

## DRAFT

### Potential Conflict Of Interest In Consensual Relationships

Eastern Oregon University (EOU) is committed to a campus environment based upon collegial respect and trust. The integrity of academic and work relationships is the foundation of the University's mission. The unequal institutional power inherent in University academic and work relationships heightens the vulnerability of those in subordinate positions. People in positions of authority within the University community must be aware and sensitive to the potential conflict of interest, and issues of sexual harassment that often occur in consensual relationships with people over whom they have a professional *power/status advantage*.

Collegial respect and trust is compromised when members of the EOU community engage in consensual relationships that involve persons of unequal power. Examples of positions of unequal power include, administrator and faculty, faculty and student, supervisor and employee, coach and athlete. The power differential inherent in any such relationship causes apparent consent to be questionable. Relationships that are mutual and consensual are often viewed by others as exploitative, and will adversely affect the learning and/or work environment. Specifically, the parties to an consensual relationship must be aware that such relationships create in co-workers and students perceived and real conflicts of interest and an environment of fear of unfair treatment in terms of promotions, grades, professional and/or educational opportunities, etc.

#### Power/Status Advantages:

- a) Academic Relationship Advantage: A faculty member or other instructor always has a *power/status advantage* when that faculty member or instructor has authority, for example, to assign grades, serve on thesis or scholarship awards committees, provide research and/or training opportunities.
- b) Staff Relationship Advantage: A staff member always has a *power/status advantage* when the staff member has the authority to evaluate, determine salary, and/or make employment and/or professional development opportunity decisions.
- c) Other Power Advantages: Power advantages also can occur between junior and senior faculty, faculty and administrators, and faculty/administrators and staff.

Consensual relationships that may be appropriate in other circumstances are imprudent when they occur between a member of the EOU community and a person for whom he/she has a professional *power/status advantage* at EOU. The individual with the *power/status advantage* bears the primary responsibility for any negative consequences resulting from a consensual relationship. It is the University's goal to provide clear direction to the University community about how to remove the *power/status advantage* associated with consensual relationships between members of the University community.

It is the policy of EOU, where a *power/status advantage* exists, both parties involved in a consensual relationship must promptly report the consensual relationship to his or her supervisor, Dean, Vice President, Provost, or President of the University. It is the responsibility of the supervisor of the parties involved in the relationship to provide counseling regarding University policy, and if necessary promptly make arrangements to eliminate the *power/status advantage* of one person over the other. This may involve such actions as changing lines of authority or changing class registrations.

Should the individuals in a consensual relationship fail to immediately report their relationship, these individuals will be considered to have violated University policy and are subject to disciplinary

action. Failure to follow University policy will result in the University not bearing liability in the event a formal grievance or lawsuit is brought against the parties of the consensual relationship.

Individuals in a consensual relationship who fail to immediately report their relationship will be violation of University policy and subject to disciplinary action. Further, failure to follow policy will result in the University not bearing liability in the event a formal grievance or lawsuit is brought against the parties of the consensual relationship.

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