

# WORKPLACE CONSENSUAL RELATIONSHIPS

---

## I. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to address concerns where a consensual relationship exists between a Faculty member and his or her student or a supervisor and his or her subordinate. The type of consensual relationship addressed by this policy is one of a romantic or sexual nature.

## II. Scope

This policy applies to all College employees, including temporary, interim, and specialized professional services employees, volunteers, as well as Board members. This policy also applies to independent contractors who have a direct supervisory relationship to any College employees.

## III. Definitions

- A. Consensual relationship: One entered into willingly by both parties, free of any coercion.
- B. Romantic relationship: One characterized by displaying or expressing erotic love or strong affection.
- C. Sexual relationship: One involving sexual contact of any degree.
- D. Direct Supervision: Is defined as a direct line of authority no matter how far removed (an employee who reports to a Manager who reports to a Director who reports to the Vice President is in a direct line of authority to the Vice President).
- E. Line of authority: As indicated on the official organization chart.

## IV. General

Employees and supervisors are expected to be fully aware of their professional responsibilities in consensual workplace relationships, and avoid apparent or actual conflict of interest, favoritism, or bias. Romantic and sexual relationships between a faculty member and his or her student or between a supervisor and his or her subordinates are full of the potential for exploitation. The respect and trust accorded a faculty member by his or her student or a supervisor by his or her subordinate, as well as the power exercised in an academic or evaluative role, makes voluntary consent by the student or subordinate suspect, even when both parties initially have expressed consent. The development of a romantic or sexual relationship renders the faculty member or supervisor and the College vulnerable to possible later allegations of sexual harassment in light of the significant power differential that exists between faculty members and students, and between supervisors and subordinates under his or her direct supervision; and vulnerable to charges of sex discrimination if the faculty member or supervisor affords unwarranted favorable treatment to the student or subordinate. As such, romantic and sexual relationships between faculty and his or her student (i.e. there is some current

academic nexus between the faculty member and student, or such a nexus has existed within the preceding four months), and between a supervisor and his or her subordinate under his or her direct supervision are prohibited and must be avoided. Violation of this policy is considered professional misconduct and may be grounds for discipline, up to and including termination.

If a romantic and/or sexual relationship exists or develops between a faculty member and his or her students; or between a supervisor and his or her subordinates under his or her direct supervision, there must be prompt disclosure of the relationship. The faculty member or supervisor should provide written notification to Human Resources as soon as the faculty member or supervisor becomes aware of an actual or potential prohibited conflict of interest based on a consensual relationship (e.g., a student's enrollment in a class section assigned to the faculty member or an individual's candidacy for a position under the supervisor's direct supervision). Failure to comply with these disclosure requirements constitutes a violation of policy and may be grounds for discipline, up to and including termination.

Upon receipt of the written disclosure, College leadership will determine the best course of action to avoid or eliminate the conflict of interest. This will most often consist of making alternative arrangements for supervision of the subordinate or education of the student. Employees who disclose relationships in conformance with this policy will not be subject to discipline based on the existence of a consensual relationship.

## **V. Responsibility**

Responsibility for the interpretation and administration of this policy is delegated to the Executive Director of Human Resources or his/her designee.

## **VI. Waiver**

The Board may waive this policy by resolution of the Board through a recommendation of the President.

Adopted: February 16, 2010  
Revised: 6/18/2018