

SOUTH DAKOTA BOARD OF REGENTS

Policy Manual

SUBJECT: Faculty Discipline and Disciplinary Procedures

NUMBER: 4:14

1. Discipline and Disciplinary Procedures

A. Preamble

The Board, through its institutional administrators, has the duty to maintain a competent, productive, effective and ethical workforce and to ensure observance of obligations and rights established by law, rule or policy and implicated in university operations. This duty extends to supervision of faculty member conduct. To discharge this duty, the Board and its administrators possess the inherent power to discipline employees, including faculty members, who fail to adhere to expectations for competent, productive, effective and ethical teaching, research or service, who violate laws, rules or policies implicated in university operations, or who engage in misconduct, neglect of duty, insubordination or otherwise unacceptable conduct. This article ensures that the exercise of the power to discipline comports with the requirements of due process.

B. Alternative Measures

Subject to the reserved authority required by *Worzella v. Board of Regents of Education*, 77 S.D. 447, 93 N.W.2d 411 (S.D. 1958), the Board has delegated to institutional administrators provisional authority to discipline any faculty members for failure to adhere to expectations for: competent, productive, effective and ethical teaching, research or service; violation laws, rules or policies implicated in university operations; or misconduct, neglect of duty, insubordination or otherwise unacceptable conduct, including such conduct identified in section 2 of this policy. The authority delegated to institutional administrators must be exercised consistently with Board policy. The delegated authority includes the power to determine the discipline to be imposed and its effective date.

Taking into consideration the circumstances that warrant discipline, past service, scholarly achievements and other mitigating or aggravating circumstances, discipline may include any of the following alternative actions:

- 1) Warnings;
- 2) Warnings to be filed with the personnel file of the faculty member;

- 3) Required training or current substance abuse treatment at the cost of the faculty member;
- 4) Suspension from duties with, or without, loss of pay commensurate therewith;
- 5) Reassignment;
- 6) Demotion;
- 7) Discharge.

C. Interim Suspension

Unlike a disciplinary suspension under paragraph B (4) above, an interim suspension from duties during the pendency of an active review of allegations of conduct warranting discipline is not deemed to be a discipline under this article.

The decision to place a faculty member on interim suspension pursuant to this section does not require compliance with the Stage One notice procedures set forth in section D, below, but an informal pre-suspension process will ordinarily be provided. Absent the need for quick action or manifest impracticality, a faculty member will be informed, either orally or in writing, of the basis for the suspension, given an explanation of the evidence supporting the action and afforded an opportunity to respond before being placed on interim suspension.

In circumstances that require quick action or where the pre-suspension process is impractical, and where independent third-party findings confirm reasonable grounds for the allegations against the faculty member, the administration may place a faculty member on interim suspension before providing the requisite information, explanation and opportunity to respond.

The administration may withhold pay where the circumstances that trigger the interim suspension implicate public trust in ways that would preclude continued discharge of assigned responsibilities.

D. Procedures

The following procedures apply to all disciplinary measures other than warnings and warnings filed in the personnel file.

The disciplinary procedure comprises two stages. The first stage is designed to provide an initial check against mistaken decisions, by creating an opportunity to determine whether there are reasonable grounds to believe that the charges against the employee are true and support the proposed action. At the first stage, the faculty

member will receive oral or written notice of the allegations, an explanation of the evidence, and an opportunity to tell the faculty member's side of the story. At the close of the first stage hearing the administration may impose the selected discipline. The second stage assures clear and actual notice of the reasons for the disciplinary action in sufficient detail to enable presentation of evidence relating to them; notice of both the names of those who have made allegations against the faculty member and the specific nature and factual basis for the charges; a reasonable time and opportunity to present testimony on any disputed issue of material fact; and a hearing before an impartial decision-maker.

1) *Stage One: Pre-Discipline Hearing*

If the administration determines that there are reasonable grounds for discipline, the faculty member will be furnished written notice of the allegations supporting the determination, an explanation of the evidence relied upon by the administration and the intended disciplinary action. The matter will be discussed with the faculty member at a personal conference which will be held at a time not sooner than ten (10) working days, nor later than fifteen (15) working days from the date of the transmission of the written notice, unless otherwise agreed by the faculty member and the administration. The faculty member may bring to this meeting a representative chosen by the faculty member. At the close of the personal conference, or within five working days thereafter, the administration will notify the faculty member whether it will discipline the faculty member, how and the effective date of the discipline.

