

Whistleblowing and Whistleblower Protection

Summary/Purpose: Defines “whistleblower,” explains how to report misconduct by an individual or organization within the University, and describes the protection given to whistleblowers.

The University of Mississippi is committed to maintaining a culture where ethics and integrity are not only valued, but practiced. A part of that culture is the ability of employees and other individuals to speak up without fear of retaliation when they have a reasonable belief that improper governmental action is taking place. Examples of improper governmental action include, but are not limited to, suspected fraud, waste, or abuse of University funds.

Administrators at all levels of management are responsible for setting the appropriate tone of intolerance for misconduct. Administrators are further responsible for detecting and preventing misconduct. Regardless, if misconduct does occur, employees should feel comfortable in reporting it.

How to report misconduct: Employees who have a reasonable belief that misconduct may be occurring, or has occurred, have a duty to report their concerns. Suspected misconduct may be reported to an employee’s immediate supervisor, department chair or dean (or to another individual in the employee’s chain of command), the Office of Internal Audit, the Department of Human Resources, the Office of the Provost, the Office of Equal Opportunity and Regulatory Compliance, or the Office of General Counsel. Employees who wish to report anonymously may do so at the EthicsPoint Hotline at <https://secure.ethicspoint.com/domain/media/en/gui/31500/index.html>.

Protection for whistleblowers: A “whistleblower” is an employee or student who reports in good faith alleged improper action by an individual or an organization within the University. The University abides by the state Whistleblower Protection Act, found at Miss. Code Ann. § 25-9-171 *et seq.* The Whistleblower Protection Act prohibits retaliation against individuals who provide information to a state investigative body. In addition to state law, the University complies with federal laws that prohibit retaliation against individuals who report improper conduct.

How to report retaliation: If you believe that you have been retaliated against for any protected lawful conduct including whistleblowing, contact the Department of Human Resources, the Office of the Provost, the Office of Equal Opportunity and Regulatory Compliance, or the Office of General Counsel.

Note: Employees who knowingly make a false report may be subject to discipline. Furthermore, the Mississippi Whistleblower Protection Act does not prevent the University from disciplining an employee for misconduct or poor performance.