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4.615 Relationships in the Workplace

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Type of Policy <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> University <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Campus</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Department/Unit</i> <input type="checkbox"/> Interim		Relationships in the Workplace Policy 4.615	
Human Resource Policies		Effective date: December 6, 2011	
Policy History:	Approved by:	Resolution #	Date:
Approved	Chancellor	N/A	December 6, 2011
Revised (Non-substantive)	Office of University Counsel	N/A	May 17, 2017
Responsible Office:	Responsible Administrator:	Contact information:	Applies to:
Office of Human Resources	Director of University Human Resources	937-769-1375	All Employees

I. Introduction and Purpose

Antioch University (“AU” or the “University”) strives to be a professional yet friendly workplace and is committed to maintaining an environment in which members of the University community can work together to further education, research, and community service.

Romantic relationships that might be appropriate in other circumstances always have inherent dangers when they occur between any employees of the University and any persons for whom they have a professional responsibility (i.e., as teacher, advisor, evaluator, supervisor). Implicit in the idea of professionalism is the recognition by those in positions of authority that in their relationships with students or other employees there is always an element of power. It is incumbent upon those with authority not to abuse, nor to seem to abuse, the power with which they are entrusted. This policy provides guidelines for establishing and maintaining acceptable relationships at work between employees, and between employees and students. More information can also be found in the Nepotism and Employment of Relatives Policy # 4.111.

II. Relationships between Employees

- A. Employees are encouraged to socialize with each other and are free to develop personal relationships in the workplace provided that these relationships do not interfere with the work performance of either individual or with the effective functioning of the University. Employees who engage in personal relationships (including romantic and sexual relationships) should be aware of their professional responsibilities, and will be responsible for assuring that the relationship does not raise concerns about favoritism, bias, sexual harassment, ethics and conflict of interest. In cases of doubt, advice and counsel should be sought from the next level of administrator, the Director of the Office of Human Resources (“HR”), or the University Counsel, who is the University’s ethics officer.
- B. Antioch University also prohibits consensual sexual or amorous relationships where there is an institutional power difference between the parties involved, for example, between a supervisor and a subordinate employee. Relationships that occur in the context of employment supervision present serious concerns about the validity of consent and existence of welcomeness. The disparity of power between persons involved in amorous relationships of a supervisor and subordinate, makes them susceptible to exploitation. Furthermore, the possibility of a future amorous relationship may distort the present employment relationship. These kinds of “dual relationships”, even if truly consensual, may ultimately result in conflict or difficulties in the workplace. If such a relationship currently exists or develops, it must be disclosed. The employee who has influence or control over the other's conditions of employment has an obligation to disclose the relationship to HR and the next level of administrator. The other employee involved in the relationship is encouraged to disclose the relationship to HR.
- C. In the event that a prohibited dual relationship is found to exist between employees, after consultation with the Ethics Officer, HR and the appropriate next level of administrator will take appropriate personnel action should the involved employees choose not to end their relationship. The University, at its sole discretion, may transfer one of the employees to an available position in which no dual relationship would exist. If no such position is available, one employee will unfortunately be required to resign. In the event that the employees both refuse to resign or to accept an available transfer, then the employee who is superior in rank may be dismissed from employment.

III. Relationships between Employees and Students

- A. The employee-student relationship inherently involves disproportionate power and influence, creating the potential for serious abuse. The differential is particularly significant where evaluative relationships exist, *e.g.*, conducting academic assessment, providing recommendations for future study or employment. Employees of universities should be aware that any romantic involvement with students may cause them to be liable for formal action against them. Even when both parties have consented at the outset to the development of such a relationship, it is the employee’s or instructors who, by virtue of their special responsibility and educational mission, will be held accountable for unprofessional behavior.

- B.** Consensual romantic or sexual relationships between students and employees who are in positions to exercise power or authority over that student are prohibited and constitute professional and personal misconduct. Efforts by employees to initiate such relationships are also prohibited. Violations of this policy by employees will lead to corrective action and discipline up to and including termination as per the Corrective Action and Discipline Procedure Policy # 4.617.
- C.** Consensual romantic or sexual relationships between students and employees who are not in a position to exercise direct power or authority over that student may also be inappropriate. The employee should be sensitive to the constant possibility that he or she may unexpectedly be placed in a position of responsibility for the student's instruction or evaluation. This could involve being called upon to write a letter of recommendation or to serve on an admissions or selection committee involving the student. In addition, others may speculate that a specific power relationship exists even when there is none, giving rise to assumptions of inequitable academic or professional advantage for the student involved. Relationships between employees and students are always fundamentally asymmetric in nature. Therefore, any employees who engage in such a relationship must immediately disclose the relationship to their superior so objective decision making concerning the student can be arranged. Failure to disclose is a violation of this policy and may result in disciplinary action including termination of employment. At all times the employee shall take those steps necessary to ensure that the relationship does not result in a conflict of interest or raise other issues of professionalism. In cases of doubt, advice and counsel should be sought from HR or the Ethics Officer.

IV. General Guidelines

- A.** If employees or students, whether or not involved in the relationship, believe they have been, or are being, adversely affected by a dual relationship, they are encouraged to contact HR, or the Ethics Officer. In addition, employees can make anonymous reports via the **Compliance Hotline** at **1-866-606-4026**.
- B.** When relationships develop into situations that may be viewed as harassment or discrimination, employees should refer to the Title IX, Sexual Harassment and Sexual Violence Policy #4.607. If questions or concerns arise regarding potential harassment or discrimination, employees should contact the Title IX Coordinator, AA/EO Officer, or HR for assistance. Contact information is provided in the Title IX, Sexual Harassment, Sexual Violence Policy, #4.607.

V. Sanctions

A violation of this policy by an employee may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment.

Policy Cross References

Affirmative Action and Equal Opportunity	# 4.005
Nepotism and Employment of Relatives	# 4.111
Code of Ethics	# 4.603
Title IX, Sexual Harassment, and Sexual Violence	# 4.607
Corrective Action and Discipline	# 4.617