

Religious Accommodation Policy

I. Purpose:

The College of Southern Maryland prohibits discrimination, harassment, and retaliation on the basis of religion. The College respects the sincerely held faith-based or religious beliefs and practices of all applicants for employment, employees and students and will, on request, accommodate such observances when a reasonable accommodation is available that does not create an undue hardship or a fundamental alteration to the educational program or activity.

II. Scope and Applicability:

This Policy applies to all applicants for employment, employees and students of the College.

III. Definitions:

A. Academic Requirement means an activity that is required for completion of an academic class or program of study, including but not limited to, an assignment, examination, assessment, or class attendance, in a credit or non-credit course or program of study, including but not limited to, laboratory and clinical courses.

B. Activity collectively refers to Academic Requirements and Co-Curricular Programs.

C. Co-Curricular Program means an organized activity that is made available to students outside of the student's classes.

D. Essential Function of an Activity means:

1. A function that is necessary to perform, engage in, or allow access to the Activity;
2. A Fundamental Learning Outcome of an Activity being pursued by a student;
3. An Academic Requirement directly related to a licensing certification, or
4. A code of ethics requirement to practice in the field or occupation.

E. Fundamental Alteration means a Religious Accommodation that is so significant that it changes an Essential Function of an Activity. Factors to be considered are set forth in the accompanying procedures.

F. Fundamental Learning Outcome means the knowledge, skills, and competencies that students are expected to exhibit upon successful completion of an Academic Requirement or Co-Curricular Program.

G. Religious Accommodation means a reasonable modification or adjustment to a job, the work or Activity, or the hiring process that enables an employee or student to exercise Religious Beliefs. In accordance with Maryland state law, reasonable academic accommodations for students may include excused absences and/or alternatives for missing an examination or other academic requirement if the student's sincerely held faith-based or religious belief or practices affects the student's ability to meet the requirement as scheduled. Other reasonable academic accommodations may include modifications

to dress/uniform standards or providing alternative assignments provided it does not create an undue hardship or fundamental alteration to the educational program or activity.

H. Religious Belief means all aspects of religious beliefs and Religious Practices and Observances, whether the beliefs, practices, or observances are common or non-traditional, theistic or non-theistic, or are recognized by any organized religion, as long as the beliefs, practices or observances are religious in the person's own life. Religious Beliefs can include moral or ethical beliefs as to what is right and wrong, which are sincerely held. Social, political, or economic philosophies, or mere personal preference, do not constitute Religious Beliefs.

I. Religious Holidays means holidays for reasons of faith, conscience, or for organized activities conducted under the auspices of a religious denomination, church, or religious organization.

J. Religious Practices and Observances include attending worship service, celebrating Religious Holidays, praying, wearing religious garb or symbols, displaying religious objects, adhering to certain dietary rules, proselytizing or other forms of religious expression, and refraining from certain activities. Whether the practice is religious will be a situational, case-by-case inquiry. Students and employees will have the right to pray, proselytize, or engage in other forms of religious expression if they are not disrupting the teaching and learning processes or compelling others to participate when such expression is unwelcome.

K. Undue Hardship means a Religious Accommodation that results in substantial increased costs in relation to the conduct of the College's business.

IV. Religious Accommodations

A. All requests for Religious Accommodations will be handled in accordance with law and the accompanying Procedures.

B. Religious Accommodations are not guaranteed, and the decision to provide a Religious Accommodation will be made at the College's sole discretion following an interactive process.

C. The College may deny a request for a Religious Accommodation if it would cause an Undue Hardship or Fundamental Alteration.

D. No applicant for employment, employee or student will be retaliated against for requesting a Religious Accommodation.

V. Use of College Facilities for Religious Practices

A. Upon request, the College will provide space on each campus to accommodate faith-based or religious practices for students and employees.

B. Students seeking a private space on campus to pray, meditate, or reflect for religious or spiritual practices can request use of a room to meet their needs. These rooms might be available classroom or meeting spaces that are readily available for use. Rooms are available on a first-come, first-serve basis and can be reserved up to a week in advance. Students can initiate a request by contacting the Executive Director of Student Affairs and Conduct, and Employees can initiate a request by contacting the Director of Employee Relations. Requests can also be made directly by sending an email to the Scheduling Office at Scheduling@csmd.edu or by phone at 301-934-7743.

C. Students who believe they have not been appropriately accommodated should contact the Executive Director of Student Affairs and Conduct. If the matter is not rectified, a student can appeal to the Vice President for the Division of Learning. Employees and applicants for employment who believe they have not been appropriately accommodated should contact the Director of Employee Relations. If the matter is not rectified, an applicant or employee can appeal to the Vice President of Human Resources.

Policy Category: General

Policy Owner: VP, PCE, VP, Student Equity and Success, and VP Operations and Planning

Policy Administrators: Dir II, Employee Relations and Compliance (for Employees) and Executive Director, Student Conduct and Title IX Coordinator

Contact Information:

Approval Date:

Effective Date:

Related Policies: N/A

Related Procedures: (To be approved)

Student Religious Accommodations Procedure

Employee Religious Accommodations Procedure

(?)Fundamental Alterations Review Procedure

Guidelines:

Use of Space guidelines