

# THE AMERICAN COLLEGE OF FINANCIAL SERVICES



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*Graduate School*

## **Student Handbook**

October 2014

The American College reserves the right to make changes to the Graduate Student Handbook at any time. All graduate students of the American College are responsible for knowing, understanding, and abiding by the terms of this Graduate Student Handbook.

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## 1. Introduction

The rules and regulations appearing in this Graduate Student Handbook have been approved under the authority of The American College Board of Trustees and, therefore, constitute official College policy. All graduate students of The American College are responsible for knowing, understanding, and abiding by the terms of this Handbook.

The regulations presented in this document outline both student rights and student responsibilities. The Student Handbook is a dynamic document. Changes are made as required in the Handbook to strengthen College procedures and students should be aware of changes that affect them. The American College reserves the right to make changes to the Graduate Student Handbook at any time.

Questions related to this handbook may be directed to The Irwin Graduate School of The American College, 270 S. Bryn Mawr Avenue, Bryn Mawr, PA 19010 or e-mail [graduateschool@theamericancollege.edu](mailto:graduateschool@theamericancollege.edu) or by calling 610-526-1383.

## 2. Mission and Vision

The mission of The American College is to raise the level of professionalism of its students and, by extension, the financial services industry as a whole. By imparting expert knowledge – and by emphasizing that such knowledge must be regularly and ethically applied – The College seeks to strengthen not only its students' professionalism, but also the financial security of individuals, families, businesses, and the societies they serve.

The American College's vision is:

As the leader in financial services education, we will partner with companies and professionals to help them realize their full potential, creating relevant learning opportunities that:

- Raise expectations and standards
- Build sustainable advantages for clients
- Influence the industry and general public for the common good

## 3. College Wide Policies

### 3.1 Students with Disabilities

The College is committed to providing equal educational opportunities to all students, including students with disabilities. The College does not discriminate against students with disabilities and provides reasonable accommodation to a student's known disability in order to afford that student an equal opportunity to participate in College programs. Please let us know of special accommodations needed with sufficient advance notice.

**Responsible College Office:** All students with disabilities are served by the Professional Education Department (PED). PED is available to assist faculty, academic support staff, and students in reaching a joint determination of academic accommodations, where needed.

#### **Accommodation Procedure:**

#### **The Role of Students**

All students with disabilities who seek an accommodation at The College have the responsibility to identify themselves to PED. Identification may take place at matriculation/admissions or at any time during the student's course of study.

All students with disabilities have the responsibility to provide documentation at their own expense in order to be considered for accommodations. PED may request additional documentation from students if the determination of a disability is inconclusive, or if the documentation does not support the accommodations requested.

The request for accommodation and supporting documentation must be provided within 45 days from the time that the course of study is to be implemented.

### **Concerns and Complaints**

The College Dean is responsible for overseeing The College's implementation of its equal opportunity and nondiscrimination obligations arising under federal, state, and local laws. Any concerns or complaints relating to perceived violations should be addressed to this office.

### **3.2 Examination Special Accommodations**

The College can provide additional examination time if English is the student's second language. Requests must be made in writing to the Examination Systems Department (Exams@TheAmericanCollege.edu) at least two weeks prior to the desired appointment. Special accommodations also can be made if the student has a disability and/or a learning impairment. For students with disabilities, requests must be made in writing to Examinations Systems at least one month prior to the desired appointment. The student will be required to provide medical documentation of the disability. Paper-and-pencil exams are available only under special circumstances by writing to Examination Systems at least two months before the desired appointment. A fee may be charged for this service

### **3.3 The Vane B. Lucas Memorial Library**

The Vane B. Lucas Memorial Library features one of the most robust, online collections of financial services information in the country. The digital collection was developed to support students across all College programs, and each resource is selected to provide the most current and authoritative information on any particular topic.

**Digital Resources** --In addition to the comprehensive collection of The American College's study materials, the databases link students directly to the most current financial services news and data from the world's top publications.

Databases are accessible via the "Library" tab in Blackboard or at [library.theamericancollege.edu](http://library.theamericancollege.edu). Database resources are available to current students only and require a Blackboard username and password to access.

**Interlibrary Loan**--In the event that a resource is not available in the library's collections, students are encouraged to contact a librarian for assistance in borrowing that item from another library or institution. Interlibrary loan requests are generally fulfilled within 3-5 business days. If the student needs a resource sooner, or requests a resource that is not part of another library's collection, the student is expected to acquire the resource through his or her own means, without reimbursement.

**Research and Reference Help**--Library staff are available for assistance by appointment, 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Eastern Time, Monday through Friday. Students are encouraged to request appointments by email at [library@theamericancollege.edu](mailto:library@theamericancollege.edu)

### **3.4 Online Study Tools**

All students of The American College are given access to The American College's Online Learning Center (OLC), Blackboard. Varying levels of access are granted and this is dependent upon the type of

course the student has been enrolled in. The course delivery format, explained previously, determines the types of online study tools available to each student. A number of our Live Webinar courses, and a variety of our Self-Study courses, utilize the OLC as a mandatory portion of the curriculum. Many of our courses use Blackboard to give convenient access to supplementary resources intended to engage the student and enrich their learning experience.

Blackboard study tools may include:

- Access to Reading Material. All courses give students access to PDF versions of their textbook and/or study guide to quickly access them when needed.
- On-Demand Multimedia. Video and/or audio lectures are available for streaming or download for a number of College courses to provide students with an additional method of learning.
- Peer-to-Peer Learning. Ask questions of fellow students or professors in our discussion forums.
- Timely Announcements. Announcements from professors giving important information regarding course content or assignment submission.
- Practice Exams. Simulate the test day experience with our sample exams. Test gained knowledge with our multiple choice and true/false quizzes.
- Virtual Classroom Experience. The live classroom experience but with the convenience of being online. Interact with professors and fellow students in our live online classroom. The experience ranges from lectures to interactive question and answer to collaborative group work.
- Interactive Online Modules. In select courses, course content is delivered in an interactive, asynchronous method, using a variety of media, including video, audio, graphics, animations and slides.
- Mobile Learning. In select courses, students are able to download the e-Book version of their textbook and/or study guide and video/audio lectures to their Apple®, Android®, and Kindle® devices.

