

GEORGIA STATE UNIVERSITY STUDENT CODE OF CONDUCT AND ADMINISTRATIVE POLICIES

N. POTENTIAL CONFLICT OF INTEREST IN AMOROUS RELATIONSHIPS

The integrity of academic and work relationships is the foundation of the University's educational mission. These relationships vest considerable trust in persons with authority whether as mentor, educator, evaluator and/or administrator. The unequal institutional power inherent in University academic and work relationships heightens the vulnerability of those in subordinate positions. The University must protect itself from influences or activities that interfere with intellectual, professional and personal growth, or with the University's financial interests. Consequently, people in positions of authority within the University community must be sensitive to the potential for conflict of interest as well as sexual harassment in amorous relationships with people over whom they have a professional power/status advantage. (See Section 206.03 of the Faculty Handbook, Section 6-1 of the Classified Employee Handbook, and the GSU General Catalog for the Sexual Harassment Policy of the University.)

The individual in authority bears the primary responsibility for any negative consequences resulting from an amorous relationship. It is in the interest of the University to provide clear direction and educational opportunities to the University community about potential professional risks associated with consensual amorous relationships between members of the University community where a power/status advantage exists.

a. Power Advantages

Academic Relationship Advantage: A faculty member or other instructor always will be treated as having a power advantage when that faculty member or instructor has authority to assign grades; serves on thesis, dissertation, or scholarship awards committees; provides research and/or training opportunities, etc.

Staff Advantage: A staff member will always be treated as having a power advantage when the staff member has the authority to evaluate, determine salary, and/or make employment decisions.

Other Power Advantage: Power advantages also can occur between junior and senior faculty, faculty and administrators, and faculty/administrators and staff.

b. Conflict of Interest

Relationships that are mutual and consensual may be viewed by others as exploitative and may adversely affect the work environment in that serious conflicts of interests may be perceived to exist. In particular, the parties to an amorous relationship should be aware that such relationships often create general conflicts of interest and the fear from co-workers or students of unfair treatment in terms of promotions, grades, etc. Therefore, Georgia State University prohibits the parties who are or have been involved in any amorous relationship from evaluating each other.

There are situations sufficiently complex that judgments may differ as to whether there is or may be a conflict of interest, and individuals may inadvertently place themselves in situations where conflict exists. Accordingly, for the common good, should a situation arise in which parties who are or have been involved in any amorous relationship come into a position in which they would normally be called upon to evaluate one another, the individual in authority must promptly report this fact to his or her supervisor. The supervisor will then make arrangements to see that those who are or have been involved in any amorous relationship do not evaluate each other. In particular, if a faculty member has had or comes to have an amorous relationship with a student over whom the faculty member has authority as described above, the faculty member must promptly report this to the department/school chair who will make arrangements for an alternate evaluation mechanism. Should the individual in authority fail to promptly report an amorous relationship with a person the individual in authority evaluates, the individual in authority has violated University policy and is subject to disciplinary action as outlined in the Faculty Handbook, Classified Employee Handbook or appropriate student catalogue, handbook, or college regulations (depending on whether the individual in authority is faculty, staff or a student).

GEORGIA STATE UNIVERSITY STUDENT CODE OF CONDUCT AND ADMINISTRATIVE POLICIES

c. Malicious Use of This Policy

It is important to avoid conflict of interests resulting from amorous relationships; it is equally important to recognize that malicious accusations of inappropriate amorous relationships have the potential to severely damage a person's career and reputation. Therefore, Georgia State University prohibits making knowingly false accusations that an unreported amorous relationship exists or existed between two parties now in a position to evaluate each other.

d. Due Process

Due process rights are matters of fundamental fairness. Therefore, any disciplinary action initiated will be taken in accordance with the procedures set out in the Faculty Handbook, Classified Employee Handbook or appropriate student catalogue, handbook, or college regulations.

Revised February 28, 2008, Student Life and Development Committee