2) *Stage Two: Post-Discipline Hearing Rights*

Faculty members who have been disciplined after completion of Stage One hearings may challenge the action through the grievance procedures established in Board Policy No. 4:7. Any grievance appeal under this section will begin at Step 2.

In all cases, the burden to prove the charges will rest with the administration to the extent provided by law; provided that the faculty members will bear the burden to prove affirmative defenses or counterclaims relating to a challenged discipline.

2. Unprofessional Conduct

The Board recognizes that academic tradition has established common and accepted standards of acceptable conduct and that academic disciplines may assemble and publish statements applying such standards to the unique circumstances of their respective professions. While the Board expects faculty members to adhere to accepted professional standards, whether published or not, it also recognizes that university lecture halls,

laboratories and work environments have become subject to manifold levels of governmental regulations and contractual restrictions that also establish or imply standards of conduct needed to protect the special interests that justify the regulations and restrictions.

Even standards published by professional organizations or conduct expectations grounded in statute, rule, policy or contract may be subject to change over time or may be extended to technological or social contexts that emerge following their original adoption. These circumstances preclude the establishment of comprehensive policy that catalogs each form of conduct that violates the essential principles recognized by professionals or established in statute, rule, or policy contract. Thus, the Board provides the following instances to illustrate, without limitation, forms of unacceptable conduct that expose faculty members to discipline, but this enumeration is neither intended, nor could be intended, to preclude disciplinary action for other conduct that violates accepted standards or emergent requirements of statute, rule, policy or contract:

- A. Neglect of duty, misconduct, incompetence, abuse of power or other actions that manifest an unfitness to discharge the trust reposed in public university faculty members or to perform assigned duties;
- B. A failure to correct deficiencies in performance in compliance with a constructive plan;
- C. A breach of recognized published standards of professional ethics;
- D. Conviction of any felony or the conviction of a misdemeanor involving moral turpitude;
- E. Unauthorized absence from duties without prior notification or justifiable cause or excuse for the absence;
- F. The manufacture, distribution, dispensing, possession or use of alcohol or controlled substances shall be cause for discipline where:
 - 1) The conduct is unlawful or unauthorized and occurs while acting within the scope of employment; while on premises owned and controlled by the Board of Regents or used by the Board of Regents for educational, research, service or other official functions; or while participating in any capacity in activities sponsored by the Board; or
 - 2) The conduct has been authorized and is lawful, but the use significantly impairs the faculty member in the performance of his duties; or
 - 3) Other conduct that involves a failure to conform to laws regulating alcohol and controlled substances and that results in injury to the person or the rights of others.

- G. The failure or refusal to follow or comply with Board or institutional policies, regulations or published work rules or with lawful orders or instruction of a superior;
- H. Theft, misuse, abuse or wrongful destruction of state owned or controlled property controlled real, personal or intellectual property, including information systems, databases and similar resources;
- I. Participation in strike activities proscribed by SDCL Chapter 3-18;
- J. Violations of rights assured to students, employees or others under federal or state laws or regulations or Board or institutional policies and regulations;
- K. Use of the powers and prerogatives of a faculty member to coerce or to induce others to engage in unlawful conduct or conduct prohibited under Board or institutional policy;
- L. Failure to comply with health or safety regulations, to require compliance by students or others under a faculty member's supervision or to comply with duly issued emergency orders;
- M. Misrepresentation of authority or other conduct intended to deceive or to assist another to deceive others, irrespective of the motives;
- N. Interference with or disruption of the efficiency or morale of educational, research or service programs, workplaces or organizational units, including actions that violate expectations for civil conduct among professors and when working with students, as provided in Board Policy No. 4:38 (4), or failure at all times to be accurate, to exercise appropriate restraint and to show respect for the opinions of others, as required under Board Policy No. 1.11 (1)(C); or
- O. Any substantial or irremediable impairment of the ability of a faculty member to perform assigned duties.

SOURCE: 1991 Policy Manual 5:4:2 and 5:4:3; BOR April 2009; BOR December 2010.