To access Blackboard, visit <http://blackboard.theamericancollege.edu>. Login with the information sent to you in the Blackboard login email.

### 3.5 Academic Integrity

#### 3.5.1 Definition of academic integrity and what constitutes an academic integrity violation

Academic integrity means that students must demonstrate honest scholarship in all academic activities associated with The American College. All academic work submitted for grading, assessment of student proficiency, or consideration as original research must be the result of an individual's own efforts. Academic dishonesty generally falls into one of three categories: cheating, plagiarism, or falsification of information.

**Cheating.** When taking examinations, students may not use their textbook, course notes, or any other materials, or receive help from any outside source, unless specifically instructed otherwise by their course professor. Only a professor formally associated with The American College can provide such instructions; neither proctors nor course moderators are permitted to change The College's exam expectations for students. Students may not exchange information of any kind during an exam. Copying answers from a classmate and submitting them as one's own work is a clear academic integrity violation, whether on an exam or any other assessment of student proficiency.

All examinations administered at Pearson VUE test centers or through the college's proctored examination system (live or online) are provided to students strictly for the purpose of assessment of their mastery of course content. Any exams copied or printed from these sources in any manner are considered by The College to be stolen proprietary and confidential material. Possession of The

College's proprietary, confidential exams will be viewed as evidence of cheating or intent to assist others to cheat.

**Plagiarism.** Plagiarism is representing another person's work as your own. Examples of plagiarism include: Submitting someone else's paper, project, presentation, or other piece of work as your own;

1. Submitting a paper or other assignment that you have not produced on your own;
2. Quoting or paraphrasing someone else's work without giving credit to the original author;
3. Presenting another person's ideas as if they were your own.

**Falsification of information.** Examples of falsification of information include but are not limited to fabricating references, statistics, or quotations in a paper or citing incorrect references.

### **3.5.2 Process for responding to potential academic integrity violations**

**Who addresses complaints.** When The College receives or discovers information about a potential academic integrity violation, the information will be forwarded to the Associate Dean if the issue relates to plagiarism or falsification of information. The Associate Dean will provide the information to a faculty committee for review. Based on its review and investigation, the committee will make a recommendation concerning the validity of the claim. The Associate Dean will make a preliminary decision based on the available evidence and the committee's recommendation.

If the issue relates to cheating on an EOD®, the information will be forwarded to the Associate Vice President (AVP) for Assessment and Examinations. The AVP will provide the information to the Director of Examinations for review by members of the Examinations Department. Based on the department's review and investigation, the Director of Examinations will make a recommendation concerning the validity of the information and whether or not a cheating episode occurred. The AVP will make a preliminary decision based on the available evidence and the Director's recommendation.

Evidence for any claim of academic misconduct may be based on statistical anomalies or other data available and may also include hearsay as well as statements made by involved parties or witnesses. If the data available is conclusive, further investigation may or may not be conducted prior to The College's response outlined below. All student information will be treated confidentially on a need-to-know basis during the review and any subsequent investigation of alleged academic integrity violations.

**Initial notification of an alleged violation.** If initial review and any further investigation conducted substantiate that a violation is likely to have occurred, the Associate Dean or AVP will notify the student(s) (and others, if appropriate, such as an exam proctor or class moderator) that a complaint of academic misconduct has been made. The initial notification will inform the student and other involved parties, if any, of the nature and basis of the allegation and his or her right to respond within 30 days. The student (and others, if appropriate) will be offered the opportunity to provide additional information and will be informed of potential disciplinary actions that may result if The College makes a determination of academic misconduct. The Dean will be copied on letters of notification of an alleged academic integrity violation.

**Determination of a violation.** After 30 days, the faculty committee or Examinations Department will review any additional information received and make a second recommendation to the Associate Dean or AVP, as appropriate. The Associate Dean or AVP will then make a determination on the matter and notify the student (and others, if appropriate) of The College's decision. Information about the violation and The College's decision will become part of the student's academic record.

**Appeals process.** Students and other directly-involved parties (such as a proctor or moderator) have the right to appeal The College’s decision for their own situation only. An appeal of an academic misconduct decision made by the Associate Dean or AVP for Assessment and Examinations must be made in writing to the Dean. Reconsideration by appeal of an academic misconduct decision is subject to the following guidelines and limitations:

- Appeals must be submitted in writing to the Dean within 30 days of the College’s academic misconduct decision.
- Grounds for appeal may include review of the process followed and/or the evidence considered in the original determination, but the appeals process may not involve evidence previously known to the student but not submitted during the initial 30-day response period.
- The appeals process does not allow attorney or counsel involvement, nor do any established rules of evidence apply.
- Upon appeal, a decision may be overturned for gross misconduct of process or a finding of unfair consideration of the available evidence.
- A determination upon appeal is final; no further appeals will be considered.

**Disciplinary action.** The Dean, in his sole discretion or in consultation with a faculty committee, as appropriate, will determine whether and under what circumstances the parties involved may continue their academic relationship with The College. The Dean’s decision of disciplinary action is final.

**Notifications required by law, guideline, or regulation.** The American College may be required to report a change of grade to a state insurance department when CE is involved, to report a violation to FINRA or another regulatory body, or to make other such reports as required by law, guideline, or regulation by any relevant regulatory body. The Dean will make any such compliance-related determination and that decision will be final.

**Coordination with other policies.** Actions taken under the Academic Integrity Policy will not preclude a review of any alleged ethics violation under The College’s Code of Ethics and the possibility for the removal of an existing designation, if any, held by the student or by any other involved party.

