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## Community Responsibility

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### The Mission of the College

(from *The Plan for Mount Holyoke 2003*)

Mount Holyoke College reaffirms its commitment to educating a diverse community of women at the highest level of academic excellence and to fostering the alliance of liberal arts education with purposeful engagement in the world.

### The Mount Holyoke Community

(from *The Plan for Mount Holyoke 2003*, the *Student Handbook*, and faculty legislation)

Mount Holyoke College believes in the right, indeed the necessity, of free inquiry and free expression for every member of the College community. The College aims to provide an environment hospitable to open interchanges of knowledge and opinion in the terms of reasoned discourse. The citizen's rights to free speech, free movement, free association, peaceful assembly, and orderly protest extend to every member of the College. So do the citizen's responsibility to uphold the law and the civilized person's obligation to respect the rights and feelings of others.

The goal for the new century must be to build a community of students, faculty, and staff devoted to intellectual and creative freedom, critical inquiry, personal honor, ethical discernment, and responsibility. We must encourage openness and candor, dialogue and debate, and the creative engagement of all constituencies in building a genuine community.

A College does not become a community by so naming itself. Community is a dynamic condition, difficult and necessary to achieve, reached by active synthesis, by the consensus of free wills and free intelligences agreeing to pursue objectives in common, in an atmosphere of general sympathy, forbearance, respect, and trust. When such conditions prevail, there should be little occasion for coercion or violence, or for punitive response, and the very occurrence of such action will suggest that the community has failed, at least for the time, to achieve its common purposes. Ultimately the quality of life in the College is the property of the conscience of all its members.

### Statement of Nondiscrimination

Mount Holyoke College does not discriminate in its educational and employment policies on the bases of race, color, religion, national or ethnic origin, sex, sexual orientation, age, handicap or disability, or veteran/uniformed services status.

### Harassment Generally

Mount Holyoke College seeks to maintain free expression while protecting members of its community from harassment—including but not limited to harassment on the basis of race, color, national or ethnic origin, religion, sex, sexual orientation, age, or disability. Such harassment that targets an identifiable individual or group is clearly in conflict with the interests of the College as an educational community and may be in conflict with provisions of the law.

### Sexual Harassment Policy

Sexual harassment is explicitly prohibited by College policy and by federal and state law.

Sexual harassment of students includes unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature when:

- submission to or rejection of such advances, requests or conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of the provision of the College's educational benefits, privileges or services or as a basis for the evaluation of academic achievement; or
- such advances, requests or conduct have the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's education by creating an intimidating, hostile, humiliating or sexually offensive academic or educational environment. [Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, and Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 151C ]



Sexual harassment in employment is a form of illegal sex discrimination and is defined as: unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature, when;

- a. submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of an individual's employment,
- b. submission to or rejection of such conduct by an individual is used as the basis for employment decisions affecting such individual, or
- c. such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's work performance or creating an intimidating, hostile, humiliating, or offensive working environment. [Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, and parallel Massachusetts law]

Individuals who believe they have been subjected to sexual harassment may follow the procedures outlined under Resolution of Grievances below. In addition, individuals who believe they have been subjected to sexual harassment may file a complaint with either or both of the following government agencies:

- i. The United States Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), 1 Congress Street, 10th Floor, Boston MA 02114, 617-565-3200; and/or
- ii. The Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination (MCAD), 424 Dwight Street, Room 220, Springfield MA 01103, 413-739-2145; or One Ashburton Place, Room 601, Boston MA 02108, 617-727-3990.

EEOC and MCAD complaints must be filed within 300 days of the alleged harassment.

#### **Community Responsibility**

To enter Mount Holyoke College as a student is to become a member of a community. Choosing to become a member of this community implies a commitment to the notions of free inquiry and free expression that are central to a liberal arts education. It also implies a commitment to maintaining an environment in which these goals may be attained. Being a member of this community is a privilege; sharing in the maintenance of this community is a responsibility.

The Mount Holyoke College community believes in the necessity of maintaining an environment in which every individual may pursue the lifestyle of her choice. Toward this end, it is the community's responsibility to protect individual rights, and it is the responsibility of every member of this community to respect the rights, opinions, beliefs, and feelings of others.

Our community is committed to maintaining an environment in which diversity is not only tolerated but celebrated. Therefore, each member of the Mount Holyoke community is expected to treat all individuals with a common standard of decency. Discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, ethnic or national origin, sex, age, physical or mental handicap, or sexual orientation by any member of the Mount Holyoke community will not be tolerated.

We are drawn together by a common desire to further our understanding of the world, ourselves, and each other. Every member is encouraged to explore the opportunities and challenges that this unique institution provides and is expected to share in the responsibility of maintaining an environment guided by mutual respect and understanding.

#### **Conditions of Free Inquiry**

The following statement, adopted in 1971 by the Mount Holyoke College faculty and student legislature, serves as an explanation of and a model for the working of the College's institutional machinery.

##### **I. Principles**

As an institution dedicated to seeking intellectual enlightenment and amelioration of the quality of life, Mount Holyoke College believes in the right, indeed the necessity, of free inquiry and free expression of every member of the College community. The College aims to provide an environment hospitable to open interchange of knowledge and opinion in terms of reasoned discourse. The citizen's right to free speech, free movement, free association, peaceful assembly, and orderly protest extend to every member of the College. So do the civilized person's obligations to respect the rights and feelings of others.

The College is not a monolith but a living organism. As such, its structures ought to be as flexible as is consistent with effective operation, its phases and practices capable of constructive change. Avenues of communication among all segments of the community must be clear and of easy access. All of us must hold ourselves available to reasoned expression of the formed wills and opinions of others. Advocates of any serious concern are entitled to a hearing by persons in authority and to a reply as prompt, full, and specific as due consideration will allow.

These principles of rational and humane relationship suggest that temperate and cogent persuasion is the appropriate voice of will in an academic community and that demonstration of opinion will not take forms that are coercive or seriously disruptive. Violence against persons or property cannot be allowed, nor can action that interferes with the rights of others or prevents

the orderly practice of the processes by which the College pursues its normal objectives be tolerated indefinitely.

**II. Institutional Mechanisms for Inquiries, Suggestions, and Complaints**

In addition to various regular institutional channels, the Faculty Conference Committee and the Student Advisory Committee to the Trustees are accessible in unusual circumstances as clearinghouses for inquiries, suggestions, and complaints from members of the College community. These committees will identify existing mechanisms appropriate for the consideration of unusual problems and bring them to the attention of the appropriate agencies. If existing institutions are not working effectively, these committees may stimulate changes to enhance effectiveness. If issues arise that are outside the jurisdiction of existing mechanisms, these committees may stimulate the creation, by the faculty or other appropriate bodies, of ad hoc arrangements for dealing effectively with these issues.

**III. Procedures**

If behavior occurs that is contrary to the principles of Part I of this statement, it will be met first by persuasion to cease such behavior, then by warning from the appropriate College official as to College or civil consequences of persistence.

If further steps appear necessary, the president may, after consultation with the Faculty and Student Conference Committees when that is feasible, authorize measures to restore normal functioning of the College and to apply established disciplinary procedures of the College.

In extreme cases that exceed the competence or control of College authorities, the president may, after consultations with the Faculty Conference Committee and/or Student Advisory Committee to the Trustees, when that is feasible, make recourse to civil authority.

(See also the *Report of the Ad Hoc Committee on Communication and Decision Making*, published in 1975, available in the library.)

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To contact the College, call 413-538-2000.

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