

ADMISSION OF APPLICANTS WITH CRIMINAL CONVICTIONS AND/OR STUDENT DISCIPLINARY RECORDS

PURPOSE

To describe the use the University makes of information about an applicant's prior criminal convictions and/or student disciplinary records in the University's admissions process.

BACKGROUND

Westfield State University requests to know if an applicant has been convicted of a crime or has been held accountable for serious student disciplinary infractions in order to assist it in judging whether the applicant is suited for admission to the University's academic community and, in particular, whether the applicant's admission might place the remainder of the campus population at some risk. Decisions on enrollment are made in part based on the University's understanding and interpretation of any risk to the campus community.

POLICY

The University is committed to admitting students who not only meet its academic standards but whom it judges are suited more generally for membership in its academic community. It reserves the right, therefore, to require applicants to submit information, in addition to their academic credentials, on the basis of which it can make those judgments. One important component of this information is certain information about an applicant's prior criminal and disciplinary history. The University therefore requires all applicants to disclose certain prior criminal convictions and student discipline on their applications.

The University is responsible by statute and has set as a priority the safety and security of its students; it will therefore make an individual assessment of the application of each applicant with a criminal history or serious student disciplinary record. The University, that is, will examine the individual background and circumstance of each applicant whose application discloses certain criminal convictions or past student discipline or about whom such information has come

Westfield State University

Policy concerning:

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page 2 of 2

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to the University's attention by any other means. The University will make its admission decision after review by the admission office and a senior staff review committee.

The University makes its decision about an applicant's fitness for campus housing at the time it makes a decision about admission to the University. In some cases, an applicant will be offered admission to the University, but will not be invited to reside in campus housing. The University considers many factors when making decisions about housing, and housing decisions are made on an individual basis. An applicant's prior criminal conviction or student disciplinary history is one factor in those decisions.

Applicants are required to disclose certain prior criminal convictions and student discipline on their applications. Applicants who are admitted to the University but who have failed to disclose the requested prior criminal convictions and academic discipline will be subject to discipline up to and including dismissal from the University when that information becomes known to the University.

The University recognizes the uniquely sensitive and confidential nature of information about an applicant's prior criminal or disciplinary record and will keep it confidential. The University is bound by the Fair Information Practices Act (Chapter 66A of the General Laws of Massachusetts) to keep confidential any information applicants disclose on their applications. If an admitted applicant enrolls at the University, his or her application is also protected by the Family and Educational Rights and Privacy Act (20 U.S.C. §11232g). If an applicant is not admitted or does not enroll, his or her application is destroyed according to the College's Records Retention Policy.

If applicants have questions about how this policy may affect their application, the College urges them to contact the admissions office.

The University maintains the authority upon review to deny an applicant admission to the University and/or University housing based on its review of all information available to it. A review of information will not include any criminal convictions not allowed to be considered under the law.

REVIEW

This policy will be reviewed annually by the Vice President of Student Affairs.