**Notification of the Board of Trustees.** As a matter of routine reporting, the Educational Policy Committee of the Board of Trustees will be notified semi-annually of academic integrity violations. The College Dean is responsible for overseeing The College’s implementation of its equal opportunity and nondiscrimination obligations arising under federal, state, and local laws. Any concerns or complaints relating to perceived violations should be addressed to this office.

### **3.6 The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)**

#### **Purpose:**

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (“FERPA” - 20 U.S.C. § 1232g; 34 CFR Part 99) is a Federal law that protects the privacy of student education records. The law applies to students who are at least eighteen years old or who attend or attended a post-secondary institution, even if they have not reached the age of eighteen.

#### **Policy:**

It is the policy of The American College to comply with all provisions of FERPA and all other applicable federal statutes.

#### **FERPA Summary:**

To view the definitive set of regulations and for other helpful information, please visit:  
<http://www.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/fpco/ferpa/index.html>

### **Contact Information:**

In the event of questions or concerns regarding this policy or other matters pertaining to FERPA, a student can contact The College Registrar at 610-526-1357 or email at [Registrar@theamericancollege.edu](mailto:Registrar@theamericancollege.edu).

### **3.7 Nondiscrimination and Privacy**

The American College does not discriminate on the basis of race, religion, sex, handicap, or national and ethnic origin in its admission policies, educational programs, and activities or employment policies. It respects the right to privacy of its students and are committed to safeguarding student personal information. For more information, see [TheAmericanCollege.edu](http://TheAmericanCollege.edu).

### **3.8 Campus Security Policy and Procedures**

The American College is committed to creating and maintaining a safe and positive environment for all of our students, faculty, employees and visitors to the campus. Individuals are urged to report all incidents they believe potentially endanger the safety or security of any persons on campus. Information about crimes that occur on campus to an individual or to personal property will be reported to the Radnor Township Police. Crimes reported to the Radnor Township Police will be included in the College's annual crime statistics and aid in providing timely notice to the campus community, as appropriate. Incident Reporting Procedure Faculty and employees should report campus safety or security incidents to the head of their department or a member of the Human Resources staff. Students or others visiting the college should report incidents to the College receptionist (610-526-1000), a faculty member, an area supervisor, or the Human Resources office. College faculty or staff who are advised of an incident must forward the report to the College Security Officer, Steve Kernaghan. What to do if you experience or witness a crime or other safety or security incident while on campus:

1. If you observe a crime or the threat of a crime that has potential for physical harm, notify the Radnor Township Police immediately by calling 911 (emergency) or 610-688-0503 (nonemergency).
2. If you report an incident to the Radnor Township Police, you must also report the incident to the Office of the President and/or Office of Human Resources.
3. For safety or security incidents you feel do not require immediate police involvement, contact the appropriate College staff member listed in the introductory paragraph of this section.
4. Be prepared to answer all questions concerning the incident and have available as much information as you can provide (e.g. date/time and description of the incident, description of anyone involved, description of vehicle or license plate number, if applicable, any other potential witness to the incident, etc.) Any campus complaint reported to the Radnor Township Police or any complaint reported to the College Security Officer, which results in an investigation, will be recorded in the College incident report log. Upon resolution of a reported incident, the reporting party will be informed of the resolution. If at that point the reporting party believes the Uniform Crime Reporting Act is being violated, he/she may file a complaint with the Office of the Attorney General and will be provided with the address of the Attorney General's Office.

### **2013 College and Campus Security Information**

- 1) Enrollment: 26,837 undergraduate students; 374 graduate students

- 2) Number of students residing on campus: 0
- 3) Number of employees: 186 full-time, 6 part-time (as of December 31, 2013)
- 4) Office responsible for campus security: Operations Division
- 5) Campus Security Officer: Steve Kernaghan
- 6) Enforcement authority of the campus security personnel: The College Security Officer and senior leadership are authorized to ask persons for identification and to determine whether individuals have a legitimate reason to be on college property. The authority to make arrests on campus or otherwise respond to alleged criminal actions rests with the Radnor Township Police. Senior leadership is trained in proper reporting procedures along with other safety and security responsibilities. Prompt reporting will assure timely warning notices on campus and timely disclosure of crime statistics, as appropriate.
- 7) Incident reporting by The College: The College reports criminal incidents to the Radnor Township Police whenever such incidents occur. The College reports annual crime statistics to the Pennsylvania State Police as required by the Pennsylvania Uniform Crime Reporting Act of 2004.
- 8) Access to College facilities: College staff and students have access to the College's campus facilities via the main entrance from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Monday through Friday. The College staff has keycard access to other entries and at other times based on need, as determined by the Office of Human Resources.
- 9) Possession, use, and sale of alcoholic beverages: The College is committed to providing a safe, quality work environment conducive to both optimum productivity and employee satisfaction. Abuse of drugs and/or alcohol is a serious problem that can jeopardize employees' health, work output, public safety, and security in the workplace. Such abuse adversely affects productivity and morale, and increases business costs. In an effort to promote employee welfare and business productivity, The College requires employees to report to work in a fit condition for duty and free from the influence of drugs and/or alcohol. The illegal sale, purchase, transfer, use, possession, or being under the influence of drugs, narcotics, or controlled substances while engaged in College activities or on College property is strictly prohibited. Employees are also prohibited from using or being under the influence of alcohol while on College property; exceptions to this policy (e.g., social functions) must be approved by the President and the Vice President of Human Resources. Any employee who is taking prescribed medicine that may in any way affect his or her ability to work or to work safely must report that fact immediately to his or her supervisor and to the Vice President of Human Resources. The College reserves the right to temporarily reassign, change the work assignment, or restrict work of such an employee during the period he or she is taking the medication. If The College believes an employee is under the influence of drugs and/or alcohol and may cause harm to his/her self or another employee, The College reserves the right to refer the employee to outside counseling. Drug and/or alcohol abuse will result in disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment. The College reserves the right to order third party drug and alcohol testing in cases of reasonable suspicion. In addition, there are certain positions that may require a mandatory drug screening as a condition of employment. Any drugs, narcotics, or controlled substances discovered or confiscated by The College will be turned over to local law enforcement authorities. Medical and Employee Assistance plans, available as an employee benefit, contain provisions for treating drug and alcohol related health problems. Possession, use, or sale of illegal drugs is prohibited by law and enforceable by the Radnor Township Police.

