STUDENTS’ RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

STUDENT BILL OF RIGHTS

1. The right of students to be treated with dignity, courtesy, and fairness.

2. The right to miss, without penalty, class meetings held at hours other than their regularly scheduled times.

3. The right to consult with an assigned advisor for a reasonable time to complete the advisement necessary for the student's present semester as well as for future planning.

4. The right to transfer core curriculum within the University system.

5. The right to consult with faculty outside of classroom time during regularly scheduled office hours or by appointment.

6. The right to have access to campus facilities of which use is required to complete course assignments and objectives, i.e., computer lab, any academic building.

7. The right to receive at the beginning of each semester, for each course, a syllabus which outlines course objectives and requirements. If changes to the syllabi are made during the semester, students should be informed of these changes in writing.

8. The right to receive access to any and all of their own personal records.

9. The right to have access to standards of grading and evaluation.

10. The right to be informed of the grade appeals process.

In order for the goals and objectives of the University to be realized, students are guaranteed certain freedoms and rights. At the same time, students must accept commensurate responsibilities. The principles and procedures contained herein have been adopted by Georgia Southwestern State University in order to create and perpetuate an optimal environment within which students may exercise fully their freedom and rights as citizens of the University community, and be protected against infringements on such freedoms and rights by other members of the University community, or by members of the society at large.

Georgia Southwestern State University students and members of the academic community enjoy the same freedom of speech, right to peaceful assembly, right of petition and other rights accorded by the Constitution of the United States of America and the State of Georgia. As members of the academic community, they also are subject to the obligations that accrue to them by virtue of this membership.
Georgia Southwestern State University is a community of persons from diverse cultural, racial, ethnic, educational and social backgrounds. The University community is unique in that its members strive to learn from one another in an atmosphere of positive engagement and mutual respect. Georgia Southwestern State University holds each member of this community to explicit expectations concerning respect for and behavior toward each other.

The members of the University community are individually and collectively responsible for their behavior and are fully accountable for their actions. They must take individual responsibility for their own learning and awareness about racism, sexism, and other forms of injustice. Bigotry is unacceptable within this university community. No one has the right to denigrate another human being on the basis of race, sex, sexual orientation, age, handicap, national origin, or any other factor. By their conduct and expressions, all members of the University community are expected to comply with the University policy of non-discrimination. Verbal, gestural, or written abuse, threats, harassment, intimidation or other forms of violence against any member or groups of members of this community will not be tolerated.

In this context, abuse of alcohol or illegal substances will not be accepted as an excuse, reason or rationale for such abuse, harassment, intimidation or violence. Ignorance or “it was just a joke” also is not an excuse for such behavior. Such behavior will be subject to serious disciplinary measures. All who study, teach, live and work in the Georgia Southwestern State University community are here by choice and are committed to these principles that are an integral part of the mission and goals of Georgia Southwestern State University.

Georgia Southwestern State University is an equal opportunity, affirmative action, educational institution and as such does not discriminate in any matter concerning students, employees, or services to its community on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, veteran status, disability, age or national origin. The University is in compliance with all known federal, state and local regulations regarding discrimination. By their conduct or expressions, students are expected to comply with the University policy statement regarding non-discrimination.

In the event that a student has been convicted of a civil or criminal offense, the nature of which may present a clear and present danger of serious physical or mental harm to the student or to any other member of the University community or to university property, such student may be subjected to disciplinary action of a severe nature. Appeals to disciplinary action are outlined in other appropriate sections of this document. Disciplinary action may be taken against students if they behave in a manner that directly and adversely affects the interests of the University community. In such a case the student is liable to disciplinary action within the college community that is independent of formal charges which could lead to trial by legally constituted authorities outside the college community.

The right of the student to be secure against unreasonable searches by university officials shall not be denied. However, in the reasonable exercise of its supervisory duty and in carrying out the basic responsibility of the institution regarding discipline and the maintenance of an educational atmosphere, the University may, under the direction of those institutional employees authorized by the President, conduct inspection and reasonable searches in residence halls or other facilities operated by the University. Those university employees responsible shall authorize such
inspections and searches only when they have reasonable cause to believe that criminal law or university policies are being violated. Nothing in this section shall be held to prohibit entry into residence hall rooms for necessary janitorial maintenance, fire prevention and safety activities.

