



POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Subject: Consensual Relationships

Policy No. 9

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Approved by: Cheryl J. Norton, President, Southern Connecticut State University
Signature:

Policy Statement

It is the policy of Southern Connecticut State University that employees with direct teaching, supervisory, advisory, or evaluative responsibility over other employees, students and/or student employees recognize and respect the ethical and professional boundaries that must exist in such situations. SCSU recognizes that two consenting adults should be free to conduct a personal relationship if they so wish; however, the University strongly discourages relationships between people where a status differential exists.

Consensual relationships, as defined in this policy, create conflicts of interest and/or appearances of impropriety that impair the integrity of academic and employment decisions. Such relationships also contain the potential for exploitation of the subordinate employee, student or student employee and the possible professional or academic disadvantage of third parties, and can subject both the University and individuals to the risk of liability. Therefore the University strongly discourages consensual relationships between supervisors and subordinates, teachers and students and advisors and students. Should such a relationship develop, the teacher, supervisor or advisor has the obligation to disclose its existence to an immediate supervisor and cooperate in making alternative arrangements for the supervision, evaluation, and teaching, grading, or advising of the employee, student and/or student employee.

Scope

This policy applies to all faculty, staff and students of Southern Connecticut State University.

Definitions

A **consensual relationship** is a mutually acceptable, romantic and/or sexual relationship willingly undertaken between a University employee with supervisory, teaching, evaluation or advisory authority and an employee, student and student employee who are directly supervised, taught, evaluated or advised by that employee.

A **conflict of interest** and/or an appearance of impropriety arises when individuals with the authority and the responsibility to evaluate the work or performance of an employee, student or student employee, initiates, acquiesces or engages in an intimate romantic and/or sexual relationship with that employee, student or student employee.

Direct authority is defined as the direct supervision, direction, oversight, evaluation, advisement, or substantial influence over the employment or educational status of another.

Staff member or **Employee** is anyone employed by SCSU as faculty or staff, full-time or part-time.

Supervisor is anyone who oversees, directs or evaluates the work of others, including, but not limited to, managers, administrators, coaches, directors, physicians, deans, chairs, advisors, custodians, and teaching assistants, as well as faculty members in their roles as instructors, as supervisors of their staff, and as participants in decisions affecting the careers of other faculty members.

Faculty are all those charged with academic instruction, including all ranks recognized as faculty at SCSU, teaching assistants, academic advisors, coaches, and others who have a role in educating, supervising, or advising students as part of the programs of Southern and its various off campus activities.

Students are all those enrolled full-time or part-time in any program at Southern.

Employee/Employee Relationships and Employee/Faculty Relationships

Except in unusual circumstances, where explicit authorization has been obtained from the President of the University, no one who is employed at Southern should participate in supervision, employment actions, evaluation, decisions pertaining to promotion, the direct setting of salary or wages for someone employed at Southern with whom that person has or has had a consensual relationship.

Except in special circumstances, where explicit authorization has been obtained from the President, a supervisor should not employ anyone with whom he or she has or has had a consensual relationship.

Employees should be aware that entering into such a relationship with a supervisor creates the potential for risk to both parties. In particular, such a relationship will limit that supervisor's ability to direct work or promote that employee's career.

Reporting Responsibility

In the event that a consensual relationship exists or begins to develop, the individual in the supervisory, teaching or advisory position shall immediately notify his or her immediate supervisor of the relationship and cooperate with that supervisor in making the arrangements necessary to resolve the conflict of interest whose consequences might prove detrimental to the University.

Regarding Faculty and Student Consensual Relationships

No employee should enter into a consensual relationship with a student actually under that employee's authority. Situations of authority include, but are not limited to, teaching, formal mentoring, supervision of research, and employment of a student as a research or teaching assistant; and exercising substantial responsibility for grades, honors, or degrees; and considering disciplinary action involving the student.

No employee should accept authority over a student with whom he or she has, or has had, a consensual relationship without agreement with the appropriate Dean. For example, the employee should not, absent such agreement, allow the student to enroll for credit in a course which the employee is teaching or supervising; direct the student's independent study, thesis, or dissertation; employ the student as a teaching or research assistant; participate in decisions pertaining to a student's grades, honors, and degrees; or consider disciplinary action involving the student.

If nevertheless a consensual relationship exists or develops between an employee and a student involving any situation of authority, that situation of authority must be terminated. Termination includes, but is not limited to, the student withdrawing from a course taught by the employee; transfer of the student to another course or section, or assumption of the position of authority by a qualified alternate staff member or teaching assistant. In case of failure to reach agreement, the Provost or the Associate Vice President of Human Resources and Labor Relations, shall terminate the situation of authority as the case may be.

Immediate Supervisor Responsibility

A supervisor who is notified, or becomes aware of a consensual relationship, shall take immediate steps to alter the conditions that create the conflict of interest and/or the appearance of impropriety caused by the relationship. In most

instances, that will be accomplished by providing an alternative means for the supervision, teaching, advising, and/or evaluation of the subordinate employee, student or student-employee.

Failure to Report or Cooperate

Employees in positions of authority who enter into or persist in consensual romantic or sexual relationships without reporting them, or who fail to cooperate in efforts to eliminate the conflict of interest or appearance of impropriety they present, will be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination. In the event that a complaint of sexual harassment or sexual misconduct is brought by the subordinate party regarding an unreported relationship, there will be no presumption that the relationship was consensual in nature.

Grievance of Disciplinary Action

Disciplinary actions imposed for violations of this policy may be grieved or appealed by the individual who is disciplined pursuant to existing University policies and procedures and the employee's collective bargaining agreement.

Confidentiality

Cases that involve consensual relationships are especially sensitive and special attention will be given to the issue of privacy for all individuals. Information will be released only on a need-to-know basis.

For Assistance

Any questions regarding this policy should be directed to the Provost, Office of the Dean of Students, Office of Diversity and Equity or the Human Resources Office.

Retaliation

Retaliation against persons who report concerns about consensual relationships is prohibited and constitutes a violation of this Policy.

Authority

- Connecticut State University System Board of Trustees Policy Book 1.17 "*Consensual Relationships Between Employees*" (BR #05-13)
- SCSU Employee Handbook

Exceptions

Any exceptions to the procedures in this Policy shall require prior written approval from the President of this University.

