

# MISSISSIPPI STATE UNIVERSITY™

## Operating Policy and Procedure

MEMORANDUM TO: All holders of Mississippi State University Policy and Procedure Manuals

DATE: January, 2012

SUBJECT: OP 01.28 – Policy on Amorous Relationships

### **PURPOSE**

The purpose of this Operating Policy and Procedure (OP) is to establish university policy concerning amorous relationships between employees and/or between employees and students as well as the actions that must be taken to address such relationships. This policy does not apply to situations of nepotism involving related or married individuals (governed by AOP 10.05 – Nepotism).

### **POLICY/PROCEDURE**

Professionalism in interpersonal relationships between university employees and between employees and students is important to the mission and proper functioning of the university. Consensual romantic and/or sexual relation between individuals in such groups can present conflicts of interest or the appearance of such conflicts. Although not strictly prohibited, consensual romantic and/or sexual relationships between employees or between an employee and student are discouraged. Should such conditions arise, the principals involved must take steps immediately to eliminate any appearance of or potential conflicts of interest.

Amorous or sexual relationships in which one person has a position of authority over another employee or student present conflicts of interest even when the relationships are consensual and have the potential to lead to undesirable and, in some instances, unhealthy consequences. A position of authority is defined as but is not limited to the authoritative capacity in which an individual has the potential to, in his/her professional capacity, evaluate or supervise the reporting employee or student. This type of romantic relationship will be referred to as a power-differential amorous relationship.

No MSU employee or student in a position of authority shall enter into or continue a power-differential amorous relationship with another employee or student at MSU. If one exists or develops, it is the responsibility of the employee or student to report that relationship to his/her immediate supervisor and/or Human Resources Management. Failure to report such a relationship may result in disciplinary action.

Once a power-differential amorous relationship is reported, the following actions must be taken: the position of authority must be eliminated or transferred to another appropriate person. Alternatively, the amorous relationship can be ended. Documentation of any action taken related to a power-differential amorous relationship must be reported to Human Resources Management.

For individuals in non-power-differential amorous relationships, it is each party's responsibility to monitor the circumstances so that neither an appearance nor an actual conflict of interest is created. Individuals involved in such relationships should be sensitive to the constant possibility that he or she may unexpectedly be placed in a position of responsibility or evaluation. Should a conflict of interest or

its appearance arise, it is each party's responsibility to take immediate steps to remove the conflict consistent with the above actions.

**REVIEW**

This policy and procedure will be reviewed by the Provost and Executive Vice President at least every four years (or whenever circumstances require immediate review).

**AUTHORIZATION**

REVIEWED BY:

<u>/s/ Jerome A. Gilbert</u> Provost and Executive Vice President	<u>2/17/12</u> Date
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<u>/s/ Lesia Bryant</u> Director of Internal Audit	<u>2/20/12</u> Date
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<u>/s/ Joan Lucas</u> General Counsel	<u>2/20/12</u> Date
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APPROVED:

<u>/s/ Mark Keenum</u> President	<u>2/27/12</u> Date
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