

Subject: CONFLICT OF INTEREST/ETHICS
Section: Employee Relations
Reference: Miss. Code of 1972, Ann., Secs. 25-4-101 through 25-4-105

Mississippi statutory law requires state employees to abide by certain ethical standards as public employees. The law applies to all employees of Mississippi State University, as well as to all other state employees. Specifically, the statute states in part:

No public servants shall use their official positions to obtain pecuniary benefit for themselves other than that compensation provided for by law, or to obtain pecuniary benefit for any relative or any business with which they are associated.

No employees may intentionally use or disclose information gained in the course of or by reason of their official positions or employment as a public servant in any way that could result in pecuniary benefit for themselves, any relative, or any other person, if the information has not been communicated to the public or is not public information.

Though the above general prohibitions do not include all prohibitions, for example prohibitions regarding any contracts with the University, they do set the tone of Mississippi Ethics law for public employees.

A violation of the Ethics law will not only bring about the immediate discharge of an employee by the University, but may be grounds to impose a civil fine in the amount of \$5,000.00 for each violation. In addition, the violator is subject to criminal prosecution by the appropriate state prosecutor.

Procedure

Individual employees desiring advice regarding whether their own activities would violate the Ethics law must seek private consultation/advice from their own attorney at their own expense, or may request an opinion, through the appropriate administrative channels, from the Mississippi Ethics Commission.

Supervisors who may question employees' activities, as they pertain to the Ethics law, should forward inquiries through their administrative channels to the appropriate vice-president, who in turn may forward the inquiry to the Office of the University Counsel. The Office of the University Counsel has been designated by the President as the Ethics Official for Mississippi State University.