



Fraternization and Employment of Relatives

Relationships at Work

The University is committed to providing equal employment opportunities to its employees, and also providing work environments that are conducive to maximizing individual contribution to our collaborative and collective goals. As such, employees are encouraged to socialize and develop professional relationships provided such relationships do not interfere with the overall effectiveness and functionality of the workplace. Employees who engage in intimate relationships (including those of a romantic and sexual nature) should be aware of their professional responsibilities and will be responsible for assuring that their relationship does not raise concerns in regards to favoritism, bias, ethics and conflict of interest. Intimate relationships have the potential to interfere with the University's ability to provide equal employment opportunities for its employees and, in some instances, may constitute sexual harassment or other unlawful discrimination. To minimize conflicts of interest which often occur as a result of intimate relationships, the University prohibits its employees from entering into intimate relationships with other employees or students for whom they have professional supervisory responsibility. Intimate relationship is defined as a relationship between individuals who have or have had a relationship of a romantic or intimate nature. This applies regardless of the sexual orientation of the parties involved.

If two employees or an employee and student marry, become related, or enter into an intimate relationship, they may not remain in a professional supervisory relationship or in positions where one individual may affect the educational environment of the student or the terms or conditions of employment of another employee. The parties may be separated by reassignment if possible or terminated from employment at the discretion of the University.

- The Supervisor or faculty or staff member who has influence and/or control over the other's conditions of employment has an obligation to disclose his/her relationship immediately to the department head or next level of administration, or to Human Resources.
- The other staff member involved in the relationship is encouraged to disclose the relationship to the next level administrator, or to Human Resources, without sanctions.

Relationships with Students

When faculty and staff members interact with students, they are in a position of trust and power. These relationships must not breach our ethical standards, or jeopardize the effective functioning of the University by giving the appearance of either favoritism or unfairness in the exercise of professional judgment. In developing relationships with students, faculty and staff members are expected to be aware of their professional responsibilities, and to avoid perceived or actual conflict of interest, favoritism or bias.

Accordingly, intimate relationships, even if consensual, are prohibited between a faculty or staff member and a student if the faculty or staff member is in a position to exercise power or authority over the student. Efforts by faculty and staff members to initiate such relationships also are expressly prohibited. Violation of this policy by a faculty or staff member is grounds for disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment.

Failure to adhere to this policy, including failure to disclose relationships that violate this policy, will subject the supervisory faculty or staff member to disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment.

Intimate relationships between a student and a faculty or staff member who is not in a position to exercise direct power or authority over that student also may be inappropriate, even if they are consensual. Any staff member who engages in such a relationship must accept responsibility for assuring that it does not result in a conflict of interest or raise other issues of professionalism. In cases of doubt, refer to the University's Conflict of Interest Policy, in the Employee Handbook, for additional guidance and information.

While relatives of employees or the Board of Trustees may be employed by the University, a familial relationship among employees can also create an actual, or at least, a potential conflict of interest in the employment setting. To avoid this problem, the University may refuse to hire or place a relative in a position where the potential for favoritism or conflict exists.

In other cases where a conflict or the potential for conflict arises between an employee and another employee or student, even if there is no professional supervisory responsibility involved, the parties may be separated by reassignment if possible or terminated from employment at the discretion of the University.

For purposes of this policy, a "relative" is any person who is related by blood or marriage, or whose relationship with the employee is similar to that of persons who are related by blood or marriage. Also, an individual has "professional supervisory responsibility" for another individual if he or she performs functions including, but not limited to, supervising, evaluating, hiring, coaching, counseling, recommending, advising, grading, teaching, or making decisions that confer benefits such as

compensation, promotions, academic grades and progress, financial aid awards or other remuneration that may impact upon other academic or employment opportunities.