- 10) Possession and/or use of weapons by campus security personnel and others: The possession and use of firearms by anyone other than the Radnor Township Police is prohibited. All instances of possession and/or use of a firearm (including violation of policy, accidental discharge, as well as any authorized discharge) shall be reported immediately to the College Security Officer. All instances of firearm possession and/or use will be investigated.
- 11) Students or employees with criminal records: Current College employees convicted of a violation of a law or ordinance off-campus, whose violation also adversely affects The College's pursuit of its educational objectives, will be subject to judicial review by the Office of Human Resources. Students or employees involved in a crime on-campus are subject to arrest and prosecution, and are subject to judicial review by the Registrar's Office and/or Office of Human Resources respectively. The College's Alcohol and Drug Abuse Policy will be invoked in situations where a current employee is convicted of a drug related crime. A student who indicates a felony conviction on an admission application to The College is referred to the Registrar's Office, which will evaluate the nature and severity of the offense. The evaluation will determine the applicant's fitness for inclusion in the college community prior to an admission decision. Any person being considered for hire, who indicated on an employment application a conviction for a felony offense, will be reviewed by the Office of Human Resources prior to an employment decision as to the relevancy of the criminal record to the applicant's desired position. Employment decisions are based upon the overall records of the applicant and the criminal record, if relevant to the job in question.
- 12) Security considerations related to campus maintenance: The College Security Officer or designee conducts a survey of outdoor lighting throughout the year and reports any problems directly to the Operations Office. Twice a year, the main campus building is surveyed for hazardous conditions, with problems reported to the Operations Office. Monthly fire extinguisher inspections are performed in all buildings owned or leased by The College. In addition, the College Security Officer routinely reports all hazardous, unsafe and potentially unsafe conditions found to exist on campus.

### **3.9 Student Policy and Information on Sexual Misconduct and Harassment**

It is the policy of The American College, in working to establish an environment of respect that is conducive to learning for every student, to view sexual misconduct and sexual harassment of students as unacceptable conduct that will not be tolerated. This policy includes all forms of sexual misconduct, sexual harassment, sexual assault, relationship violence, and sexual violence by employees, faculty, students, or third parties while engaged in College activities.

Any violation of trust or any form of sexual intimidation or exploitation jeopardizes the mission of the institution and threatens the educational experience and well-being of students. This institution prohibits all forms of sexual harassment or sexual misconduct by its students and employees. The American College will take appropriate action, as deemed necessary, to prevent and address all such conduct.

The following procedures and guidelines are designed to inform students relative to: (1) the definition of sexual misconduct and sexual harassment and (2) procedures for filing and resolving related complaints. In addition, we provide prevention and educational information to both online and residency students.

Sexual misconduct or harassment of or by students or College employees is unacceptable behavior whether it occurs in an online forum, at a class in an offsite location, or while a student attends a residency on campus at The American College. Any act, comment, or behavior that is of a sexually

suggestive or harassing nature and that in any way interferes with a student's performance or creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive environment is strictly prohibited by The American College. Students have the responsibility to bring any such incident (via written or verbal report) to the attention of the appropriate administrator so that the matter can be addressed as quickly as possible. Students who wish to file a report should contact the Vice President of Academic Affairs and Dean or Associate Dean (see below for contact information).

There are two categories of sexual harassment:

1. Sexual harassment in which a person in authority (for instance, a faculty member or program administrator) makes sexual demands upon a student in exchange for favors or preferential treatment, and
2. Sexual harassment in which a hostile or uncomfortable environment is created by unwelcome or offensive conduct, language, or interaction of a sexual nature.

Sexual harassment does not require physical contact and could take place in an online environment. A hostile environment may be created by, but not limited to, the following unwelcome and offensive behaviors: repeated and unwelcome sexual advances, comments, physical or electronic contact, jokes, flirtations or any abuse of a sexual nature.

### **Hostile Environment**

A hostile environment is present when unwelcome and demeaning behavior or conduct substantially interferes with a student's learning or performance or creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive situation. For example, the harasser may continually remark on someone's body or clothing, post sexually explicit photos, send texts or online messages with sexual or suggestive content, or make sexually oriented comments. A student, College employee, or third party can create a hostile environment.

### **Confidentiality and Reporting**

A student who believes he or she has been a victim of sexual misconduct or sexual harassment is urged to report it immediately to either of the following:

Vice President of Academic Affairs and Dean, Dr. Walt Woerheide,  
610-526-1398  
Associate Dean of Academics, Dr. Melisande McCrae, 610-526-1316

We are concerned about both safety and the importance of confidentiality. Staff members may be required to share information provided related to a complaint with a limited group of College officials and/or law enforcement authorities when necessary. In these cases, the information will be shared with as few people as possible and every effort will be made to maintain confidentiality.

When reporting an incident, it is helpful to provide as much information as possible, including the following:

1. A description of the event(s)
2. The number of occurrences, with dates and places
3. The names of any witnesses
4. Any documents or other exhibits, if appropriate

Students may receive guidance, advice, support and/or advocacy from College staff as needed and requested.

### **Sexual Misconduct Involving Faculty Toward Students**

Sexual misconduct complaints involving faculty towards students will be handled in collaboration with Human Resources. The Vice President of Human Resources will serve as the lead investigator. Both the complainant and the accused will be informed in writing of the outcome of the proceedings.

