Consensual Romantic Relationships Policy

Unit: Human Resources
Effective Date: 8/13/2001
Revision Date: 1/15/2020

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Title: Associate Vice President for Human Resources

Purpose
The purpose of this policy is to clarify appropriate student/employee and employee/employee relationships.

Policy
The work or education relationships between employees and students as well as employees and other employees must be, and must remain, professional at all times. Romantic or sexual relationships between supervisors and subordinates or between students and employees who have authority or influence over aid, benefits, services, or the academic progress of that student may create an appearance of impropriety that is contrary to the interests of The University of Alabama (“University”). Even though a relationship may have been entirely consensual at its inception, a significant power differential exists when one party to the relationship has the authority to influence the academic progress, aid, benefits, or services of a student or to influence the pay, work assignments, benefits or working conditions of an employee. These are just some examples of influence and in no way is this intended as an exhaustive list. Such relationships are particularly vulnerable to exploitation as well as to claims of exploitation.

Employees shall not engage in consensual romantic or sexual relationships with any student or employee over whom they exercise any academic, administrative, supervisory, evaluative, counseling, advisory, or extracurricular authority or influence. This prohibition includes employees engaging in consensual romantic or sexual relationships with other employees when one party to the relationship is an individual who supervises, evaluates, makes assignments for, or grades the other party (i.e. “supervisor/subordinate relationship”). Likewise, employees who have the authority to influence aid, benefits, or services provided to a student may not engage in consensual romantic or sexual relationships with a student seeking such aid, benefits, or services. Similarly, employees who have the authority to influence the academic progress of a student may not engage in consensual romantic or sexual relationships with that student.

No employee shall exercise any academic, administrative, supervisory, evaluative, counseling, advisory, or extracurricular authority or influence over any student or employee with whom that employee has previously been involved in a consensual romantic or sexual relationship.

It is the responsibility of the parties who are or ever have been involved in such a consensual romantic or sexual relationship to proactively initiate contact with the HR Business Partner for their department to report the relationship and begin taking whatever steps are necessary to ensure immediate compliance with this policy. The HR Business Partner will assist the employee and the department to ensure compliance. Compliance may be achieved in a number of ways including, but not limited to:

1. The voluntary transfer or reassignment of one party so the supervisor/subordinate relationship or the improper student/employee relationship no longer exists;
2. In respect to a student seeking aid, benefits, or services, excluding the employee from having any influence over the provision of aid, benefits, or services to that student;
3. In respect to an employee, excluding either employee from participating in discussions or decisions that might influence the pay, work assignments, performance evaluations, benefits or working conditions of the other employee.

Any person, including but not limited to any third-party (e.g. co-worker), who believes a conflict of interest exists or that they may be or may have been disadvantaged by virtue of a consensual romantic relationship may file a complaint with the HR Business Partner. The complaint will be investigated and both the complainant(s) and the respondent(s) will have an opportunity to be heard.

Failure to comply with this policy may result in the taking of disciplinary action appropriate to the circumstances up to and including termination. Any potential violation of this policy should be promptly reported to the University’s Title IX Office.

Scope

This policy applies to all employees, including all faculty, staff, and graduate/undergraduate student employees. University departments and divisions may expand on this policy to address specific positions or relationships within their area, but any such expansion must be properly approved and may not negate this policy. Further, to the extent any such expansion conflicts with the policy, the terms of this policy shall govern.

Office of the Vice President of Finance and Operations

Signed: Cheryl Mowdy

1/15/2020

Cheryl Mowdy
Assistant Vice President for Finance and Operations