FAQs: Reporting - General

Why do we need a system like SMU Confidential?

Samuel Merritt University is an institution with strong values of community, ethical leadership, responsibility, and integrity. As a community, we hold ourselves to the high standards set forth in our mission statement, policies, and handbooks. An effective reporting system supports all the university's efforts to promote a positive learning and work environment.

Why is SMU Confidential replacing SMU Voices?

Although SMU Voices served our university community as an avenue for expressing concerns and making suggestions in an anonymous manner, SMU Confidential is a more comprehensive platform that provides many important features that were not available on the SMU Voices platform. SMU Confidential is maintained by an independent third-party company, thereby further protecting reporters' anonymity. Additionally, concerns raised through SMU Confidential are addressed in real-time, with status updates, enhanced case management, and an overall improved experience for individuals who submit a report.

If I see a violation, shouldn't I just report it to my manager, student leader, security, or the Office of People and Culture (OPC) and let them deal with it?

When you observe behavior that you believe violates SMU policy, we strongly encourage you to report it. Ideally, you should bring any concerns forward to those university officials responsible under the policy.

However, we recognize that there may be circumstances when you do not feel comfortable reporting the issue in this manner. It is for such circumstances that we have partnered with a third-party company, Campus Confidential. We would rather you report anonymously than keep the concerns to yourself. If you choose to file an anonymous report and would like to check the status in the "Check Report Status" section of SMU Confidential, please retain your login code, password, and report number. Also, you may be asked to provide additional information to aid in the investigation of the case.

Why should I report what I know? What's in it for me?

We all have the expectation of learning and working in a positive environment. With that comes the responsibility of behaving ethically and alerting the appropriate people when someone's conduct is not aligning with our standards. By working together, we can create and maintain a safe and productive community.

Where do these reports go? Who can access them?

Reports are entered directly onto a secure server to prevent any possible breach in security. The reports are made available only to specific individuals within the university who are charged with evaluating the report, based on the type of violation and location of the incident. Each recipient of these reports has undergone training to ensure the strictest confidentiality when handling cases. At the end of the report process, you will see which case manager is assigned to your case.

FAQs: Reporting Security & Confidentiality

It is my understanding that any report I send from a university computer generates a server log that shows every website that my computer connects with, and won't this log identify me as a report originator?

The third-party company Campus Confidential does not generate or maintain any internal connection logs with IP addresses, so no information linking your computer to SMU Confidential is available. Campus Confidential also strips all meta-data attached to uploaded evidence files. Additionally, Campus Confidential is contractually committed not to pursue a reporter's identity. If you do not feel comfortable making a report on your work or university computer, you have the option of using a computer outside our university and work environment (such as on your personal laptop, mobile phone, or at an Internet café, at a friend's house, etc.) through the SMU Confidential secure website.

I am concerned that the information I provide via SMU Confidential will ultimately reveal my identity. How can you assure me that will not happen?

The SMU Confidential system is designed to protect your anonymity. However, if you wish to remain anonymous, you - as a reporting party - need to ensure that the body of the report does not reveal your identity by accident. For example, "From my office next to Jane Smith," or "In my 28 years, I have never..."

What if I want to be identified with my report?
If you wish to identify yourself, there is an option to do so.

You have three options of reporting:

- **Completely Anonymously.** With this option, your identity will not be disclosed to SMU or to Campus Confidential. You will not be asked for your name or contact information if you request to remain anonymous, and your IP addresses is not stored. If you choose this option, you must make a note of your assigned Login Name and Password (which you can change). You can use this login information to keep abreast of the status of your report, add more information, and answer any questions in a safe, secure, and anonymous environment.

- **Anonymous to the University:** This option is for those who are comfortable revealing their name and contact information to the Campus Confidential, but not to SMU.

- **Share Name & Contact Info:** This option is for those situations in which you do not wish to remain anonymous and choose to reveal your identity and contact information to both SMU and to Campus Confidential.

FAQs: Tips & Best Practice

I am aware of some individuals involved with unethical conduct, but it doesn't affect me. Why should I bother reporting it?

Ethical leadership is at the hallmark of all we do at SMU. Unethical conduct, at any level, ultimately hurts the students, employees, community, and the university. Should you become aware of any misconduct or ethical violations, you are encouraged to recognize it as your responsibility to report it.

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

Communicate with your supervisor or advisor. If you do not feel comfortable doing that, file a report through SMU Confidential. We'd rather you report a situation that proves to be harmless than let possible unethical behavior go unaddressed because of uncertainty.

What if my supervisors, teachers, or other personnel are involved in a violation? Won't they get the report and start a cover-up?

The SMU Confidential system and report distribution are designed so that implicated parties are not notified or granted access to reports in which they have been named. Before submitting your report, you will be able to view the team assigned to your case. If you wish to exclude a specific individual from that team, you may do so.

What if I remember something important about the incident after I file the report? Or what if the company has further questions for me concerning my report?

When you file a report via SMU Confidential, you receive unique log in information that you can use to return to the SMU Confidential system to access the original report, add more detail and information or answer questions posed by a university representative that will help resolve open issues. Given the time-sensitive nature of many cases, we highly recommend returning to the site within the specified timeframe to respond to questions. You and the university now have entered an "anonymous dialogue," where situations are not only identified, but can also be resolved, no matter how complex.

Are these follow-ups on reports as secure as the first one?
All SMU Confidential correspondences are held in the same strict confidence as the initial report, continuing under the umbrella of anonymity.