ACADEMIC RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF STUDENTS

Students have the right to learn and to inquire. They have a right to examine and discuss questions of interest, to take stands on issues of interest to them, and to support causes, by orderly means, which do not impede the collegial process of learning.

Recognized student organizations shall be allowed to invite and to hear any person of their own choosing for the purpose of hearing that person's ideas and opinions. However, the university president has final responsibility for campus events and activities and may affirm or cancel a speaker's registration. In cases of cancellation the president shall provide the organization with a written explanation for the decision.

Students shall have the right of protection against prejudiced academic evaluation. At the same time, students are responsible for maintaining the standards of academic performance established by the faculty for each course in which they are enrolled. Any student who believes that individual academic rights have been violated may seek redress by contacting the Dean of Academic Services in the Office of Academic Affairs for direction in filing a formal grievance.

Individual students and recognized campus organizations have the right to publish and distribute written materials provided the material is identified by the name of the student or organization, in accordance with university regulations, and follows the guidelines established by the publications committee. Student publications shall be guaranteed the rights inherent in the concept of "freedom of the press."

In all academic matters, students at Georgia Southwestern State University have a right to be governed by justified regulations. They shall be free to take reasoned exception to data and views offered in the classroom and to reserve judgment about matters of opinion, without fear of penalty. Students have a right to grades that represent the instructor's professional judgment of their performance in courses, a right to professional relationships with each instructor, and a right to protection against improper disclosure of personal information. Students also have a right to clearly stated information that would enable them to determine:

1. The general requirements for establishing and maintaining an acceptable academic standing;
2. Their own academic relationship with the University and any special conditions which apply;
3. The graduation requirements for any particular curriculum and major.

Students are responsible for classroom behavior that is conducive to the teaching-learning process for all concerned, and for meeting the requirements of a course of study according to standards of performance established by the faculty. Students who engage in any prohibited or unlawful acts that result in disruption of a class may be directed by the faculty member to leave the class for the remainder of the class period. Longer suspensions from a class, or dismissal or disciplinary grounds, shall be administered through the campus judicial proceedings. The Vice
President for Student Affairs, or his or her appointee, has the right to impose temporary sanctions pending hearings, as outlined in Appendix A. AA.

Students are expected to attend all classes. If an absence is necessary, the student is responsible for reporting this fact to the instructor. Each instructor will take whatever action he or she deems necessary. Faculty members are to have made their expectations concerning absences clear to the students enrolled in their classes, preferably in writing and within the first week of class.

STATEMENT ON ACADEMIC RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES from the American Council on Education
The university and the Board of Regents have also adopted the following Statement on Academic Rights and Responsibilities from the American Council on Education:

*Intellectual pluralism and academic freedom are central principles of American higher education. Recently, these issues have captured the attention of the media, political leaders and those in the academy. This is not the first time in the nation's history that these issues have become public controversies, but the current interest in intellectual discourse on campus suggests that the meaning of these terms, and the rights and responsibilities of individual members of the campus community, should be reiterated.*

*Without question, academic freedom and intellectual pluralism are complex topics with multiple dimensions that affect both students and faculty. Moreover, America's colleges and universities vary enormously, making it impossible to create a single definition or set of standards that will work equally well for all fields of academic study and all institutions in all circumstances. Individual campuses must give meaning and definition to these concepts within the context of disciplinary standards and institutional mission.*

*Despite the difficulty of prescribing a universal definition, we believe that there are some central, overarching principles that are widely shared within the academic community and deserve to be stated affirmatively as a basis for discussion of these issues on campuses and elsewhere.*

- *American higher education is characterized by a great diversity of institutions, each with its own mission and purpose. This diversity is a central feature and strength of our colleges and universities and must be valued and protected. The particular purpose of each school, as defined by the institution itself, should set the tone for the academic activities undertaken on campus.*