### **Retaliation**

No student shall be subject to any form of reprisal or retaliation for having made a good faith complaint under The College's Student Policy on Sexual Misconduct and Harassment or for participating in an investigation of such complaint. Appropriate steps will be taken to protect students from retaliation.

### **Additional Resources**

Students may also refer to The College's "Student Policy on Online Forms of Sexual Misconduct and Harassment" and "Understanding The College's Sexual Harassment Policy in the Context of Live Instruction" for additional information.

### **Amendments to Policy and/or Procedures**

The College reserves the right to modify and/or amend any or all of the policy outlined herein at any time, in its sole discretion. In the event The College determines that circumstances warrant modification/amendment of any part of this policy, timely notice of same shall be made available to relevant and affected parties.

### **Dissemination of Policy**

Copies of the policy will be available both through our online learning platform and as part of the materials provided to our residency students.

#### **3.9.1 Online Forms of Sexual Misconduct and Harassment**

##### **Student Policy on Online Forms of Sexual Misconduct and Harassment**

It is the policy of The American College, in working to establish an environment of respect that is conducive to learning for every student, to view sexual misconduct and sexual harassment of students as unacceptable conduct that will not be tolerated. This policy includes all forms of sexual harassment or misconduct resulting from inappropriate online behavior.

##### **The following online behaviors are not permitted at The American College:**

1. **Use of Sexual or Violent Language or Images** - includes either overt or suggestive language and/or links to websites containing such language or images which:
  - Are in any way pornographic in nature, obscene or vulgar
  - Refer to sexual acts
  - Are suggestive of sexual acts or sexual involvement
  - Refer to intended or threatened violence of any kind
2. **Other Inappropriate Language** - includes language and/or links to websites containing such language or images which are:
  - Even mildly inappropriate references to human anatomy or bodily functions

- Other sexual references considered offensive or objectionable, such as jokes, demeaning remarks, or suggestions or solicitations

This policy applies to communication between students as well as between College employees and students, and includes both online platforms managed by The College and communication incidental to The American College's coursework.

### **Where to Learn More**

The American College's "Student Policy and Information on Sexual Misconduct and Harassment" can be accessed through the College's Blackboard online portal. The policy provides full information about what constitutes sexual misconduct or harassment, procedures for reporting an issue and how complaints are addressed.

A student who believes he or she has been a victim of sexual misconduct or sexual harassment related to College activities is urged to report it immediately to either of the following:

- Vice President of Academic Affairs and Dean, Dr. Walt Woerheide, 610-526-1398
- Associate Dean of Academics, Dr. Melisande McCrae, 610-526-1316

### **3.9.2 Sexual Harassment in the Context of Live Instruction**

#### **Understanding The College's Sexual Harassment Policy in the Context of Live Instruction**

The American College is an educational community where strong emphasis is placed on self-discovery and awareness. Where such an atmosphere exists for freedom of expression, it must be combined with a mutual respect and consideration for the lives and feelings of others. As a result, this institution strictly prohibits all forms of sexual misconduct or harassment by its students and employees.

#### **What is Sexual Harassment?**

Sexual harassment of any kind is bothersome, demeaning, offensive and/or abusive behavior of a sexual nature. The involved parties can be men or women, College employees, faculty, students or others.

#### **What does Sexual Harassment look like?**

Consider the following examples:

1. During class breaks, Sonya frequently makes personal phone calls to her friends. Her conversations are loud and generously sprinkled with sexually explicit or suggestive language. Fellow students nearby cannot help but overhear her conversations.

Though Sonya is not addressing her language directly toward her colleagues, the behavior may contribute to creating a sexually harassing environment if those within hearing find the conversation offensive and unwelcome.

2. Oscar frequently tells sexually explicit jokes during breakout discussions. Jennifer, who is occasionally in Oscar's breakout group, is offended by his jokes. Though Oscar believes his jokes are all in fun and he does not intend to offend anyone, Oscar's behavior may be considered sexual harassment.

## **Hostile Environment**

A hostile environment is one in which unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature creates an uncomfortable environment for some students. Examples of this may include sexually explicit talk or emails, sexually provocative images, comments on physical attributes or inappropriate touching.

We often find ourselves interacting with people of widely different backgrounds and values. Each of us perceives and interprets the world based on our experiences and values, so we may interpret words and behavior very differently from others. Different social, cultural and gender standards can lead to very different understandings.

What is harmless joking to one person may be offensive to another. We expect professionalism and respect from students, College employees, and third parties throughout the classroom experience.

### **Unwelcomeness: What Does It Mean?**

Sexual harassment or misconduct takes a wide variety of forms, some mild and others severe. The behaviors may range from an offensive joke to physical assault. Whether a particular behavior is defined as sexual harassment or misconduct depends largely on whether the behavior is unwelcome to the recipient.

Unwelcome behavior is just that – behavior that is not welcome, not solicited and not wanted by the receiving person. While you may perceive your behavior to be friendly and harmless, another individual may find the behavior offensive, so it is important to think before you act in a way that could be reasonably perceived as sexually offensive.

### **Intent vs. Impact**

It is important to understand that intent is not relevant in determining whether or not a behavior is sexual harassment. All that matters is the impact of the behavior on the environment or the offended individual. Regardless of the intent, the behavior will be judged on its impact.

This fact is critically important. The statement, "I didn't mean anything by it," is not a valid defense of harassing behavior.

### **Humor - A Risky Behavior?**

Most of us love a good laugh. Humor can relieve tension and energize us, but if the fun is at the expense of another person or persons, it is risky. "It was just a joke" is not an excuse for sexual harassment.

People often have such different perspectives on some types of behaviors that it is easy to offend someone through ill-considered attempts at humor. Remember that it is the impact, and not the intent, that matters in determining if a reasonable person would consider the behavior sexual harassment.

