MESSIAH COLLEGE

SEXUALITY AND RELATIONSHIPS POLICY

Messiah College’s foundational documents articulate the institution’s mission and identity as a Christian college. Because of that mission, we hold to beliefs and practices that are rooted in our understanding of scriptural teaching and the historic teaching of the Christian church, both broadly and of our founding denomination (Brethren in Christ) specifically. Therefore, we affirm Christian marriage to be the union of one man and one woman and that human sexuality should be understood within this framework. Because of this affirmation, premarital and extra marital intercourse and forms of same-sex sexual expression fall outside of God’s design for sexual expression. As we embrace these theological truths that are foundational to our understanding of the gift of sexuality, we also recognize that applying these truths to a specific set of behavioral expectations for our community is challenging, but necessary.

SEXUAL BEHAVIOR EXPECTATIONS

It is expected that married students will honor their marriage vows by remaining faithful to their spouse.

While it may be appropriate for committed male/female couples to hold hands and even kiss, care should be given to avoid more intimate behaviors such as heavy making out or oral sex. Any intimate sexual behavior that would put individuals on a path toward intercourse should be avoided, rather preserving that for marriage. In this vein, it is never appropriate to ‘hook up’ or practice promiscuous sex.

Students who experience same sex attraction or identify as gay or lesbian are expected to refrain from “same sex sexual expression” as it is embodied in culturally contextual practices (e.g., identifying as a couple or exhibiting expressions of physical intimacy).

Students are also expected to refrain from the using and/or distributing pornographic material. The College desires and is prepared to help students who are struggling with pornography. Students in need of help should contact the Engle Center for Counseling and Health or College Ministries for confidential assistance and support.

Students who are victims of sexual abuse are encouraged to seek help from a counselor or other appropriate person. If someone at the College has been
the abuser, the College would like your assistance in dealing appropriately with that person (see Messiah College Title IX website at www.messiah.edu/TitleIX)

Students who are finding it difficult to uphold the sexual behavior expectations or who have follow up questions concerning the sexuality and relationships policy and sexual behavior expectations are encouraged to speak with the Vice Provost/Dean of Students, College Pastor, Director of Counseling, Associate Dean of Students, Director of Residence Life, Residence Director or other educators within the Student Affairs Division.

**AMOROUS RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN STUDENTS AND EMPLOYEES**

Amorous relationships between employees and students are prohibited. An exception to this policy may be an existing amorous relationship which predates an employee’s or student’s affiliation with the College. When Human Resources is informed of a failure to abide by this policy, such failure will be cause for disciplinary action, which may include termination of employment.

**PREGNANCY**

When an unmarried student becomes pregnant, the College seeks to respond redemptively. Both the father and the mother of the child are to be treated equally and both are encouraged to remain in school. Proper medical care is considered essential, as are appropriate emotional and spiritual support. Students who are dealing with a pregnancy are encouraged to discuss the pregnancy with a counselor or other appropriate person. Responsible decisions for the care of all parties involved are encouraged and supported.

**SEXUAL MISCONDUCT & INTERPERSONAL VIOLENCE**

Messiah College does not tolerate sex discrimination, including harassment, stalking, sexual misconduct or sexual violence in any form. These behaviors are demeaning and interfere with the rights of others to pursue their education in an atmosphere that is safe and respectful. Overt acts of harassment and assault, any sexual contact without consent and any gender-based violence are strictly prohibited. In addition to upholding
these community values, Messiah College complies with Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972.

Examples of violent and unacceptable behavior include, but are not limited to:

- sexual contact without consent
- sexual contact while a person is incapacitated
- sexual exploitation of another person, such as posting sexual pictures on social media
- coercion for sexual contact
- stalking
- threatening or intimidating a person for sexual contact

Students who believe they have experienced nonconsensual sexual harassment, sexual assault or other forms of sexual violence are encouraged to report the incident immediately. Messiah College seeks to provide a consistent, caring, and timely response.

Information on our policy, protocol, reporting, confidentiality, student care, victim’s rights, on and off campus resources, and education and support can be found on the Messiah College Title IX website at www.messiah.edu/TitleIX.

STUDENT HARASSMENT POLICY AND PROCEDURE

As an expression of our Christian values, Messiah College is committed to creating an atmosphere of dignity and respect free from any harassment, whether sexual, racial or otherwise including harassment based upon ability/disability. It is also the College’s responsibility to uphold existing laws regarding a learning, living, and working environment free from harassment. Such harassment in any manner or form by anyone in the College community is expressly prohibited. This includes harassment of or by individuals not directly affiliated with the College, e.g. contractors, vendors, visitors. This policy also applies to harassment off-site or after normal business hours in College related settings. These include but are not limited to academic placement (practicums, internships, etc.) field trips, athletic events, conferences, and College related social events.

Furthermore, all employees and all students are responsible for maintaining an environment free of harassment. Individuals who believe that they have been subjected to or witnessed harassment should bring the matter to Residence Life Staff (RD, RA), Department of Safety, Vice
The College will take seriously any adverse action taken against an individual for reporting an incident of discrimination or harassment. Retaliation against an individual who complains of discriminatory harassment under this policy, is strictly prohibited and will be dealt with immediately. There will be no adverse action against any individual for reporting what he/she believes is an incident of harassment, or for participating in or cooperating with an investigation of an alleged incident. The College’s commitment to address complaints related to discrimination and/or harassment should not be viewed as license for individuals to engage in unfounded, frivolous or vindictive actions that are not made in “good faith.” Such behavior is a violation of the intent of this policy.

