



OP 70.09: FINANCIAL CONFLICT OF INTEREST IN SPONSORED ACTIVITIES

PURPOSE

Faculty participation in outside professional or commercial activities generates important contributions to Mississippi State University's core values, however it is essential to define and establish a mechanism to guard against the dangers of unintended bias or inappropriate participation. This policy serves to protect the integrity and objectivity of research by setting forth acceptable parameters relating to possible financial conflicts of interest or conflicting commitments which may arise from the outside professional or commercial activities of investigators.

This policy is intended to enable investigators to recognize situations that may pose a conflict of interest or conflict of commitment, to provide a process for reporting to Mississippi State University, and for working to manage these situations.

This policy is designed to comply with:

- National Science Foundation's Investigator Disclosure Policy, 60 F.R. 132, pp. 35810-823
- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Objectivity in Research Rules, Subpart F - Responsibility of Applicants for Promoting Objectivity in Research for which PHS Funding Is Sought, 42 C.F.R. Part 50, Subpart F
- Reminders of NIH Policies on Other Support and on Policies related to Financial Conflicts of Interest and Foreign Components, NOT-OD-19-114
- Department of Energy Foreign Government Talent Recruitment Programs, DOE Order 486.1
- Guidance for Implementing National Security Presidential Memorandum-33 (NSPM-33) on National Security for United States Government-Supported Research and Development
- The CHIPS and Science Act of 2022 (H.R. 4346)
- John S. McCain National Defense Authorization Act.

DEFINITIONS

The terms used in this policy statement are defined as follows:

- A. *Conflict of Commitment (COC)* – situation in which an individual accepts or incurs conflicting obligations between or among multiple employers or other entities. COC includes obligations to dedicate time and effort in excess of MSU or funding agency policy or an obligation to improperly share information with an outside entity or withhold information from MSU or a federal funding agency.
- B. *Financial Conflict of Interest (FCOI)* – a significant financial interest held by an Investigator (or the Investigator’s spouse or dependent children) that could directly and significantly affect decision-making in the design, conduct, or reporting of research performed on behalf of Mississippi State University.
- C. *Foreign Government Talent Recruitment Program (FGTRPs)* – means any program, position, or activity that includes compensation in the form of cash or certain in-kind compensations in exchange for the individual (1) engaging in the unauthorized transfer of U.S. intellectual property, materials, data products, or other nonpublic information to the government of a foreign country or foreign entity; (2) being required to recruit trainees or researchers to enroll in a program, position, or activity; (3) establishing a lab or company, accepting a faculty position, or undertaking any other employment or appointment in a foreign country or with a foreign entity if activities are in violation of the standard terms and conditions of a federal research and development award; (4) being unable to terminate the foreign talent recruitment program contract or agreement except in extraordinary circumstances; (5) being limited in the capacity to carry out a research and development award or required to engage in work that would result in substantial overlap or duplication of federally funded work; (6) being required to apply for and successfully receive funding from the sponsoring government’s funding agencies with the sponsoring foreign organization as the recipient; (7) being required to omit acknowledgement of the recipient institution with which the individual is affiliated, or the federal research agency sponsoring the research and development award, contrary to the institutional policies or standard terms and conditions of the federal research and development award; (8) being required to not disclose to the federal research agency or MSU the participation of such individual in such program, position, or activity; (9) having a conflict of interest or conflict of commitment contrary to the standard terms and conditions of the federal research and development award.
- D. *Institutional Responsibilities* – an investigator’s professional responsibilities on behalf of Mississippi State University, which may include for example (but not limited to): activities such as research, consultation, teaching, professional practice, institutional committee memberships, and service on committees such as the Institutional Review Board or the Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee.
- E. *Investigator/PI/PD* – the project director or principal investigator and any other person, regardless of title or position, who is responsible for the design, conduct, or reporting of research, or proposed for such funding, which may include, for example, collaborators or consultants. Senior/Key Personnel are considered “investigators” for

purposes of this policy. Typically, students would not be considered “investigators” although there may be circumstances where, in the PI’s judgment, a student is working relatively autonomously and should be considered an investigator.

- F. *Malign Foreign Talent Recruitment Program (MFTRP)* – is any program, position or activity that meets the criteria in Section 10638(4)(A) of the CHIPS and Science Act (Public Law 117-167), a program that is sponsored by a foreign country of concern or entity based in a foreign country of concern, or a program sponsored by an academic institution on the list developed under section 1286(c)(8) of the John S. McCain National Defense Authorization Act. Participation with MFTRPs that meet these criteria is prohibited.
- G. *Manage* – taking action to address a financial conflict of interest, which can include reducing or eliminating the financial conflict of interest, to ensure, to the extent possible, that the design, conduct, and reporting of research will be free from bias.
- H. *Other Support* – all positions and scientific appointments both domestic and foreign held by investigators that are relevant to an investigator’s institutional responsibilities. This includes titled academic, professional, or institutional appointments whether or not remuneration is received, and whether full-time, part-time, or voluntary (including adjunct, visiting, or honorary). Other Support may also be called Current and Pending Support by some funding agencies.
- I. *Research* – a systematic investigation, study or experiment designed to develop or contribute to generalizable knowledge.
- J. *Significant Financial Interest* – a financial interest consisting of one or more of the following interests of the investigator (and those of the investigator’s spouse and dependent children) that reasonably appears to be related to the investigator’s institutional responsibilities:
1. With regard to any publicly traded entity, a *significant financial interest* exists if the value of any remuneration received from the entity in the twelve months preceding the disclosure and the value of any equity interest in the entity as of the date of disclosure, when aggregated, exceeds \$5,000. For purposes of this definition, remuneration includes salary and any payment for services not otherwise identified as salary (e.g., consulting fees, honoraria, paid authorship); equity interest includes any stock, stock option, or other ownership interest, as determined through reference to public prices or other reasonable measures of fair market value;
 2. With regard to any non-publicly traded entity (including MURA companies), a *significant financial interest* exists if the value of any remuneration received from the entity in the twelve months preceding the disclosure, when aggregated, exceeds \$5,000, or any equity interest (e.g. stock, stock option, or other ownership interest);
 3. Venture or other capital financing;