### **Risky Behaviors - Touching**

Many people touch others in the normal course of life and work, but unwanted touching can be offensive and uncomfortable to others whether or not it is intended to be of a sexual nature. This is especially important to know for people who are accustomed to touching others. The best policy is always to avoid touching someone else unless you are sure it is welcome.

## **Where to Learn More**

The American College's "Student Policy and Information on Sexual Misconduct and Harassment" can be accessed through The College's Blackboard online portal. The policy provides full information about what constitutes sexual misconduct or harassment, procedures for reporting an issue and how complaints are addressed.

A student who believes he or she has been a victim of sexual misconduct or sexual harassment is urged to report it immediately to either of the following:

- Vice President of Academic Affairs and Dean, Dr. Walt Woerheide, 610-526-1398
- Associate Dean of Academics, Dr. Melisande McCrae, 610-526-1316

## **4. Master of Science in Financial Services (MSFS)**

### **4.1 Introduction**

Today's wealthy clients are seeking increasingly complex solutions to meet their financial needs. The Master of Science in Financial Services (MSFS) provides the tools one needs to analyze, plan, and implement integrated financial and life strategies that results in growing the business in affluent markets. The MSFS program includes practical case studies and client/practitioner scenarios so that the advisor can immediately address clients' needs with expertise and confidence. With the convenience of distance learning, combined with indispensable faculty and peer interaction, the MSFS program helps the adviser access into advanced markets, corporate clients, and larger cases. The MSFS program may be taken self-study or live online with a professor. Go to The American College website for a detailed description of each course in the MSFS degree program.

### **4.2 The Mission**

The mission of the Master of Science in Financial Services (MSFS) program is to provide in-depth knowledge and skills that allow financial services professionals to serve their clients effectively. The program emphasizes analysis, planning, and implementation of strategies for individuals, families, and businesses to protect, grow, and distribute financial assets. The program emphasizes the role of the financial services professional in developing a synthesis of financial resources, needs, objectives, and appropriate alternative plans for achieving the economic ends desired.

### **Target Audience**

The target audience of the MSFS program is individuals with an undergraduate degree who: (1) work in the financial services industry and desire to enhance their careers or (2) have strong backgrounds in closely related fields (e.g., CPAs, attorneys) and want to prepare for a career in financial services.

### **Program Learning Objectives**

Upon completion of this program, the student should be able to:

- 1) Work effectively with high net worth clients
- 2) Better integrate ethical considerations into the financial planning process
- 3) Demonstrate mastery of knowledge in the wealth accumulation process
- 4) Work with business owners to develop compensation, succession planning and retirement strategies

5) Guide individuals in the areas of tax minimization, retirement planning, and estate planning

### **4.3 Degree Requirements**

The MSFS degree requires the completion of 36 course credits (6 credits from the residency session and 30 credits from self-study and/or webinar courses). The program curriculum is:

Required Self-Study or Webinar Courses (24 Credits Total). Each Course Earns 3 Credits.

- GS 803—Financial Statements and Business Valuation Analysis
- GS 807—MSFS Case Study Project
- GS 811—Security Analysis and Portfolio Management
- GS 814—Qualified Retirement Plans
- GS 815—Advanced Estate Planning
- GS 817—Personal Tax Planning
- GS 819—Mutual Funds: Analysis, Allocation and Performance Evaluation
- GS 842—Executive Compensation

Elective Self-Study or Webinar Courses (2 Courses Required—6 Credits Total). Each Course earns 3 Credits.

- GS 838—Business Succession Planning
- GS 840—Building and Managing Financial Advisory Practice
- HS 383—Interpersonal Relationships in the Workplace
- GS 839—Planning for Impact in the Context of Family Wealth
- GS 849—Charitable Strategies
- GS 859—Gift Planning in a Nonprofit Context

Required Residency Courses (2 Courses Required—6 Credits Total). \*Courses are taken together in a one week on campus residency program.

- GS 808—Issues in Advanced Retirement Planning
- GS 831—Ethics and Human Values

\*It is strongly recommended that the student complete the required courses before enrolling in the residency session.

### **4.4 Graduate Certificates and Designation**

An individual may take any self-study course in the Irwin Graduate School without being admitted to a Master's degree program. Certificate programs, outlined as follows, are designed for students that want the course knowledge and are not yet admitted to the degree program. Completion of any of these

programs may qualify the student for up to nine credits toward the MSFS degree if the student is subsequently admitted to the degree program. The available certificate programs are:

- **Certified Family Business Specialist Certificate**—This program educates students to help understand the emotional issues confronted by business owners contemplating a transition of their business; identify financial issues regarding succession planning; and recognize tax considerations regarding transitioning the business. The student receives advanced education in financial statement analysis, accounting concepts in a business, business valuation, estate and gift tax planning, and the process and technical requirements for successful family business succession planning. The certificate program requires completion of three courses—GS 803, GS 815, and GS 838.
- **Estate Planning and Taxation Certificate**—The student receiving this certificate will successfully complete GS 815, GS 817, and GS 838. The certificate recipient will receive advanced education in estate and gift taxation, federal income tax planning, and business succession planning.
- **Chartered Advisor in Philanthropy (CAP) Designation**—This is a masters-level, three course curriculum providing financial advisors and fundraisers with a common body of knowledge and a common credential enabling them to collaborate effectively at the planning table when the client’s legacy is planned. The first course, GS 839—Planning for Impact in the Context of Family Wealth, connects family wealth with meaning and purpose for self, family, and society. The second course, GS 849—Charitable Giving Strategies, teaches the financial and social benefits of charitable tools. The final course, GS 859—Gift Planning in a Nonprofit Context, looks at legacy planning from the perspective of a fundraiser cultivating, soliciting, and stewarding major and planned gifts from highest capacity donors.
- **Accredited Estate Planner (AEP) Designation**—The AEP designation, granted by the National Association of Estate Planners and Councils (NAEPC), is awarded to recognized estate planning professions who meet special requirements of education, experience, knowledge, professional reputation, and character. The designation requires completion of two graduate courses through The American College in addition to other NAEPC requirements. See [www.NAEPC.org](http://www.NAEPC.org) for more details.