- *Colleges and universities should welcome intellectual pluralism and the free exchange of ideas. Such a commitment will inevitably encourage debate over complex and difficult issues about which individuals will disagree. Such discussions should be held in an environment characterized by openness, tolerance and civility.*

- *Academic decisions including grades should be based solely on considerations that are intellectually relevant to the subject matter under consideration. Neither students nor faculty should be disadvantaged or evaluated on the basis of their political opinions. Any*
member of the campus community who believes he or she has been treated unfairly on academic matters must have access to a clear institutional process by which his or her grievance can be addressed.

- The validity of academic ideas, theories, arguments and views should be measured against the intellectual standards of relevant academic and professional disciplines. Application of these intellectual standards does not mean that all ideas have equal merit. The responsibility to judge the merits of competing academic ideas rests with colleges and universities and is determined by reference to the standards of the academic profession as established by the community of scholars at each institution.

- Government's recognition and respect for the independence of colleges and universities is essential for academic and intellectual excellence. Because colleges and universities have great discretion and autonomy over academic affairs, they have a particular obligation to ensure that academic freedom is protected for all members of the campus community and that academic decisions are based on intellectual standards consistent with the mission of each institution.

Other university policies regarding academic rights can be found in this excerpt from the Faculty Handbook:

**ACADEMIC FREEDOM FOR FACULTY**

The teacher is entitled to full freedom in research and in the publication of the results, subject to the adequate performance of his or her other academic duties; but research for pecuniary return should be based upon an understanding with the authorities of the institution.

The teacher is entitled to freedom in the classroom in discussing the subject, but he or she should be careful not to introduce into the teachings controversial matter (which – that) has no relation to the subject.

The university teacher is a citizen, a member of a learned profession, and an officer of an educational institution. When speaking or writing as a citizen, he or she should be free from institutional censorship or discipline, but the university teacher's special position in the community imposes obligations. As a person of learning and an educational officer, he or she should remember that the public may judge the profession and the institution by his or her utterances. Hence, the university teacher should at all times be accurate, should exercise appropriate restraints, and should make every effort to indicate that he or she is not an institutional spokesperson.

A faculty member who believes he or she has been deprived of academic freedom by any member of the faculty or administration and has exhausted all informal means of resolving the difficulty may, in writing, file a grievance as provided in Section G, Article II of the Faculty Handbook. (University Statutes, Article III, Section 8)
Faculty members should assure unimpeded intellectual diversity in their classes and avoid even the appearance that students who disagree with their views will in any way be subject to prejudiced academic evaluation. Student complaints to this effect will be addressed through the Academic Grievance Policy as stated below. If warranted, the faculty member may be subject to disciplinary action administered according to due process through the Office of Academic Affairs.

**STUDENT EXPRESSION OF OPINION**
The right of students to freedom of speech and to peaceable assembly shall not be infringed by the University or by any of its officials or committees. Expression of opinion may go beyond verbalization and may include dramatization of their beliefs to catch the attention of the academic community. Students who avail themselves of their right to free expression shall be limited, however, by the general principle that they may not invade the rights of other citizens; nor may they by word or deed disrupt the normal functioning of the institution. Examples of such invasions and disruptions are as follows: attempts to exclude other members of the university community or guests of the University from free movement on campus or in buildings; destruction of property; public use of speech which, by current community standards, is considered to be obscene or is so patently abusive that it would fall into the category of "fighting words".

Non-members of the University community shall not be permitted to engage in activities that disrupt, obstruct, or in any way interfere with the pursuits of teaching, learning, campus activities, or any other university process.

The Board of Regents Policy referencing the freedom of expression by members of the University community is found in the Regent's Policy Manual and is located in the Office of Student Life.

