

OREGON INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

Consensual Relations Leading to Conflicts of Interest OIT-22-055

The mission of the Oregon Institute of Technology is promoted by an atmosphere of professionalism, mutual respect and trust. This trust is put at risk when members of the University community engage in romantic or sexual relationships that involve persons with unequal power; i.e., administrator and faculty, faculty and student, supervisor and employee, coach and athlete. The power differential inherent in such relationships makes any apparent consent invalid.

Amorous relationships that might be appropriate in other circumstances are imprudent when they occur between a member of the University community and a person for whom he/she has a professional responsibility at Oregon Institute of Technology. The individual in authority bears the primary responsibility for any negative consequences resulting from a romantic or sexual relationship. Such consequences may include, but are not limited to, subsequent assertions of a coerced relationship, sexual harassment, discriminatory favoritism, or existence of a hostile learning or working environment.

If any party involved in a romantic or sexual relationship with another member of the campus community is in doubt as to whether a power differential does exist or whether the relationship violates this policy, he/she is strongly encouraged to consult in confidence with his/her academic advisor, the academic Department Chair, the administrative department supervisor or the Affirmative Action Officer.

Any employee involved in a consensual romantic or sexual relationship is required to advise his/her direct supervisor, the academic or administrative department head, or the appropriate Vice President of the relationship. The employee is further required to cooperate in eliminating any actual or potential conflict of interest resulting from the relationship.

Amorous Relationships in the Instructional Context

Commonly accepted standards of professional behavior and ethics require that faculty members not hold evaluative power over any student with whom they have a romantic or sexual relationship. Evaluative power includes, but is not limited to, decisions concerning grades, degrees, evaluations, and awards. Should such a relationship exist between a faculty member and a student, the faculty member is required to make immediate and formalized arrangements through his/her Department Chair to eliminate the conflict of interest.

Amorous Relationships Outside the Instructional Context

A similar proscription applies to administrators and supervisors in their relationships with students and employees over whom they have an evaluative role. A supervisor who is in a romantic or sexual relationship with another individual over whom he or she has an evaluative responsibility must remove himself or herself from personnel decisions concerning that individual including, but not limited to, appointment, retention, promotion, discipline, tenure, leave approval, and compensation.

Process and Sanctions

Concerns about actual or potential violations of this policy should be referred to the Affirmative Action Officer or the Director of Human Resources. No official action will be taken that could result in sanctions unless or until a formal non-anonymous written complaint is filed. Every reasonable effort will be made to resolve alleged policy violations on an informal basis. Disclosure during consultation shall be confidential. If necessary, a formal investigation of the alleged violation(s) will be initiated by the appropriate Vice President and conducted by the Affirmative Action Officer who shall submit a report of findings to the appropriate party. In the event that a real or potential conflict of interest exists on the part of the Affirmative Action Officer, the President shall appoint an investigator. Consequences, ranging from a letter of reprimand to dismissal for cause, may occur as a result of activities that are found to violate this policy.

Retaliation Prohibited

Retaliation in any form, including but not limited to adverse employment actions or academic grading and standing actions, in response to complaints made or concerns expressed under this policy is prohibited and subject to disciplinary action.

Policy Dissemination and Evaluation of Effectiveness

This policy shall be made available to all members of the University community through publication in policy manuals, the Student and Faculty Handbooks, and on the University website. Training on the policy and the potential consequences of consensual relationships shall be provided to all new faculty and staff and supervisors.

The Affirmative Action Officer shall conduct an annual review of policy dissemination, training, and submitted complaints, including their resolution; and shall conduct periodic campus-wide surveys and/or forums to assist in the evaluation of the effectiveness of the policy dissemination and training processes.

