



## University of Illinois System Policy on Workplace-Related Intimate Personal Relationships

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### I. Background and Rationale

Professional and supportive relationships among faculty or staff and students are at the heart of the education and research missions of the University of Illinois System. Indeed, faculty and staff routinely and effectively serve as mentors, advisors, role models and teachers both in and out of the classroom. This policy in no way is intended to interfere with such professional relationships. There are also intimate personal relationships that exist among colleagues and staff members across our universities and in the University Hospital and clinics. Nevertheless, sexual, amorous, dating, and romantic relationships under some circumstances have interfered with achievement of the U of I System's institutional mission by undermining the integrity of professional roles. The unequal institutional authority inherent in certain relationships invites a host of issues—perceived or actual conflicts of interest, abuses of authority, biased treatment, favoritism—that can damage the campus' learning and work environment and distract from student growth and well-being. The fact that a relationship was initially consensual does not insulate either party from a claim of sexual misconduct or sexual harassment (which are governed by separate policies), nor does it guarantee that said relationship will remain consensual between parties of varied positional powers. Further, a party's professional or academic reputation may suffer due to perceptions of favoritism or exploitation. Moreover, such relationships may lead to restricted opportunities, or a perception thereof, for others in the work or academic environment.

Intimate Personal Relationships between Faculty or Staff and Undergraduate Students, even absent any Supervisory or Evaluative Authority, may lead to unanticipated conflicts of interest because a Faculty or Staff member's influence and power may extend beyond the classroom, department, or team. There is always the possibility that the Faculty or Staff member may unexpectedly be placed in a position of power over the Undergraduate Student. Due to the institutional power differential in Faculty-Student and Staff-Student relationships, there is the inherent risk of coercion and the perception by others of exploitation, particularly where Undergraduate Students are involved. Undergraduate Students' broad educational opportunities and experiences are such that plans to manage these important issues are typically inadequate as a remedy.

Intimate Personal Relationships between Faculty or Staff and Graduate/Professional Students also can be problematic. If the Faculty or Staff member and Graduate/Professional Student are in the same department or affiliated with the same program, the possibility exists that the Faculty or Staff member may influence evaluation or academic or career advancement of a student within the Faculty or Staff member's program. Such conflicts of interest are most pertinent with a Faculty or Staff member directly supervises the Graduate/Professional Student, as discussed below.

Intimate Personal Relationships where one party has Supervisory or Evaluative Authority over the other party create a conflict of interest. Individuals in supervisory or evaluative roles can affect the academic and employment careers of those in subordinate positions and can have access to



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sensitive information. Those who engage in Intimate Personal Relationships with a party in a subordinate role may be perceived as showing favoritism, misusing their authority, or even perpetrating sexual harassment.

This policy is intended to address these conflicts and to reduce the risk of any actual or apparent conflict of interest resulting from particular types of Intimate Personal Relationships. This policy does not limit any individual's ability to report a possible violation of the sexual misconduct policy with the appropriate University or U of I System-level offices or with law enforcement.

### **II. Scope**

The University of Illinois System Policy on Intimate Personal Relationships in the Workplace (“Policy”) applies to all Students and employees of the University of Illinois System, including the universities at Urbana-Champaign, Chicago, and Springfield; the U of I System Offices; and the University Hospital and clinics (collectively, “U of I System”, individually “University” or “Hospital”).

### **III. Definitions**

For purposes of this policy only, the following terms have the following meanings:

*Faculty* means an individual with duties that include any of the following: teaching, advising, mentoring, evaluating, grading, course management, or supervising duties performed as part of an academic program or course of study. Examples of such duties include, but are not limited to: group or individualized instruction; academic, programmatic, career, or student group advising; grade assignment; research supervision or evaluation; teaching or grading supervision or evaluation; management of course logistics; degree progress tracking or assessment; dissertation advising or committee membership; nomination or selection of student recipients for awards, fellowships, or admission to academic programs, or provision of references. The category of Faculty does not include teaching assistants, as defined below.

*Intimate Personal Relationship* means any relationship of a sexual, amorous, dating, or romantic nature. This definition will be applied based upon the nature, not the duration, of the relationship. Any contact of a sexual, amorous, dating, or romantic nature would be considered an “Intimate Personal Relationship” under this policy even if it does not recur.

*Staff* means non-Faculty employees with duties including but not limited to accessing confidential information, providing security, providing extracurricular activities, administering support services, maintaining facilities, administering student services, supervising employees, administering financial processes, and administering research.

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*Student* means an individual admitted by the University as a student and enrolled in at least one credit-bearing class at the University. Students include both *Undergraduate Students* as well as *Graduate/Professional Students*.

*Supervisory or Evaluative Authority* means the power to control or influence another person's employment, academic advancement, or extracurricular participation, including but not limited to, hiring, work conditions, compensation, promotion, discipline, termination/discharge, admission, grades, assignments, supervision of dissertations or research, recommendations, financial support, or participation in co-curricular or extracurricular programs.

*Teaching Assistants* means non-Faculty employees or volunteers, such as undergraduate student teaching assistants, graduate student teaching assistants, and professional student teaching assistants, with duties including but not limited to teaching, advising, mentoring, evaluating, grading, course management, or supervising duties performed as part of an academic program or course of study. Examples of such duties include, but are not limited to: group or individualized instruction; academic, programmatic, career, or student group advising; grade assignment; research supervision or evaluation; teaching or grading supervision or evaluation; management of course logistics; degree progress tracking or assessment; dissertation advising or committee membership; nomination or selection of student recipients for awards, fellowships, or admission to academic programs, or provision of references.