4. Compensation that could be affected by the outcome of research;
5. Intellectual property rights and interests (e.g., patents, copyrights, licensing agreements, and royalties from such rights), upon receipt of income related to such rights and interests: and
6. Reimbursed or sponsored travel, related to the investigator's institutional responsibilities if the combined monetary value (airfare, lodging, meals, etc.) exceeds \$5,000.
 - The Research COI Manager will determine if any travel requires further investigation, which may include:
 - Purpose of the trip,
 - Destination, and
 - Duration

The term *significant financial interest* **does not include** the following types of financial interest:

1. Salary or other remuneration received from Mississippi State University, including salary received from external sources through sponsored agreements administered by the University;
2. Intellectual property rights assigned to Mississippi State University and agreements to share in royalties related to such rights;
3. Standard royalties received for published scholarly work or other professional writings;
4. Income from investment vehicles, such as mutual funds and retirement accounts, as long as the investigator does not directly control the investment decisions made in these vehicles;
5. Income from seminars, lectures, or teaching engagements sponsored by a federal, state, or local government agency, an Institution of higher education as defined at 20 U.S.C. 1001(a), an academic teaching hospital, a medical center, or a research institute that is affiliated with an Institution of higher education;
6. Income from service on advisory committees or review panels for a federal, state, or local government agency, an Institution of higher education as defined at 20 U.S.C. 1001(a), an academic teaching hospital, a medical center, or a research institute that is affiliated with an Institution of higher education; or
7. Travel that is reimbursed or sponsored by a federal, state, or local government agency, an Institution of higher education as defined at 20 U.S.C. 1001(a), an academic teaching hospital, a medical center, or a research institute that is affiliated with an Institution of higher education.

K. *Research COI Manager* – the Research COI Manager will serve as the designated official with the responsibility to:

- Review all investigator disclosures of significant financial interests;
- Determine whether any significant financial interests relate to funded research;
- Determine whether a financial conflict of interest exists; and, if so,
- Review the [COI Matrix](#) to determine the proper course of management
- Provide reports to sponsoring agencies as required.
- Maintain records relating to all investigator disclosures and the review of, and response to, such disclosures and all actions taken by MSU under this policy for a period of three years from the date the final expenditures report is submitted to the sponsor.
- Respond to written requests for information concerning any significant financial interest disclosed to the University in accordance with sponsor requirements.

POLICY

For all federally-funded research, Mississippi State University requires that investigators disclose on the Financial Conflict of Interest Disclosure Form (FCOI) (<https://www.ore.msstate.edu/compliance/coi/forms>) any Significant Financial Interests, Other Support, or participation in a Foreign Government Talent Recruitment Program related to their institutional responsibilities, or certify that none exist, at the time of proposal submission. All conflicts of interest and conflicts of commitment must be managed prior to the expenditure of award funds.

Each Financial Conflict of Interest Disclosure Form must be updated throughout the course of the award either on an annual basis, or within 30 days of obtaining a new reportable Significant Financial Interest, Other Support, or participation in a Foreign Government Talent Recruitment Program.

For all federally funded research, Mississippi State University requires that investigators complete FCOI training prior to proposal submission and every four years thereafter.

For all other non-federal externally-funded research, Mississippi State University requires that investigators disclose any financial conflicts of interest related to the proposed research, or certify on the Internal Approval Sheet that none exist, at the time of proposal submission. All conflicts of interest for each award must be managed prior to the expenditure of award funds.

The Conflict of Interest Review Committee (CIRC) is appointed by the Vice President for Research and Economic Development and has the authority to develop management plans for FCOIs. The CIRC is charged with ensuring that a researcher's personal interest in, or commitment to, entities outside the University's purview does not compromise or appear to

compromise his/her objectivity in performing a research project, in mentoring students involved in a research project, or in reporting the results of a research project conducted under the auspices of Mississippi State University.

The CIRC is not a punitive body. Its purpose is not to discourage industry/university partnerships, personal investments, or consulting, but to protect the integrity of the research related to these activities. When an FCOI is unable to be properly managed, the matter will be referred to the Vice President for Research and Economic Development.

Failure to make the necessary disclosure or follow an agreed upon management plan is violation of this policy. Sanctions for non-compliance may include reprimands or other appropriate measures, up to and including termination.

Additionally, Mississippi law requires all Mississippi State University employees to abide by certain conflict of interest and ethical standards as public employees which differ from those outlined in this policy. In addition to this policy, employees should see also HRM 60-416, Conflict of Interest/Ethics.

REVIEW

This OP will be reviewed as needed, but at least every four years, by the Executive Director of Research Administration with recommendations for revisions presented to the Vice President for Research and Economic Development.

This policy has been superseded.

REVIEWED BY:

/s/ Julie Jordan
Vice President, Research & Economic Development

04/02/2024
Date

/s/ Tracey N. Baham
Associate Vice President, Institutional Strategy & Effectiveness

04/09/2024
Date

/s/ Joan Lucas
General Counsel

04/12/2024
Date

APPROVED BY:

/s/ Mark E. Keenum
President

07/23/2024
Date

This policy has been superseded.