

# Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

## About the University Hotline

### **What is the University Hotline?**

North Carolina A&T State University (A&T) uses **EthicsPoint**<sup>1</sup>, a confidential reporting tool created by NAVEX Global, Inc., for the University Hotline. It provides a confidential and anonymous method for reporting instances of fraud, waste, abuse, improper conduct, potential noncompliance with laws, regulations, university policies, standards and other concerns.

The University Hotline offers both telephone and web-based reporting options. Neither service is maintained on the University's systems or by University employees. Reports can be filed anonymously and held securely in EthicsPoint.

### **Why do we need a tool like the University Hotline?**

All members of the campus community are required to maintain integrity and ethical behavior in conducting operations and activities. The University prefers the use of direct discussions with one's supervisor and other existing channels of communication as the initial approach to raising concerns. However, some circumstances or situations may require that individuals remain anonymous while expressing concerns about potential noncompliance.

### **Do we have other channels of communication about compliance concerns?**

There is a variety of university channels of communication for expressing concerns and resolving them. Direct communication between the involved persons is generally preferred. When individuals feel that direct communication is not a constructive option, the University Hotline provides an additional method of reporting "good faith" compliance concerns.

### **What is the difference between the University Hotline and other "hotlines" like the State Auditor's hotline?**

The University Hotline provides a method to report concerns anonymously through an independent, third-party provider and it allows for the University to investigate the reported matters.

## Reporting – General (How does it work?)

### **Who can file a report?**

The University Hotline, is designed for employees to report instances of fraud, waste, abuse, improper conduct, potential noncompliance with laws, regulations, university policies, standards and other concerns.

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**What types of situations should I report?**

You should file reports about any violations of A&T's Compliance Program and Standards of Ethical Conduct. The following are some examples of violations that should be reported: Accounting Irregularities/Fraud, Conflict of Interest & Commitment, Environmental & Safety Matters, Confidentiality of Student Records, Research Misconduct, NCAA Violations, Donor Stewardship, and Misuse of State Resources.

**May reports be filed through the University Hotline using either the internet or the telephone?**

Yes. The University Hotline ensures that employees can file a report anonymously and in the manner most comfortable or convenient to them.

**Where do these reports go? Who can access them?**

Reports made to the University Hotline are entered directly on the EthicsPoint<sup>2</sup> secure server to prevent any possible breach in security. Reports may be submitted through the secure webpage or toll-free telephone number. If you choose to file a report using the toll-free phone number, a NAVEX Global intake specialist will enter the report information into the EthicsPoint system on your behalf.

NAVEX Global makes these reports available on the EthicsPoint system only to specific individuals at the University who are charged with evaluating the report. Each of these report recipients has had training in keeping these anonymous reports in the utmost confidence.

**How long will it take for me to file a complaint?**

Depending on the nature of the concern, it should generally take less than 15 minutes to file a report via the University Hotline. We do not expect any web-based reporting to take longer than 30 minutes.

**I am not sure if what I have observed or heard is a violation of University policy, or involves unethical behavior, but it just does not look right to me. What should I do?**

You should file a report. The University Hotline can help you prepare and file your report so it can be properly understood. We would rather be alerted to a situation that turned out to be harmless than let possible violations go unchecked because you weren't sure.

**Can a person file a report without access to the internet?**

If you do not have access to a computer, you can call the University Hotline toll-free hotline at **877-507-7313**, which is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

**What happens after a report is filed?**

When filing a report through either the University Hotline website or toll-free telephone number, you receive a unique username (report key) and are asked to choose a password. The report key and password allow you to return to the University Hotline to check your report for comments or follow-up questions. Meanwhile, EthicsPoint<sup>3</sup> notifies the appropriate designated University Hotline Administrator that there is a report posted to a secure access site on the EthicsPoint system. Within 5-6 business days, the

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University Hotline Administrator will review the allegations and acknowledge receipt of the report. Based on the nature of the allegations, the report is assigned for review and resolution.

Reporters should return to the University Hotline and click “Track a Report” after 10 business days to check for a University response and answer any questions that have been posed.

**What if my boss or other managers are involved in a violation? Won't they get the report and start a cover-up?**

The University Hotline report distribution process is designed so that implicated parties are not notified or granted access to reports in which they have been named.

**What if I remember something important about the incident after filing the report? Or what if the University has further questions concerning the report?**

When you file a report using the University Hotline website or toll-free telephone number, you receive a unique username (report key) and are asked to choose a password. You can return to the University Hotline either by internet or telephone and use your *report key* and *password* to access the original report, answer any questions that have been posed, and add supplementary information that will help resolve open issues. We strongly suggest that you return to the site within 10 business days of filing your initial report to answer any follow-up questions. Through the University Hotline's secure platform, you and the University can enter into an “anonymous dialogue” called *EthicsChat* where you can clarify what you observed. The chat feature only works if both the reporter and the University Incident Manager are online at the same time. In an *EthicsChat* session, you will only be identified as “reporter” to the University Incident Manager.

**Won't this tool just encourage individuals to gripe or to make wild charges about others?**

The University Hotline provides a clear channel of communication for good faith concerns, and it is also structured to focus reporting on fraud, waste, abuse, improper conduct, and potential noncompliance with laws, regulations, university policies, standards, and other concerns. Reports or inquiries posted to the University Hotline help us assure that the University is a safe, secure, and ethical place to work. Although the University Hotline can be misused, we rely on integrity and good intentions of reporters to avoid frivolous or erroneous reports.

**How will I know if the University took my report seriously?**

Good faith inquiries and reports are essential for the effective functioning of the University, and thus the Hotline Administrators and Incident Managers take reports seriously. However, depending on the nature of the complaint, investigation, and resolution, the University may not be at liberty to reveal the results to the reporter or to others who have participated in the investigation.

## Security & Confidentiality in Reporting

**Are anonymity and confidentiality guaranteed?**

The University cannot guarantee either anonymity or confidentiality but we have established the University Hotline to provide maximum potential for both. In some situations, the University cannot by policy take action on a complaint unless

complainants are willing to identify themselves. An example is a charge of scientific misconduct (see the University's [Research Misconduct Policy](#)). Unless you identify yourself, your identity cannot be disclosed to the University. Should you choose to identify yourself, the University will keep your identity confidential, unless disclosure is required by law.

**Are follow-up reports as secure as the first one?**

All University Hotline correspondence is held in the same strict confidence as the initial report, continuing under the umbrella of anonymity.

**I am concerned that the information I provide the University Hotline will ultimately reveal my identity. How can you assure me that will not happen?**

The University Hotline is designed to protect your anonymity. However, if you wish to remain anonymous, you need to be sure that the information you provide does not reveal your identity by accident. If you are the only individual who could possibly know the reported facts, there may be an unintended deductive disclosure of your identity. The University will honor and protect your request for confidentiality to the extent possible as it fulfills its obligations in responding to the report.

**What if I want to be identified in the report?**

There is a section in the report for you to identify yourself if you wish to do so.

**Why would I want to disclose my name?**

Investigations are sometimes more effective if the investigator knows who the reporter is and is able to converse directly with the reporter to obtain information and clarification throughout the course of the investigation. The anonymous reporting line provides a mechanism that enables investigators to post questions or comments to the reporter, but this approach is not as effective as a live conversation.

**What about reprisal or retaliation for making a report?**

University policy and state law prohibit retaliation or reprisal against an individual for reporting in good faith a possible violation of state or federal law, rule or regulation. The University is committed to preventing retaliation against you after you make a "good faith" disclosure or for having reported wrongful conduct. If you feel you are experiencing retaliation, we encourage you to reach out to Human Resources personnel.