Proposed Policy for Distribution to Faculty Assembly

UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH POLICY 02-04-03

CATEGORY: ACADEMIC AFFAIRS
SECTION: Faculty Responsibilities
SUBJECT: Faculty-Student Relationships
EFFECTIVE DATE: July 19, 1996
PAGE(S): 1

Suggestion:

CATEGORY: UNIVERSITY COMMUNITY*
SECTION: Employee Responsibilities
SUBJECT: Consensual Relationships
EFFECTIVE DATE: 
PAGE(S): 3

*The committee suggests creating a new category called “University Community” for policies and procedures that cover all members of the University community.

I. SCOPE

This document establishes policy pertaining to the University’s approach to consensual romantic or sexual relationships. This policy has been established in an effort to ensure that the University’s educational and work environment is based on professional relationships in an atmosphere of mutual trust and respect. When individuals involved in a consensual romantic or sexual relationship are in positions of unequal power at the University, or closely work together, there is the potential for a conflict of interest, favoritism, and exploitation. In order to protect the integrity of the University’s academic and work environment, this policy outlines limitations on consensual romantic, sexual or intimate relationships (collectively referenced as “consensual relationships”) between faculty, staff and students at the University.

As an academic institution, the well-being and safety of our students is a primary concern and this concern will be paramount in administering this policy. Consensual relationships between faculty/staff and students are strongly discouraged. Similarly, consensual relationships between co-workers who work closely together or between a supervisor and subordinate are usually ill-advised.
II. JURISDICTION

This policy applies to all members of the University community, including all students, post-doctoral associates and post-doctoral scholars, research associates, faculty, faculty administrators, staff, staff administrators and other University officials, whether full- or part-time.

III. POLICY

A. CONSENSUAL RELATIONSHIPS WITH STUDENTS

The University prohibits faculty or staff members from soliciting or having consensual relationships with any undergraduate or graduate student whose academic work, teaching, residence life, athletics, employment, or conduct they are directly or indirectly responsible for supervising or evaluating, or for whom there is the reasonable likelihood of future supervision or evaluation.¹

All such consensual relationships, including those that commenced prior to the onset of supervision or evaluation, must be disclosed to the faculty or staff member’s supervisor, department chair, dean, or, where appropriate, higher administrative authority. In addition, the faculty or staff member must be removed from all supervisory, evaluative, and/or formal advisory roles with respect to the student; and a management plan to transition supervisory authority and manage potential conflicts must be developed and implemented.

Consensual relationships that harm the academic atmosphere, undermine professionalism, or hinder the fulfillment of our academic mission are also prohibited, even if there is no supervision or evaluation involved. As noted, the well-being and safety of our students is a primary concern and this concern will be paramount in administering this policy.

B. CONSENSUAL RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN EMPLOYEES

The University prohibits supervisors (including faculty members) from beginning or attempting to initiate a consensual relationship with an employee under the

¹ This includes but is not limited to advisors, coaches, graduate student teaching assistants, teaching fellows, instructors, post-doctoral fellows in a laboratory, thesis committee members, and members of a department’s graduate committee. It includes anyone appointed by the University as a teacher, researcher, or academic administrator, including graduate and undergraduate students so appointed.
supervisor’s area of responsibility. All such consensual relationships, including those that commenced prior to the onset of supervision or evaluation, must be disclosed by the supervisor to the appropriate administrator (department chair, dean, director) over the department/unit, and, a management plan must be developed and implemented to address supervisory authority and to otherwise assure objective evaluation and supervision and to manage potential conflicts.

C. POLICY VIOLATIONS

Persons in violation of this policy are subject to a range in sanctions, depending on the facts and circumstances and the application of other policies. Disclosure of the relationship and adherence to a management plan are among the circumstances that will be considered in this determination. Faculty or staff may forfeit the legal and monetary protections of the University’s indemnification policy in the event of any legal action that results from such relationships. See Policy 07-06-06, Faculty and Staff Indemnification.

IV. REFERENCES

Policy 07-06-06, Faculty and Staff Indemnification