Forms of Harassment
Harassment generally takes one of two forms: "quid pro quo" harassment, in which the harasser makes sexual favors or tolerance of unwelcome behavior a condition of the victim’s success in some way; or "hostile environment" harassment, in which the overtly sexual nature or derogatory nature of conversations, pictures, humor and/or activities taking place in an academic work environment makes it difficult for students and employees to concentrate on their work/studies. Often, the hostile environment means that the victim feels uncomfortable, unwelcome, intimidated, or afraid to speak or choose freely. Unwanted, offensive and/or culturally insensitive conduct, language, or images may not be directed at a specific individual; nevertheless, they may create an atmosphere that is intimidating or offensive to an individual. It is important to note that harassment may take place in an academic, residential, or work setting.

Examples of behavior that may constitute either "quid pro quo" or "hostile environment" are listed below. The list below provides only some examples and does not illustrate all types of harassment.

- unnecessary brushes or touches
- offensive graffiti and obscene gestures
- display of offensive, demeaning images
- use of insults or slurs or language meant to stigmatize another based on sexual orientation, race, religion, ethnicity, gender, age, disability, marital status, amnesty, or status as a veteran
- making use of insulting or “fighting” words or non-verbal symbols.
In the context of harassment, insulting or “fighting” words or non-verbal symbols are those “which by their very utterance inflict injury or tend to incite to an immediate breach of the peace,” and which are commonly understood to convey direct and visceral hatred or contempt for human beings on the basis of their personal characteristics

- aggressive or hostile behavior or taunts
- cyber harassment: when digital media, including messaging, blogs, websites, emails, chat rooms, and cell phones are used to threaten and/or humiliate
- physical aggression or intimidation, including subtle contact such as pinching and patting
- sexual innuendos or persistent use of sexually suggestive or racially-charged language that another person finds offensive, demeaning, or otherwise inappropriate
- verbal harassment disguised as humor (e.g., crude or ethnic jokes)
- sexist or suggestive remarks about a person's clothing, body, or sexual activities
- any type of violence or sexual violence (see Messiah College Title IX website at www.messiah.edu/TitleIX)
- conditioning an educational or employment decision or benefit on submission to sexual conduct or tolerance of racially/ethnically motivated discrimination
- pranks based on disparaging remarks about one’s sexual orientation, race, religion, ethnicity, gender, age, disability, marital status, amnesty, or status as a veteran

**Intent and Effect**

Harassment is unwelcome behavior that is either intended to harass or has the effect of harassing by abusing the dignity of an individual or creating an intimidating, offensive, or coercive environment. **Behavior that was not intended to be harassing can be perceived as harassing.**

**Power**

Harassment most often occurs between people of unequal power: when such a power differential exists (e.g., such as a physically larger person over a smaller one, a supervisor over a subordinate employee, a faculty member over a student), the victim is not in a position to freely object, resist, or give fully free consent. However, harassment can also occur where no formal power differential exists, if the behavior is unwanted by, or offensive to, the victim.

**Educational Activities**

In order to cultivate a creative learning environment, Messiah College encourages free inquiry and expression within the bounds of our Christian...
commitments. Members of the community have the right to hold and defend a variety of viewpoints within an educational setting. For educational purposes required readings(s), educational activities (videos, projects, discussions, etc.), music, drama or art may include historical information that portrays groups or individuals in a pejorative fashion. Educators carry responsibility for directing these activities with care and sensitivity.

**Same-Sex Harassment**

Both males and females are protected by law from sexual harassment. Moreover, the law prohibits sexual harassment regardless of the sex of the harasser; i.e., even if the harasser and the person being harassed are members of the same sex.

**Grievance Resolution**

The College will respond promptly to reported incidents of harassment. Once made aware of a grievance, Messiah College is committed to addressing and establishing a resolution.

**HARASSMENT REPORTING**

Students are encouraged to begin the process by talking with an employee with whom they feel comfortable. This could include a Residence Director, Coach, Faculty Member, Assistant Director of Multicultural Student Programs, Assistant Director of International Student Programs, Director of Student Involvement and Leadership Programs, Vice President for Human Resources and Compliance, College Ministries, Work Study supervisor, Director of Safety, Associate Dean of Students and the Vice Provost/Dean of Students. Reports may also be submitted via the Harassment Incident Reporting Form found on the web at [www.messiah.edu/info/20851/harassment_policy](http://www.messiah.edu/info/20851/harassment_policy). The completed form should be submitted to the Associate Dean of Students. Students do have the option of remaining anonymous; however, that does minimize the investigation and the subsequent outcomes. Students should be aware that all employees, with the exception of pastors and counselors, who are notified about a possible harassment incident are expected to report it to the Associate Dean of Students.

Any form of harassment that includes sexual harassment, misconduct, assault or violence will be dealt with through the Title IX protocols found here: [www.messiah.edu/TitleIX](http://www.messiah.edu/TitleIX).