For additional information or to apply to any of these certificates and/or designations go to The American College website or email [MSFS@TheAmericanCollege.edu](mailto:MSFS@TheAmericanCollege.edu).

#### **4.5 Admissions Requirements**

Applicants to the MSFS degree program are selected on the basis of academic and professional criteria. All applicants must submit the below listed information to the Graduate School:

- Completed Application Form
- Current resume
- Letter of corporate approval from supervisor (if applicable)
- List of business, professional and social organizations in which the applicant has been active
- A description of your career objectives and why you believe the MSFS will help you attain them

- Signed Admissions Declaration
- Undergraduate college transcripts; must come directly from the undergraduate college
- Pay the admissions fee (if applicant is rejected for any reason the admissions fee is returned)

#### **4.6 Registration Process**

- Register Online: Go to [www.theamericancollege.edu](http://www.theamericancollege.edu) and click the “Course Enrollment and Registration” link at the top of the page.
- Register by Phone: Call 610-526-1385 Monday – Friday, 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. ET

Payment is required at time of registration unless covered by a contract by a sponsoring entity. Consult the website for fees and prices of each course.

##### **4.6.1 Matriculation/Admission**

New students are required to pay a one-time matriculation fee when enrolling in their first course as part of registration.

##### **4.6.2 Tuition and Fees**

See [www.The American College.edu](http://www.The American College.edu) website for up-to-date MSFS Admission Fees, Course Tuition, Residency Tuition, and Shipping and Handling fees.

##### **4.6.3 Tuition Discounts**

The College currently provides MSFS tuition discounts for the following:

- Those individuals actively serving in the U.S. Military
- Individuals who have been honorably discharged from the U.S. military and who are taking a course(s) within five years of discharge.
- Students age 65 or older.

The amount of the discount is 25 percent for all MSFS tuition. The discount is provided on tuition only. Admission fees and other items will not be discounted. Students requesting a discount are required to register by phone at 610-526-1385.

#### **4.7 Continuing Education Filing Fees**

The continuing education (CE) filing fees are included in the tuition cost. Students must request CE upon registration into a course. Students requesting CE credits are required to take an Examination On Demand (EOD) to receive CE credit. For more information concerning CE processing see The American College of Financial Services annual Catalog.

#### **4.8 Scheduling the Exam**

The student must wait at least two business days after registering for the course before contacting the exam center’s vendor headquarters to make an EOD® appointment for the current quarter. When scheduling the appointment, the student should request a Pearson Professional Center in the area where the student lives.

The vendor contact information is:

**866-EXAMTAC (866-392-6822)**  
**www.VUE.com/tac**

To make an EOD® appointment for a future quarter, the student must wait until the week preceding that quarter before scheduling the appointment. The student should confirm the date and time of the exam appointment with the vendor headquarters at least two business days before the scheduled exam date.

**Availability:** The exam center needs 24 hours advance notice to schedule an exam. All appointments are made on a first-come, first-served basis and are subject to seating availability. Note that the College cannot guarantee seats at the testing facility if the student waits until the last month in the test period to schedule the exam. No walk-in or same-day exams are available.

#### **4.9 Exam Rescheduling**

Exam rescheduling refers to when a student wants to change the date and time in which he/she will take the exam. An exam retake occurs when a student has failed an exam.

When a student enrolls in a course, he/she receives an exam ticket good for the quarter in which the student indicates he/she wants to take the exam. Exam tickets may be requested for the current quarter, the next quarter, or the second quarter out. At the start of each quarter, The College notifies Pearson Vue of which students are authorized to take which exams. Thus, when a student calls an exam center to schedule an appointment, the center validates that the student is approved to take the exam and schedules a sitting. If a student has made an appointment in the appropriate quarter and wants to change the time or date within that quarter, then the student need only contact the exam center to reschedule the appointment. If the student wants to reschedule an appointment to an earlier or later quarter than what is on the student's exam ticket, then the student must first contact The College that The College can notify Pearson Vue of the change in testing quarter. There is no fee to move an exam ticket to an earlier quarter, but there is a rescheduling fee to move an exam to a later quarter. Also, if a student simply fails to schedule an exam in the designated quarter, then he/she must contact The College to acquire a new exam ticket and specify a new quarter for sitting for the exam. There is a fee for this service.

#### **4.10 Exam Retakes**

If a student has failed an exam, then the student must contact The College to pay the fee necessary to schedule a retake of the exam.

#### **4.11 Testing in Webinar Courses**

Professors who teach webinar courses typically will provide the student with an option of taking the multiple-choice exam administered by Pearson Professional Center (described above) or a take-home essay exam and/or project. If the student wishes to obtain state CE credit for the course, the student must take the exam at Pearson.

#### **4.12 Transfer of Credit**

A maximum of six credits toward the MSFS degree may be transferred from other regionally accredited colleges or universities. The credits must be at the graduate level in courses similar in content to those of The American College; they must have been earned within seven years of the date of admission to the degree program; and the student must have earned a grade of B or better in each course.

A request for credit transfer must be submitted in writing to the Dean of the Graduate School and should include a description of the course for which transfer of credit is being sought and the name of

the college or university where the credits were earned. The student also must have that college or university send an official transcript to the Irwin Graduate School at The American College. The student will be charged a transfer of credit fee for each course—see The American College web site for current transfer of credit fees. Transferred credits apply to distance learning courses only. There is a nonrefundable transfer of credit application review fee. Transfer of credit fees do not apply to courses transferred from The American College's Irwin Graduate School and there is no limit to the number of these courses that can be transferred. For more information and an application, contact the Graduate Office.

