by the Dean of Students’ Office, the documentation is reviewed to determine whether it describes potential violations of the Student Code of Conduct. This is typically determined through an initial investigation designed to confirm the basic facts of a report. If the documentation includes potential violations, a letter of charge (charge letter) will be sent to the student describing the alleged violation(s), and date and time of the meeting to determine whether the Code was violated (hearing). Hearings are scheduled around class and lab times, and charge letters are sent to student campus mailboxes and/or to student K email addresses.

Charges included in a letter of charge are treated as “open questions.” In other words, a charge raises the question of whether the Code of Conduct was violated. The hearing is the process of answering the question. A student receiving a charge letter has full access to all information relevant to their case, and may review it at any time the Dean of Students’ Office is open. Students are encouraged to review the relevant information prior to their hearing.

A student may have an advisor present with them during a hearing. An advisor is a person from the College community (faculty, staff, administrator, or student) who provides support and advice to the student. Advisors are not advocates, nor do they speak during hearings except to raise procedural questions or to provide advice to the student. At the start of every hearing, procedural protections are reviewed with the student. These are measures taken to ensure fairness in the conduct process.

Students at risk of being suspended or expelled, due to the severity of the alleged misconduct and/or their conduct-related history, have the option of having their case resolved by the Student Conduct Panel, a trained group of community members (including students) who investigate and conduct hearings.

The hearing itself is investigatory. This means that the hearing officer or panel is charged with getting the best information possible about the incident in question. The student will be given the opportunity to comment on available written information, to provide their own account of the incident, and to call material witnesses (people with first-hand knowledge of what did or did not happen), if appropriate. Typically, hearings include lots of questions and discussion.

The standard for determining whether a violation(s) of the Code occurred is a preponderance of information. Put another way, after the information has been gathered, what more likely than not happened? Does more than 50% of the information lead to a conclusion about the charges? The preponderance of information will determine the decision (or finding). If a student is found responsible
for violating the Code, a decision about the appropriate sanction will be made. If a student has had prior violations of the Code, this will factor into the decision about sanction. The decision (and sanctions, if relevant) will be formally communicated in writing, via campus mailbox, although the student may be verbally informed of the decision at the end of the hearing.

Students have the opportunity to appeal decisions and/or sanctions. Appeals are conducted by an Appeal Board (including students) which reviews the written documents, including a statement of appeal provided by the student. Typically, students do not attend meetings of the Appeal Board and would only do so at the discretion of the Board. The Appeal Board has the authority to uphold or modify a conduct decision, including increasing or decreasing the original sanction(s). Information about the appeal deadline, along with a link for information, is included in the decision letter. The decision of the Appeal Board is final.

Advice for Students

- Remember that the process is educational and will be discussion-oriented. It is not a legal proceeding, and no decisions are made until after the hearing.
- Review incident reports and documentation prior to the hearing.
- Review the Code of Conduct and the policies cited in the specific charge(s). The Code can be found online at http://www.kzoo.edu/studev/stuconduct/stuConductNEW.htm.
- Come to the hearing.
- Bring a list of questions with you, and ask questions during the hearing.
- If the alleged violations of the Code are serious, consider working with an advisor. Encourage the advisor to contact the Dean of Students’ office to learn more about their role.
- Provide accurate, truthful information during the hearing.