Introduction

Consensual romantic, intimate, or sexual relationships are of concern to Oregon State University when one of the parties has institutional responsibility for or authority over the other. Consensual relationships in this context can compromise the integrity of the exercise of institutional responsibility, create the potential for abuse of the authority or cause problems due to the perceptions of third parties.

Integrity can be compromised when individuals evaluate the work or academic performance of other individuals with whom they have a consensual relationship. The interest in the consensual relationship can impair the judgment required for the exercise of the institutional responsibility or authority.

Power may be abused within a consensual relationship between an employee and someone for whom he or she has supervisory, decision-making, evaluative, academic or advisory responsibilities. There is potential for use of the academic or supervisory role to maintain or promote the relationship.

Another potential problem involves perceptions of third parties who feel they have lost equality in terms of assignments, promotions, etc., and who may feel that the only way to succeed is to engage in a romantic, intimate, and/or sexual liaison.

All employees should recognize the possible negative consequences of romantic, intimate or sexual liaisons in the workplace and academic programs. This Policy prescribes
actions required to remove conflicts of interest and avoid adverse effects on third parties, and further specifies the situations where consensual relationships are prohibited.

Sexual harassment is distinguishable from situations covered by this Policy in that sexual harassment always involves conduct that is unwelcome, is a clear abuse of authority, or produces defined negative effects on individuals. Oregon State University’s Policy on Sexual Harassment should be consulted regarding such situations.

**Consensual Relationships**

Consensual relationships to which this policy applies are those romantic, intimate or sexual relationships where one of the parties has institutional responsibility for or authority over the other or is involved in evaluation of the other party, whether the other party is an employee or a student.

**Requirements**

1. An employee entering or in a consensual relationship as defined in this Policy, or a current or prospective employee offered a position who will be in such a relationship should the position be accepted, shall immediately:
   - A. Report the relationship to a higher level administrator, to the hiring official, or to an administrator above the hiring official; and
   - B. Cooperate in actions taken to eliminate any actual or potential conflicts of interest and to mitigate adverse effects on third parties.

2. The administrator or official who receives the report shall treat the information confidentially and shall promptly:
   - A. Consult with the Director of the Office of Affirmative Action and Equal Opportunity; and
   - B. In cooperation with the above Director, eliminate conflicts of interest and mitigate adverse effects on third parties by:
Transferring one of the individuals to another position;
Transferring supervisory, decision-making, evaluative, academic or advisory responsibilities; or
Providing an additional layer of oversight to the supervisory role; and

C. Document the steps taken.

### Prohibitions

An employee shall not exercise academic responsibility (instructional, evaluative or supervisory) for any student with whom the employee has a consensual relationship.

An employee shall not conduct performance evaluations, or make salary decisions, decisions regarding promotion and tenure, or decisions on continuation of employment for a person with whom he or she has a consensual relationship.

Consensual relationships are prohibited when effective arrangements to remove the conflict and mitigate adverse effects on third parties cannot be made.

### Failure to Comply

Sanctions for violation will be imposed in accordance with the appropriate collective bargaining agreement and State Board of Higher Education rules.

### Retaliation

Retaliation against persons who report concerns about consensual relationships is prohibited and constitutes a violation of this policy.
Guidance, Consultation and Complaints

Anyone who has concerns, questions or complaints related to this policy or its implementation should contact the Director of the Office of Affirmative Action and Equal Opportunity, the Director of the Office of Human Resources, or the Vice Provost for Academic Affairs and International Programs.