Students completing any of The College's graduate certificate programs may transfer up to nine credits toward the MSFS degree if the student is subsequently admitted to the MSFS program.

#### **4.13 Methods of Course Delivery**

##### **4.13.1 Webinar Class Attendance and Lateness**

Students are expected to attend all classes. However, it is understood that an extraordinary event may preclude class attendance. If the student misses two classes of a webinar course, the student will receive a warning communication from the teaching professor. The third time the student misses a class in the same webinar, the student will be withdrawn from the course.

A student is considered to be late to a webinar class if he/she logs into the classroom more than 30 minutes after the assigned starting time of the class as stated in the course syllabus. After three instances of lateness in a given course, the student will receive an email communication from the teaching professor that serves as a warning. The student will be dropped from the course upon the fourth instance of lateness for any given webinar course.

##### **4.13.2 Self Study**

Student who chose this method of delivery will enroll in a course. Shortly thereafter the student will receive Blackboard access and study materials via mail. The student will study all of the materials and then take an EOD® at a Pearson Center.

##### **4.13.3 Course Materials Availability for Webinars and Self-Study**

Students may begin self-study courses in Blackboard by accessing <http://blackboard.theamericancollege.edu/>. Students will receive a Blackboard login email on the day their enrollment is processed. Online course materials will become available in a student's Blackboard account within 1-2 business days of receipt of the Blackboard login email.

Students can expect delivery of hard copy materials (textbook, study guide and audio CDs) within 7-10 business days of enrollment. Access to Blackboard course materials is removed from the Blackboard system 6 months from the last day of the testing quarter, unless stated otherwise in The American College Blackboard course and Account Policy. To read this policy, visit [http://blackboard.theamericancollege.edu/course/other/policyBB\\_course Account Policy.pdf](http://blackboard.theamericancollege.edu/course/other/policyBB_course_Account_Policy.pdf).

Illegal downloading of audio, video, e-books, or any other copyrighted electronic materials is prohibited. Violations brought to the attention of The American College will constitute a violation; charges may be filed; and the violation will be addressed through the College's conduct process. Illegal downloading may also result in civil or criminal charges.

##### **4.13.4 MSFS Residency**

Residencies are taught face-to-face in a traditional classroom. The faculty has determined that the content covered in some courses is more effectively transmitted on a face-to-face basis. The MSFS

program requires a one-week on campus residency and student attendance is mandatory for its entire duration.

Exact dates for the residencies are announced about 6 months in advance, and registration materials are sent to all students who are eligible to attend. You may also request them by contacting MSFS Graduate Administration, 610-526-1385 or [MSFS@TheAmericanCollege.edu](mailto:MSFS@TheAmericanCollege.edu). Students should register 6-8 weeks prior to the residency start date to allow time to review the course materials. The residency courses conclude in either a paper-and-pencil exam (multiple-choice/short essay) or an assignment or project. Your advance reading materials will describe the format of the exam or final assignment. Residency tuition covers the cost of all study materials and instruction during the week. A commuter fee, covering catered breakfasts and lunches at the College, will be charged as well. The College will arrange a group rate for students in residency at a local hotel but the student will need to make reservations directly with the hotel.

#### **4.13.5 Course Materials for Residency**

Course textbooks and study guides will be shipped 6 weeks before residency. The student may receive an email from the teaching professor defining how students should prepare for the class. In addition, information related to each course is found on Blackboard.

#### **4.14 Examinations and Grades**

Students that are enrolled for self-study will take a 2-hour multiple choice exam at a local Pearson Center. Students that enroll and take a course via online webinar always has the option of taking the multiple choice final exam at a Pearson Center. However, some professors that teach graduate school webinar courses give the student an option of taking a multiple choice EOD® at a Pearson Center or taking an essay final exam. It should be noted that if the student wishes to receive CE credits for any course, it is mandatory that the exam be multiple choice and taken at a Pearson Center.

**The standard grading scale for the graduate school is:**

90 – 100 = A  
80 – 89 = B  
70 – 79 = C  
Below 70 = F

The grading scale, along with a grading rubric, are provided on the syllabus of every course. It is strongly recommended that the student carefully read the syllabus as the first step in studying the provided materials

#### **4.14.1 Grade Appeals/Grievance**

MSFS students at The American College are entitled to file grade appeals and grievances. If the student has a grievance, he/she should try to resolve that with the relevant College representative. If the student is not able to achieve satisfaction, he/she should file an appeal with the Graduate Office. The Graduate Dean will investigate the matter, or appoint one or more individuals to investigate the matter and make a recommendation. If the student still feels that he/she has not been treated properly or fairly, the student may appeal to the Dean of the College. The College Dean's decision is final.

#### **4.15 Program Completion**

Students admitted to the MSFS program have 7 years from the date of admission to complete degree requirements. Acceptance of courses completed prior to admission will be determined by the Graduate School Dean. Students who have completed academic requirements are invited to participate in the

College's commencement exercise at their own expense. Diplomas are ordered in June and December and take 6-8 weeks to ship.

The Office of the Registrar determines and certifies that the student has completed all degree requirements. Once certified, the student is considered to have graduated with all the rights, privileges, and obligations pertaining thereto. Degrees are awarded on the first day of the second month following the date the last examination is passed. For example, if a student completes the final course in April, the student could commence using the degree June 1.

#### **4.16 Course Refund**

The College will refund course tuition less a cancellation fee if a student requests the refund within 30 days after enrolling in the course, or in the case of a live on-site or webinar class, before the third class date, whichever is sooner. Those enrolling in course packages, where all courses are purchased at once, will be subject to separate refund arrangements communicated at the time of purchase. All refund requests should be emailed to: [MSFS@theamericancollege.edu](mailto:MSFS@theamericancollege.edu).