**STUDENT GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE**
Georgia Southwestern State University is committed to prompt and fair resolution of student concerns. The Student Grievance Procedure is the vehicle for resolving issues through mediation. The purpose of this procedure is to resolve grievances pertaining to academic issues or other issues resulting from actions of faculty, staff and/or administrative members. The informal and formal procedures set forth in this document described below have been formulated to insure fairness and consistency in the University’s relations with its students. This procedure is intended to provide guidance and understanding of student rights and responsibilities in the grievance procedure. The burden of proof rests with the complainant.

A student who feels he/she has a grievance should first seek to resolve the complaints informally. The effort must include discussion with the specific faculty or administrative member involved (unless the grievance involves sexual harassment, in which case the student by bypass this step). A demonstration of good faith by all parties in attempting to resolve complaints should be paramount.

If the informal procedures fail to resolve the issue, the student may file a formal grievance. A student may discontinue the grievance process anytime during the informal or formal grievance
procedure. A student may resume the grievance procedure again as long as it falls within the specified deadlines. Procedures set forth in this document relate to two types of grievances: 1) academic grievances, and 2) other student grievances. See Appendix I for Academic Grievance Procedures and Appendix K for Non-Academic Grievances.

CHILDREN ON CAMPUS
Students should not bring children to campus on a regular or prolonged basis. While the University encourages students and their families to take advantage of opportunities on campus, the University cannot insure the safety of children. Children must not be in classrooms, laboratories, instructional support areas or student life areas except in the context of programs conducted specifically for children. The University campus is not an appropriate environment for children, especially when there is no supervision.

POSTING OF INFORMATION
No signs or flyers are to be posted on building exteriors, glass or painted surfaces, wood or plaster walls, fixtures, or in any place or manner that defaces the surface used or makes the removal of the material difficult.

Notices may not be posted on stair rails or doors which block or obstruct one's view. Notices must carry the name of the organization or individual responsible for the removal of the notices. The University will allow no decorations within the circular drive in front of the Wheatley Administration Building or in front of the Education Center.

Signs must be properly placed and should not impair the safety of traffic or pedestrians.

Organizations and/or individuals should be careful not to harm any campus property (including trees, flower beds, sprinkler systems, etc.) when placing signs. Should rain, wind, or other forces render a sign unreadable, or cause disrepair, the sign should be removed by the organization/individual that placed it within 24 hours following the damage.

Signs/Letters should be placed no more than seven days in advance of the advertised event and removed by the first weekday after the event has taken place. Signs/Letters not removed by the designated time may be subject to removal by physical plant or another member of the University staff. Offending individuals or organizations may be assessed a $25.00 fine per incident.

The University’s input regarding the relocation and timing of posting advertisements may be required in certain circumstances.

The University reserves the right to remove, or to request the removal of, any signs/posters/advertisements.

FINANCIAL RESPONSIBILITY OF STUDENTS
As members of the University community, students are expected to act responsibly with regard to their financial obligations. Students that are delinquent in their financial obligations to the
University, or to any other facet of the University community, shall not be allowed to register for
the next semester, to reside in the university residence alls, to transfer their credits to another
school, or to graduate from the university. Fulfillment
of financial obligations shall restore students to their prior status as members of the university
community, except that they shall suffer whatever academic losses that naturally result from their
prior financial irresponsibility.

**STUDENT MEDIA**
Student media and the student press are valuable aids in establishing and maintaining an
atmosphere of free and responsible discussion and of intellectual exploration on the campus.
They are a means of bringing student concerns to the attention of the faculty and the institutional
authorities, and of formulating student opinion on various issues on the campus and in the world
at large.

The editorial freedom of student editors, managers, and directors entails corollary responsibilities
to be governed by the canons of responsible journalism, such as the avoidance of libel,
indecency, undocumented allegations, attacks on personal integrity and the techniques of
harassment and innuendo.
All university-published, broadcast and financed student media should explicitly state on the
editorial page that the opinions expressed are not necessarily those of the university or the
student body.

