I. INTRODUCTION

The University of South Florida System (USF System or University) is committed to mutual respect among all constituents of the University community. This commitment includes students, faculty, staff, and administration alike. In all concerns about fair treatment, we seek to work together to understand and address those concerns in an informal setting. As there are several offices designated to address grievances throughout the University (see USF System Policy 30-053: Student Grievance Processes), with specific processes applicable to USF Health, students should first identify the topic or substance of a grievance and file the grievance with the appropriate office.

II. APPLICABILITY

Any student concern that has a specific review process outlined in USF System Policy 30-053 must be addressed using the appropriate designated process or may be redirected to the appropriate process. As there are some grievances that may fall outside of any set Policy or Regulation or a Student may not be aware of the process availability this Policy is established as a general guideline for the USF System for students to grieve general concerns related to university departments, administration and/or staff. Most specifically, student concerns related to an academic unit’s assignment of grades or decision regarding the academic progression of a student enrolled in a course for academic credit must be addressed through the USF System Policy 10-002: Academic Grievance Procedure for Students. In addition, as each individual USF System Institution may have established internal grievance policies, the Institution specific policies shall be applied in place of, or as a first step to this Policy depending on the actual terms of the Institution policies. In addition, as individual USF System Institutions may have different levels of authority or titles, the applicable levels and titles will replace the terms of this Policy.
III. DEFINITIONS OF TERMS

1. **Informal General Student Complaint** is the first step in the General Process and is a verbal or written claim by a student alleging improper, unfair, or arbitrary treatment by a USF System department administrator, and/or staff member or an attempt to seek guidance on how to find the appropriate office or person to assist in informally resolving a complaint with a department administrator or staff member. The Ombudsperson can be a confidential resource for students who want to discuss their options for resolving these complaints and the Ombudsperson may assist the student in resolving the issue informally or redirect the student to the appropriate office for review or formal. However, it is recommended that the student first attempt to address their complaint by discussing it with the person most directly involved with their complaint as set forth in the process below.

2. **Formal General Student Grievance** is a written claim that may be filed if the Informal General Complaint Process does not resolve the issue and the student identifies improper, unfair, or arbitrary action by a USF System department, administrator, and/or staff member involving the application of a specific provision of a USF System regulation, policy or procedure. Formal grievance or complaints must utilize the official form.

3. **Time(s) or Day(s)** shall mean “academic time” or “academic days” which are the periods of academic session to include the days the University is open for business and delivery of academic services exclusive of holidays, emergency closings or other days where the office or academic delivery of services are closed. The person vested with authority at the appropriate level may extend any of the time periods contained herein for good cause. Any extensions must be communicated in writing to all parties. For the purposes of this Policy, each step shall be afforded three (3) weeks (21 academic days) as a standard time limit. The time line shall begin at the time of the first occurrence or at the time a student, using reasonable due diligence, should have obtained knowledge of the first occurrence of the event giving rise to the complaint. If the complaint or grievance is not presented or processed within the established limits, it shall not be considered. If a complaint or grievance is not appealed to the next step within the established time limits, it shall be considered settled (on the basis of the last answer). If, after presentation at any step, a USF System department, administrator, and/or staff member does not discuss and/or answer the complaint or grievance with the student within the established time limits, the student may treat the complaint or grievance as denied at that step and may appeal the complaint or grievance to the next step.

4. **Written Communication** may be either e-mail or postal mail.

IV. PROCESS STEPS/SPECIFIC PROVISIONS

1. Informal General Student Complaints:
a. The Student must first attempt to address his/her complaint by discussing it with the person most directly involved with their complaint within the time period defined above. If the complaint is not resolved, the student may elect to elevate the complaint in writing to a Formal General Student Grievance as provided below.

b. If possible, the USF System department, administrator, and/or staff member should respond by meeting with the student to attempt an agreement or resolution.

c. If there is no agreement or resolution reached by a meeting, or if either party determines a meeting is not a viable alternative, the student may schedule a time to discuss the complaint with the employee’s direct supervisor. The student is responsible for providing copies of all relevant documents including emails and previous determinations from the incident and any attempt at resolution.

d. The direct supervisor will review previous resolution steps, discuss the complaint with the student and other appropriate individuals, and communicate a final answer to the student in writing.

2. Formal General Student Grievances:

a. If the student believes that the answer or action determined by the Informal General Complaint Process has violated published policies and procedures or has been applied to the student in a manner different from other students, the student may file a formal grievance utilizing the appropriate form to the appropriate System officer as follows:

   **USF:** Office of the Dean of Students (In cases involving USF Health, the Dean of Students will accept the complaint and if it moves beyond level (a) below, the Dean of Students will transfer the matter for review and final determination to USF Health. USF Health will identify the appropriate reviewing officer who will provide the final determination back to the Dean of Students for record keeping purposes only).

   **USFSP:** Office of the Dean

   **USFSM:** Office of the Dean

b. Grievances regarding Dean or Student Affair Administrator: If the grievance is pertaining to actions of any of the three identified persons or offices listed above, the student should file their Grievance with the Vice President of Student Affairs and Student Success or the highest level of administrative officer vested with the authority over student affairs issues at the USF System Institution.
c. The Dean or System Officer (herein “Dean”) identified above will review the form and materials submitted by the student to see if the material constitutes a grievance, which must include reference to the specific policy or procedure that has been violated or applied differently to the student. If the Dean determines that the complaint does not constitute a grievance, the Dean will communicate to the student and the involved USF department, administrator, and/or staff member and the complaint and/or grievance will be considered closed.

d. If the Dean* determines that the complaint and materials do constitute a grievance, the Dean shall conduct a thorough review and provide a written statement of finding to the student and the involved USF department, administrator, and/or staff member. Specific remedies will be proposed and corrective action will be recommended by the Dean. It is important to note that the Dean can only recommend corrective action and assist in communicating that action to the parties. (*In USF Health cases, this review and determination will be made by the appropriate reviewing officer with the final determination reported back to the Dean).

Current Responsible Office*: Student Affairs and Student Success

*Refer to the appropriate Responsible Office website for a current name of the Vice President or other Responsible Officer.

History: New 8-23-11, Amended 2-17-12 (technical), 10-16-12 (technical), 3-24-16 (technical), 11-29-17 (technical)