## IV. Policy

Intimate Personal Relationships are strongly discouraged where their development impedes the U of I System's institutional mission and are prohibited under this policy as stated below unless the relevant unit grants the employee or individual with authority an exception under this policy.

### A. Requirements on Faculty, Teaching Assistants, Staff, and Individuals with Authority

#### 1. Relationships Involving Supervisory or Evaluative Authority

U of I System employees (faculty and staff), volunteers, and Graduate/Professional Students are prohibited from entering into any Intimate Personal Relationship with any person over whom they have any direct or indirect Supervisory or Evaluative Authority. For existing relationships prior to this policy see B.1.

#### 2. Relationships Between Faculty or Staff and Undergraduate Students.

Faculty and Staff are prohibited from entering into any Intimate Personal Relationship with an Undergraduate Student, regardless of whether the Faculty or Staff has Supervisory or Evaluative Authority over the Undergraduate Student.



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### 3. Relationships Between Teaching Assistants and Students

Teaching Assistants are prohibited from entering into any Intimate Personal Relationship with a Student over whom they have a direct or indirect Supervisory or Evaluative Authority, as per above.

### 4. Relationships Between Faculty or Staff and Graduate/Professional Students

Faculty and Staff members are prohibited from entering into an Intimate Personal Relationship with any Graduate/Professional Student over whom they have direct or indirect Supervisory or Evaluative Authority.

The above restrictions apply to visiting, non-degree, and executive education students so long as they are enrolled at the University and in accord with their status as undergraduate, graduate, or professional students.

## B. Exceptions

### 1. Relationships Existing Before the Effective Date of This Policy

The prohibitions set forth in Section IV.A above do not apply to Intimate Personal Relationships in existence prior to the effective date of this Policy. However, ongoing relationships that would violate this Policy if entered into on or after the effective date of this Policy must be reported as provided in Section IV.C below. The Faculty, Teaching Assistant, Staff or individual with authority is required to cooperate in the development of and comply with a conflict management plan as provided in Section IV.D below.

### 2. Other Exceptions

Individuals may request an exception from the requirements in Section IV.A above. The relevant University, System Offices or Hospital will consider exceptions on a case-by-case basis. Exceptions will be granted when and only when the relationship will not cause or threaten to cause the issues outlined in Section I. Any approved exception will require the development of a conflict management plan under IV.D.

## C. Reporting Procedures

The universities at Urbana-Champaign, Chicago, and Springfield; the U of I System Offices; and the University Hospital will each develop a procedure for their respective Faculty, Staff, Teaching Assistants, and individuals with authority to report Intimate Personal Relationships when required by this Policy. Such procedures will outline when reporting is required based on the circumstances and relationship. Employees who change units and/or positions may need to file a report if the change creates a conflict with an existing employee. Such reports will be made in writing, will specify the information required, and will identify the officials to whom such reports are to be directed. Faculty, Staff, Teaching Assistants, and individuals with authority will comply with these procedures when required to report an Intimate Personal Relationship under this Policy.



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### D. Development of Conflict Management Plans

In cases where this Policy requires a report of an Intimate Personal Relationship as provided in Section IV.C above, and where the development of a conflict management plan is required (i.e. A3, B1, B2), the Faculty, Staff, Teaching Assistant, or individual with authority will cooperate with designated University or U of I System officials to develop and implement an appropriate written plan to avoid or minimize any conflict of interest that may result from the Intimate Personal Relationship. Wherever feasible, the conflict management plan will include appropriate measures to eliminate any Supervisory or Evaluative Authority between parties to the relationship, and for ensuring that parties to the relationship will not later be placed in a position where one may exercise Supervisory or Evaluative Authority over the other.

The universities at Urbana-Champaign, Chicago, and Springfield; the U of I System Offices; and the University Hospital will each designate appropriate officials who will be responsible for developing, implementing, and verifying compliance with conflict management plans developed in accordance with this Section. Conflict management plans will be periodically reviewed and updated as appropriate given the unique circumstances of each case.

### E. Confidentiality

Information disclosed in compliance with this Policy will be regarded as confidential and will be disclosed only in accordance with applicable law.

### F. Records Retention

Records pertaining to disclosures of relationships as provided in Section IV.C and conflict management plans as provided in Section IV.D above will be retained and disposed of in accordance with applicable law.

## V. Consequences for Violations of this Policy

If any individual violates the terms of this Policy, disciplinary action will be taken in accordance with relevant disciplinary procedures contained in the relevant statutes, handbooks, policies, procedures, practices, or contracts. Any disciplinary action taken will be commensurate with the nature of the violation and will consider factors and circumstances relevant to each specific case. Disciplinary action for violations of this policy can include, but are not limited to, written warnings, loss of privileges, mandatory training or counseling, probation, suspension, demotion, exclusion, expulsion, discharge, and termination of employment, including revocation of tenure.

## VI. Policy Information

**Policy Title:** University of Illinois System Policy on Intimate Personal Relationships

**Policy Owner:** TBD

**Responsible Official:** TBD

**Approved by:** University of Illinois Board of Trustees

**Date Approved:** TBD



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**Effective Date:** TBD

**Targeted Review Date:** TBD

**Contact:** TBD

**Related Policies:**