

Dear students (copy to adult members of the community),

We write to share some important updates about our new student conduct system.

- GAP1 vs. GAP2
- Updates on suspension and dismissal
- Forum for Q&A this Sunday at 3pm

We are constantly thinking about what it means to be an excellent institution, and your intellectual and personal growth are at the heart of this work. In addition to all the wonderful things you will accomplish over your Andover career, there will be times when you make mistakes of all different types and impacts. We are committed to helping you learn in those moments.

We hope that this update provides context and clarity around changes to our student conduct system. As you may know, our latest thinking around how we uphold our community standards has shifted focus from the outcome of a discipline committee meeting (censure, warning, probation, suspension, dismissal) to a focus on the structured support of student follow-up and learning. The growth and accountability plan (or GAP) is a key resource in this effort – helping students become more self-aware, access resources, hold themselves accountable, and ultimately, learn from their experiences. To give you an idea of the kinds of resources and expectations we may include in a student's growth and accountability plan, please see below:

- Meet the Essential Elements of Student Life
- Avoid further community standards violations
- Be forthright, open, and honest in all interactions and communications
- Meet weekly with a faculty mentor
- Reflect on the impact their behavior had on self, others, and the community
- Grow their understanding of PA's ethical values and community standards
- Learn about topics relevant to the behavior that resulted in their GAP
- Write apologies to people they've impacted with their decisions and actions
- Check in with their cluster dean after 5 weeks to make sure that they're making progress toward completing their GAP

- Create specific proposals to build a healthy and inclusive community
- Keep a journal of regular actions they've taken to demonstrate respect and care for others and for the community as a whole
- Participate in a review of their GAP progress and a holistic view of how they're showing up in our community at the end of 10 weeks

Increasingly, evidence shows that high-stakes consequences, such as suspension and dismissal, often do not effectively change behavior or promote growth. We are, therefore, limiting use of these responses in favor of more rigorous behavioral interventions. In Level 3 community standards conferences, we will more frequently provide students with a chance to demonstrate that they can live within our community standards. Further, if a student who has had a growth and accountability plan engages in behavior that the deans determine to be of serious concern (Level 2 or Level 3), we may choose to offer a student a second growth and accountability plan (or GAP2). In addition to the items listed above, we may include the following support structures:

- Consultation with outside experts such as adolescent psychiatrists or psychologists
- Mandated counseling and/or specific evaluations
- Accountability structures like drug testing and random room searches
- Journaling/documentation of ongoing steps they're taking to change behaviors to provide more rigorous follow up
- Supportive measures like dorm restrictions for boarding students/campus restrictions for day students

To be clear, a growth and accountability plan is a serious commitment, not an infinite free pass. While suspensions and dismissals should remain rare, there will be cases when, following thoughtful deliberation, separation from the Academy is found to be the best path forward.

While only a small percentage of Andover students will ever interact with the conduct system (less than 2% of our students this year have met with Level 2 or Level 3 community standards conferences), we believe in the promise of every student and will do all we can to support students no matter the challenges they face. We appreciate that every case is unique and requires a holistic approach, meaning that in developing our institutional responses, including GAP's, we aim to have our decisions informed by deep understanding of social, behavioral, and developmental insights.

Your wellbeing and growth are paramount. With this as our highest priority, we will continue to look for ways to improve the support we provide. We recognize that we are at the beginning of our shift to a system that will require additional resources to be successful. In the coming months and years, as we learn from experience, we will grow our prevention efforts, assessment systems, and support resources.

If you would like to talk about these changes in person, we will hold a Question & Answer forum in the Underwood Room on Sunday, January 29th, at 3pm.

Sincerely,

Dr. Kington
Head of School

Dr. Esty
Dean of Students

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