

Motion to revise the Intimate Relationships Policy of the Faculty Handbook

Committee: Daniel Gorman, Jr., Reinhild Steingrover, Amy
Lerner, Sally A. Norton, Melissa Sturge-Apple, Valerie
Fleischauer, Nora Rubel, Michael L. Scott, Mark F. Bocko

Input into proposed revisions

- Old policy updated 2016-17
- Policies of 20+ other institutions (from Cornell website)
- Draft policy from the Dean's Office
- MJ White report

- Open comment period (> 50 comments)
- Revised proposal circulated to faculty this week

Next Steps on Intimate Relationships Policy

- Discussion of this presentation, the Senate will consider a motion to adopt the revised policy.
- The Provost then brings this motion to the Board of Trustees to approve at its May meeting.
- The Faculty Handbook is then updated.

III.C. Intimate Relationships

Freedom of thought and expression, and the ability to pursue knowledge unfettered, are essential to the academic enterprise. The faculty - student academic relationship is central to this enterprise. Faculty members serve as teachers, mentors, and evaluators, and are entrusted to nurture the intellectual development and professional preparation of their students. Intimate relationships between faculty and students can compromise the integrity of academic interactions. Given the innate power imbalance between faculty and students, intimate relationships create the potential for real or apparent coercion, favoritism, bias, or exploitation.

To provide clarity regarding the intentions and purposes of this policy, the following definitions are employed.

- **Student** refers to all full-time, part-time, visiting, or prospective undergraduate or graduate students, and all postgraduate trainees, research associates, residents, and fellows.
- For the purposes of this policy **Faculty** refers to tenure-track, instructional, **adjunct**, research, and clinical faculty members of all ranks. (Other individuals (e.g.: students, post-doctoral fellows and other trainees) who exercise academic authority over students should see their respective handbooks for related policies.)
- **Intimate relationships** refer to sexual, dating, and/or romantic relationships. Note: unwanted advances or other inappropriate behaviors may be considered sexual harassment, which fall under HR Policy 106.

- **The exercise of academic authority** includes the following activities (on or off campus): **teaching courses, (i.e., having primary or shared responsibility for the conduct of a course but not, for example, simply delivering occasional guest lectures)**; grading or otherwise evaluating student work; advising on formal projects such as a thesis or other research; serving as an external examiner or committee member on a thesis committee; participating in decisions regarding student funding or resource allocation; performing clinical supervision; making recommendations or otherwise influencing **decisions regarding** admissions, employment, **the awarding of** grants, fellowships, or **other** awards.

Every member of the faculty in a department, program, or division is assumed to exercise (or in the SMD, likely to exercise) academic authority over students and trainees in that academic unit. Faculty members are considered to be in a department, program, or division if they hold a primary or secondary appointment, teach courses, or act as **the** primary supervisor on theses or other academic projects **of students in that department.**

Any questions regarding the above definitions, as well as other aspects of this policy, should be directed to the University Intercessor or the appropriate Department Chair or Dean.

The Policy

III. C. i. Faculty are prohibited from entering into intimate relationships with undergraduate students of the University.

III. C. ii. Faculty are prohibited from entering into intimate relationships with graduate students or postgraduate trainees over whom they exercise academic authority as defined above.

III. C. iii. Faculty are prohibited from accepting academic authority (as defined above) over any student with whom they currently share an intimate relationship, or with whom they have shared such a relationship in the past.

Violations:

Violations of this policy will result in disciplinary actions, which can include, but are not limited to, written warnings, loss of privileges, mandatory training or counseling, probation, suspension, demotion (including revocation of tenure), expulsion, and termination of employment. Disciplinary actions will be enforced at the appropriate administrative **level** ranging from department Chair to the office of the Provost.

Exceptions:

In rare circumstances, an exception to this policy may be granted by agreement of both parties in the relationship, the Chair(s)/Dean(s) of the faculty member and **the** student and approval of the University Office of Counsel. **A** written management plan outlining measures to insure the integrity of the academic interaction and to protect the best interests of the student **must be filed with the cognizant Dean and reviewed annually.** The University Intercessor is available for guidance in the creation of such a plan.