

**RESOLUTION TO AMEND THE FACULTY HANDBOOK REGARDING ETHICS OF INTIMATE RELATIONSHIPS INVOLVING FACULTY**

**WHEREAS**, the Faculty Handbook describes the professional and ethical expectations of all faculty; and

**WHEREAS**, relationships involving faculty and those they supervise may arise but require specific action to mitigate bias and reduce the potential for exploitation; and

**WHEREAS**, ethical expectations that faculty do not engage in intimate relationships with those they supervise are stated but require additional clarification, and a procedure presently does not exist for disclosure in the event of the emergence of such relationship.

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** that the Faculty Handbook, Section 2.25, be amended as shown below with changes marked in red.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

That the changes to the Faculty Handbook as described above and attached be approved.

March 25, 2025

## Faculty Handbook, Section 2.25 (excerpt)

**Consensual Intimate Relationships.** It should be understood by all members of the university community that ~~consensual~~ amorous or sexual relationships (hereinafter referred to as ~~consensual intimate~~ relationships) that occur in the context of educational or employment supervision and evaluation present serious ethical concerns ~~and potential for bias or the perception thereof~~. All faculty have an obligation to eliminate any actual or perceived conflict of interest to maintain integrity and credibility for themselves and the university. Intimate relationships between supervisors and employees they directly supervise may violate university policy. ~~Consensual Intimate~~ relationships between faculty and students enrolled in their classes or students for whom they have professional responsibility as advisor or supervisor ~~violate the policy on professional ethics and responsibilities~~ contravene the Statement of Principles of Ethical Behavior. ~~Further, such relationships and may be a violation of non-discrimination and/or harassment prevention policies. Similarly, consensual romantic relationships between supervisors and employees they directly supervise violate university policy.~~

Faculty members or others performing instructional, ~~mentoring~~, or academic advising duties and supervisors involved in ~~consensual intimate~~ relationships must remove themselves from any activity or evaluation that may reward or penalize the affected student or employee. ~~To do so, faculty members are expected to disclose such a relationship to their department head, chair, or school director or other direct supervisor and work with them to identify and implement appropriate mitigating measures to change the supervisory structure. Failure to do so may lead to ethical investigations if reported to the Faculty Senate Committee on Ethics, and possible sanctions in accordance with the provisions of the Faculty Handbook governing that faculty member's employment category.~~

~~Consensual Intimate~~ relationships between faculty and students are particularly susceptible to exploitation. ~~An objective supervisory evaluation cannot exist if such a relationship exists. Moreover, t~~The respect and trust accorded a professor by a student, as well as the power exercised by the professor in giving praise or blame, ~~assigning grades, and providing recommendations for further study and future employment, make~~ may undermine the voluntary ~~nature of~~ consent by the student ~~suspect~~, given the fundamentally asymmetric nature of the relationship.

Faculty and supervisors should be aware that engaging in ~~consensual intimate~~ relationships with students or employees they supervise could make them liable for formal action. Even when both parties have consented to the development of such a relationship, it is the faculty member or supervisor who, by virtue of one's special responsibility, may be held accountable for unprofessional behavior. ~~Complaints to the Faculty Senate Committee on Ethics alleging discrimination and/or harassment, as defined above,~~ may be filed by either party to the ~~consensual intimate~~ relationship or by ~~an aggrieved~~ a third party outside the relationship.

~~For any report involving alleged nonconsensual sexual activity between a faculty member and a student, this section—including any process offered through the Faculty Senate Committee on Ethics—is superseded by university policies 1025 and 1026 and the~~

procedures referenced therein. Policy 1025 and Policy 1026 both prohibit sexual harassment—including *quid pro quo harassment* (i.e., a university employee conditioning educational benefit or service upon a person's participation in sexual conduct) and various forms of sexual violence. Any faculty member who becomes aware of an allegation of nonconsensual sexual activity between a faculty member and a student must report that allegation to the university's Office for Civil Rights Compliance and Prevention Education as required by university policy.