**STUDENT NEWSPAPER AND GSW-TV16**
The Sou'Wester and GSW-TV16 (Hurricane Watch) are the official Georgia Southwestern State
University student newspaper and television station, respectively. The tone and content of the
media are essentially determined by the student editorial and/or production staff, with the
cooperation of the faculty advisors. Hurricane Watch does operate all on-air programming in
compliance with its “Code of Conduct for Programming”. Faculty, students, and administrators
may provide advice and criticism but shall not exercise powers of veto or censorship over news
or editorial content,
except as indicated below. Should a member of the University community be aggrieved by
material appearing in The Sou'Wester or on GSW-TV16, such person may file with the Vice
President for Student Affairs a formal complaint indicating that the publication contains material
which is obscene, immoral, indecent, lacking in good taste, or seriously detrimental to the
University or to a member of the University community. The Vice President for Student Affairs
may use his or her discretion in judging the merits of the complaint. Upon finding cause to
believe that the complaint should be investigated further, he or she shall refer the matter to the
Faculty Subcommittee on Student Publications. The subcommittee shall hold a hearing and
recommend to the Vice President for Student Affairs (1) that the aggrieved member does not
have a complaint of a serious enough nature that disciplinary action is warranted, or (2) that the
aggrieved member does have a complaint of a serious enough nature and one or more of the
following actions should be taken:

1. Suspension of publication or broadcast
2. Removal of the offending staff member(s)
3. Prohibition of further contributions by the offender(s)
4. An admonishment or reprimand
5. Printed or broadcast retractions or apologies.

If the aggrieved member of the University community is a faculty member and is dissatisfied with the Vice President for Student Affairs’ decision, the Vice President for Student Affairs may appoint an ad hoc committee to act in an advisory capacity.

OTHER PUBLICATIONS
Students shall have maximum freedom to express opinions and communicate ideas by writing, publishing, and distributing materials. However, students involved with publications other than those authorized by the university shall be bound by the same rules of good taste cited for official university publications (and by other conditions as may be defined in disciplinary recommendations of the Faculty Subcommittee on Student Publications, or of some other appropriate college officials). The university shall not authorize such student publications, but the publications shall be properly registered with the Division of Student Affairs-Director of Campus Life. The responsibility for editorial or other content, finance, and distribution shall lie with the sponsoring individual, agency, group or organization. The name of the sponsoring individual, agency, group or organization shall be stated in each issue of the publication. Publications not in compliance with these specifications shall not be permitted to utilize any equipment or distribution facilities of the University.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF STUDENT EDITORS, DIRECTORS, & CONTRIBUTORS TO STUDENT MEDIA

A. Editors/Directors shall strive to meet the standards of good journalism: sincerity, truthfulness, and accuracy are fundamental. News shall be printed/broadcast in a factual and unbiased manner.

B. Student media shall have the freedom to aim constructive criticism at organizations, procedures, and policies, but must refrain from criticizing individuals. The possible effect of any published/broadcast matter shall be carefully considered.

C. Student media shall refrain from using obscene language, pornographic pictures, or offensive slang.

D. Student media shall serve the interests of all students, not just isolated groups within the University community. Editors/Directors shall perform editorial duties with due concern for the ultimate welfare of all students and the institution.

REVISIONS TO RIGHTS & RESPONSIBILITIES & CONDUCT CODE
If circumstances arise which warrant amendments or revisions to this document, such changes shall be made according to the following procedure:

REVISIONS TO RIGHTS & RESPONSIBILITIES & CONDUCT CODE
If circumstances arise which warrant amendments or revisions to this document, such changes shall be made according to the following procedure:

A. In decisions concerning amendments and revisions of this document [Weathervane], such proposals may be directed to the Faculty Committee on Student Affairs, for consideration and adoption by majority vote of the Committee. Approval and final authority rests with the Vice President for Student Affairs and the President of Georgia Southwestern State University.

B. The Faculty Committee on Student Affairs shall consider amendments and revisions proposed by its own members, The Student Government, the faculty by formal motion adopted at a faculty meeting, the President of Georgia Southwestern State University, The Vice President of Student Affairs, or any group of students who may petition independently, in writing, provided the group equals in number twenty percent or more of the Fall Semester student enrollment for that year.