



# HASKELL INDIAN NATIONS UNIVERSITY

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## MEMORANDUM

Date: March 11, 2021

To: All Haskell Indian Nations University Employees

From: Ronald Graham, President 

Subject: Haskell Directive - Chain of Command and Addressing Employee Issues

This memorandum is to inform all employees of Haskell Indian Nations University that your Leadership is committed to foster professionalism and create a positive work environment through collaboration, support, and unity that moves this university forward. Our primary concern when making decisions and/or taking action to address issues is to always ensure the decision or action is in the best interest of the students of Haskell University. This is non-negotiable. Since my arrival as the President, I have already experienced detractors from meeting this objective. As such, the following Directives are effective immediately and are also non-negotiable.

**Employees, supervisors, and managers are always expected to be professional and conduct themselves in a manner that reflects positively on Haskell Indian University.**

Employees will refrain from engaging in any misconduct or behavior that is considered to be defaming, slanderous, damaging, and inflammatory towards others. Derogatory opinions regarding coworkers, colleagues, and supervisors or administration is not protected under "academic freedom" and is not consistent with the standards of conduct expected of all Federal employees. Such inappropriate behavior will be addressed and may be referred to Human Resources for appropriate action.

**The chain of command will be followed.**

As problems arise, which they will, all staff are required to follow the chain of command in solving those problems. Chain of command refers to an organization's hierarchy of reporting relationships – from the bottom to the top, regarding who answers to whom, who reports to whom and who supervises whom. The chain of command not only establishes accountability, it also lays out an organization's lines of authority and decision-making responsibility to allow issues to be addressed and resolved at the lowest levels.

Haskell Indian Nations University has a clearly defined chain of command, along with an easy-to-understand organizational chart. Given the current structure, lines of authority and supervision are in place and must be used to elevate issues of concern and when determining the appropriate lines of appeal. As such, a properly implemented chain of command process is not a way to stall someone who has a complaint but is the avenue to seek resolution or relief if they have a complaint, grievance, appeal, or any issue of discontent. Following the chain of command provides a consistent process whereby supervisors closest to the problem have an opportunity to know about the problem, a chance to work on the problem and are able to effectively work out a solution to the problem that is agreeable to all involved. This directive is consistent with the Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA), Article 25, Section 6, "Resolution", which states,

"Most grievances arise from misunderstandings or disputes that can be resolved promptly and satisfactorily on an informal basis at the immediate supervisory level. The Employee and their immediate supervisor, or the Management Official who has the authority to resolve the matter, are encouraged to meet to discuss any cause of dissatisfaction in an effort to resolve the matter prior to raising the issue as a grievance. The Union is also encouraged to have discussions with Management in an effort to resolve matters prior to filing a grievance in the matter."

Regardless of the issue, at no time is it ever appropriate for any employee to disclose their issues publicly through the government email system or any other means of mass communication to individuals not directly or specifically a party to the possible resolution. This includes emailing management at the highest levels of the organization (BIE/BIA Headquarters personnel) and circumventing the chain of command. To do so, may be considered abuse of government time and/or resources and will be considered as a failure to follow this directive.

**All staff of Haskell Indian University will be accountable.**

To foster a professional and positive work environment everyone will be accountable for their actions, their work and for the work of those they supervise. For supervisors and managers, accountability means "we all as leaders own what we need to do and what we need to get other people to do".

To this end, time management, schedules, and performance of employees are the responsibility of the supervisors. Employees that commit considerable time policing the actions of other employees, peers, and administrators alike are not only usurping authority and misusing official government time, but are creating and perpetuating animosity and discontent within the university that all of you have worked so hard to remove from prior years. It is and will remain to be a goal of all of us to move away from any actions that adversely affect this university, its employees, and its students.

## **Rights of employees**

This is not intended to, and should not be construed as, attempting to circumvent the rights of employees to raise claims of violations of the collective bargaining agreement through the negotiated grievance procedure, to raise allegations of unlawful discrimination through the equal employment opportunity complaint process, to raise allegations of harassment through the Department of Interior's PB 18-01 procedures, or to raise allegations of fraud, waste, or abuse, through the whistleblower procedures through the Office of the Inspector General. Every employee has a right to raise such allegations and are encouraged to do so. Such allegations should be raised within the context of the appropriate forum for doing so, rather than bypassing layers of supervision and submitting them to upper management. Doing so not only misdirects the concern being raised, but in many cases may require the recipient of the document to recuse themselves from any further participation in the matter.

As such, I am reiterating my expectation for everyone to use their chain of command and to follow the supervisory line of authority for all matters, including following established procedures or protocol for seeking resolution or relief on complaints and grievances. Deviating from established protocol only exacerbates the issue and does nothing to enhance the resolution of the matter at hand.

In closing, to achieve a professional and positive work environment, it is imperative that each employee be committed to display the highest standards expected of all Federal employees, both on and off duty, and within our community, have the best interests of students in mind, follow the chain of command and be accountable for our actions. You are encouraged to comply with this Directive and to join me in reshaping the employee and student experience for everyone at the University.