

College clarifies complaint language

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SOUTH HAVEN — Lake Michigan College students, take note: If you're filing a formal academic complaint, you'll need to put it down in writing first.

That requirement is among several policy changes LMC Board members unanimously accepted during last week's meeting at the college's South Haven campus.

Though fewer than 1 percent of academic complaints reach the formal stage, the college feels it's time for stronger language, said Leslie Kellogg, vice president of academic services/career and workforce education.

"If it's going to be a formal complaint, we feel that it needs to be in writing so there's no misunderstanding about the student's perception of the issue, and what the student is looking for, in terms of a remedy," she said.

The previous policy language required only a formal written complaint at the dean's level.

Academic complaints fall into two major areas: evaluations of student work, such as grades, papers or quizzes; and failure to follow procedures, according to a memo prepared for the board.

"Obviously, a student, at any time, can have a casual conversation about an issue that they're un-

happy with. Many issues are taken care of informally," Kellogg said.

Most academic complaints focus on grades, she added.

The other big change is a 10-day turnaround for responding to academic complaints, no matter who looks at them.

"It was (previously) a 10-day turnaround at the dean's level, but we've formalized it at the other two levels – department chair, or program director (level), and faculty member (level)," Kellogg said.

Complaints about non-teaching staff and non-academic issues follow a different process, for which the board also approved one key change.

The board agreed to

create a student complaint log to help the college monitor those issues more effectively, said Doug Schaffer, vice president of student services.

"The general policy relates to things like, 'The parking lot needs to be plowed better,' or, 'the sidewalk is slippery,'" he said. "The log has been created to help us document, track, and make sure there's follow through of written and nonwritten complaints."

LMC is due for another accreditation visit in two years, "so we're starting to go over these things, look for more policies to be brought before the board," President Emeritus/Acting CEO Bob Harrison said.