The student complaint process at City College has come under heavy scrutiny recently, resulting in a resolution of dissatisfaction which the Associated Students Council (ASC) passed by unanimous vote on May 3, 2000.

The adoption of the resolution will hopefully bring some support for students who have become disenchanted after attempting to file complaints under the current system, with no success.

David Newman was a City College student for five years. When his disillusionment with the Financial Aid Department became a battle against the complaint process policy, he began letter writing campaigns and student surveys to go along with his complaints. Newman felt that no one in the department was trying to address his concerns. "What is really needed in the complaint process is an effective voice," said Newman, "is some kind of accountability."

The process is divided into formal and informal complaints. According to Frank Chong, Dean of Student Affairs and Co-chair of the student Success/Preparation Committee, "In a complaint, we try to resolve it at the lowest level and try to get some kind of agreement about what's wrong."

The problem is that not every complaint can be worked out between two parties. When complaints cannot be resolved through the first informal stages, the student's options seem to narrow. There is no requirement for mediation or counseling, and the time limit a complaint is given for resolution, effectively slows any fact-finding process.

Currently, informal complaints are unrecorded as there is no policy that requires that they be tracked. Statistics are unavailable to illustrate the number of students with complaints, the nature of the complaints and how the issues of these complaints could be effecting students.

The broad range of complaints could be a factor. "There's really no tracking mechanism because there's so many different levels, it's almost impossible to formally track," said Chong.

When the complaint reaches the formal level, the issues go to a hearing committee. Formal complaints are ruled on, by the supervisor of the individual in question. For instance, if a student is having differences with an instructor and wants to process a formal complaint, a committee is formed to hear the complaint. The committee is typically comprised of the department chair and another instructor in the department. But students are excluded from the hearings, and again, there is no account of the meeting. This is where accusations of a "good ol' boy," system have been directed. "My answer to that," said Chong, "is that sometimes it's true and sometimes it's not. Sometimes the faculty member is hardest on their own people."

The ASC has also brought up the issue of faculty retaliation in the resolution. This followed an alleged misconduct by faculty members who had received complaints against them.

"There is no clear-cut policy that prohibits this type of action. Steven Cockrell, a student representative for the Student Success Committee, and a major figure in the reform movement, contends that there is obvious bias and imbalance. "One of our concerns is that students are in an inherently inferior or weaker position from the people they are complaining about," Cockrell said. "Generally, the people they are complaining about have more power, they have more clout, they have more education; so students right off the bat are fighting an uphill battle."

The complaint issue is one of power: who has it and who doesn't, and whether or not, students have an effective voice when their needs are not met. A student's voice is especially important when issues of overcrowding, lack of supplies, financial aid and counseling effect them.

All sides have recognized the problem and expressed their respective concerns, yet there is still a wait-and-see approach on this issue. Discussion and implementation is still a work in progress as the new semester begins.

Taking an obvious problem and getting both sides together to solve it, is necessary for any type of resolution. The Shared Governance Committee, which is comprised of students, faculty members and administrators will be one of the major influences on how fast the complaint process is revamped.

Desirree Abshire, the appointed A.S. Shared Governance Committee Coordinator, is in the process of putting the important committee together.

Abshire will be working with the administration, faculty and the ASC. Anyone interested in working with her and others this semester can contact her at the Student Union, Ext. 8. In the next few weeks the Shared Governance Committee Chairperson will be selected.

**Associated Students Council Resolution**

**WHEREAS,** State Law, District Policy, and Accreditation Standards require the College to provide clearly stated, uniform, and safe student grievance procedures which are implemented in a fair and consistent manner (due process); and

**WHEREAS,** The procedures of the CCSF Student Complaint Process are not clearly and thoroughly defined or consistent and uniform, resulting in arbitrary and capricious decisions; and

**WHEREAS,** City College of San Francisco, unlike most other California Community Colleges, excludes students from the Student Complaint Hearing Committee, resulting in unresponsive and biased hearings; and

**WHEREAS,** CCSF's Student Complaint Process is too slow to offer effective relief; and

**WHEREAS,** There are no procedures for the enforcement or implementation of rulings, which are often ignored, altered, or delayed; and

**WHEREAS,** There is no recordation of hearings to monitor quality, provide accountability, or for use in appeals; and

**WHEREAS,** There is no provision for appeals of decisions in the event that due process is not provided; and

**WHEREAS,** Student complainants are not protected against retaliation:

"While the College hopes that its faculty does not retaliate [against] or harass students for any reason, it cannot, however, mandate that instructors revert to previous attitude[s] or behavior." (Memorandum from Student Complaint Committee to Chancellor Philip Day, October 6, 1999); now, therefore, be it

**RESOLVED,** That the Associated Students Council of City College of San Francisco affirms that the College's Student Complaint Process is unclear, biased, and unsafe. For the welfare of students, we request that the Dean of Students be required to inform prospective student complainants of this Resolution and provide them with a copy of it prior to the initiation of the complaint process.