NACRJ Policy Statement
on Community and Restorative Justice in Higher Education

Policy
The National Association of Community and Restorative Justice (NACRJ) Board of Directors promotes policies and procedures that allow for community justice (CJ) and restorative justice processes to be implemented in higher education institutions. In higher education, restorative processes are inclusive and collaborative decision-making practices that build community and respond to community harms. Such approaches are responsive to community conditions, individual incidents of misconduct as well as to the broader cultural contexts that support such behavior by offering non-adversarial options for prevention education, resolution, and pathways to safe and accountable reintegration. They also create opportunities to address difficult community issues in constructive and meaningful ways. Community justice and restorative justice practices offer interventions that focus on understanding the harm caused, how to repair harm, how to prevent its reoccurrence, and how to create safer campus communities. In support of the policy position, NACRJ is calling for higher education institutions to:

1. Incorporate principles of restorative justice and community justice into its student, faculty, and staff governance policies.
2. Provide technical assistance and training to faculty, students, and staff on the practice and implementation of both types of relational justice practices.
3. Encourage faculty to offer coursework in restorative justice across the liberal arts, and particularly in disciplines that prepare students for professions using restorative practices such as social work, education (K-12 & early childhood), K-12 educational leadership, higher education administration, public policy, law and criminal justice among others.
4. Support research programs in both community and restorative justice including basic research on the theory and causal mechanisms and applied research on their effectiveness.
5. Provide workshops for faculty on the pedagogical use of restorative practices in their classrooms.
6. Develop restorative justice programs in Student Affairs that respond to student misconduct and threats to a positive and inclusive living and learning climate, and provide opportunities for social-emotional learning, relationship-building, traumatic incidents, and skills in conflict resolution and civil discourse. Areas of primary concern include student conduct, residential life, diversity and inclusion, religious and spiritual life, fraternities and sororities, and athletics.
7. Encourage human resource departments to incorporate restorative and community justice principles and practices to improve the campus workplace for faculty and staff in their relations with one another as well as their relationships with students.
8. Support relational justice practices through civic engagement and service learning. Provide opportunities for students to conduct independent studies, internships, and
community service with community-based RJ organizations and restorative initiatives in K-12 schools and criminal justice agencies. Encourage community-based research efforts that support RJ organizations. Provide policy analyses for RJ legislation.

Rationale

1. The campus setting is an ideal location for the exploration and development of relational justice practices. College campuses are whole communities—places where people live, work, eat, and play. They are also unique communities known for their liberal ideals. Faculty and students have the freedom to research new ideas. Students (at least traditionally aged 18-22 year olds) are developmentally predisposed to explore new self-identities and new ways of living, often challenging conventional norms and behavioral standards. With a quarter of the population turning over each year, campuses are in constant flux, creating and recreating their unique cultures. Campuses are places of experimentation and change, charged discourse and sustained reflection. Restorative justice is a philosophy based on deep listening, attentiveness to the consequences of individual behavior and collective actions, and collaborative decision-making that promotes the common good. Higher education institutions generally have missions of service, educating students to be personally successful, but more importantly, to be competent and responsible members of a democratic society.

2. The campus setting faces several challenges that can be effectively addressed through relational justice practices (i.e., restorative justice and community justice).
   a. Although often espousing liberal and democratic ideals, higher education is structured in hierarchies that often reproduce power and privilege. Relational justice practices addressing quality of life issues on-campus (i.e., community justice) and individual or group conflicts (i.e., restorative justice) provide venues to explore these social structures, provide voice to marginalized community members (first generation students, LGBTQ students, students of color, staff in relation to faculty, contingent faculty in relation to tenure-track faculty, untenured faculty in relation to tenured faculty, etc.), and RJ practices develop pathways to inclusive and egalitarian policies and programs.
   b. Campus community members frequently experience bias incidents—racist graffiti, name-calling, and assaults or more subtle, but daily microaggressions inside and outside the classroom; Muslim students are told they are terrorists or have their hijabs torn from their heads; swastikas appear on Hillel office doors; Latinx students are taunted that they will be soon deported, etc. Restorative practices provide safe spaces for campus community members to tell their stories, heal together and offer support, and plan educational events and demonstrations of solidarity.
   c. Sexual misconduct, sexual harassment, and intimate partner violence, from cat-calling to dance floor groping to stalking to sexual assault, occur on a regular basis. Most of it goes unreported because students do not believe campuses can respond effectively to their needs. This also applies to incidents of sexual misconduct and harm that occur between faculty and other administrative staff and students, recognizing the dynamics of power and privilege in those
relationships. Restorative justice is a trauma-informed approach that works sensitively with survivors of sexual misconduct and IPV to assist in their healing process. Restorative practices such as Circles of Support and Accountability can assist students who have been suspended for conduct violations to return to the campus to be successful as students and reassure the community that they will be safe and responsible.

d. Restorative justice practices can be effective for a wide range of conduct violations and campus conflicts from alcohol violations to hazing to academic integrity.

e. Community justice practices can be effective in changing campus culture and improving the quality of life experiences for all who work, live or attend classes on university and college campuses.

3. A variety of restorative justice practices have already been implemented and shown to be effective, particularly for college student misconduct, prevention education, proactive community-building, addressing campus climate issues, and successful reintegration of students who have been suspended. Among the most common practices are the following:

a. RJ Conferences. This model focuses on the facilitated dialogue between students who have caused harm and harmed parties. After a discussion of the harm, the parties (rather than the conduct administrator or hearing board) decide what steps the students can take to repair the harm. Trained facilitators guide the dialogue.

b. RJ Circles. These are similar to RJ conferences, but borrow practices from indigenous traditions, especially the Native American practice of using a "talking piece." This is a symbolic or sacred object that is held by the speaker, indicating that no one else should speak. Circles are used for a variety of purposes; often they are used for discussion of difficult campus climate issues or community building in residential life and orientation programming.

c. RJ Boards. These are restorative adaptations of traditional conduct boards and include standing group of members that may be drawn from faculty, staff, and students.

d. RJ Administrative Hearings. Most campuses rely on one-on-one administrative hearings to manage their conduct caseloads with large universities often processing thousands of cases each year. A restorative hearing includes an emphasis on identifying what harm was caused by the violation and how the student can repair it.