5.2.2 Nepotism & Personal Relationships in the Workplace

Policy Section: Conditions of Employment

Policy Number and Title: 5.2.2 Nepotism & Personal Relationships in the Workplace
Applicable to: All Regular Employees
Effective Date: March 1, 2006

Policy Description

Princeton University permits the employment within the college community of individuals of the same family or those who have a personal relationship. However, the employment within the same department normally is prohibited for individuals of the same family or for those who have a personal relationship (see policy 2.1.5 Employment of Members of the Same Family or Household).

Additionally, to avoid a conflict of interest or an appearance of conflict of interest, no employee may initiate or participate in, directly or indirectly, decisions involving a direct benefit, e.g., initial employment or rehire, promotion, salary, performance appraisals, work assignments or other working conditions to those related by blood or marriage, membership in the same household, including domestic partners, or persons with whom employees have an intimate relationship.

The potential for conflict of interest may also exist in close personal relationships which involve other than family relationships. The University views such conflicts of interest as seriously as it does those involving family members or blood relatives.

Application of This Policy

**Definition of Relationships**

To avoid a conflict of interest or appearance of a conflict of interest, the definition of “relationships,” which is covered by this policy, should be interpreted very broadly.

In considering whether a relationship falls within this policy, all employees are urged to disclose the facts if there is any doubt rather than fail to disclose in cases where a relationship exists or existed in the past.

Additionally, this policy applies to all types of employment, including short-term and casual or hourly employees.

All employees are responsible to raise potential issues to the attention of
Consensual Romantic or Sexual Relationship

Conflict of interest also exists when there is a consensual romantic or sexual relationship in the context of employment supervision or evaluation. Therefore, no supervisor may influence, directly or indirectly, salary, promotion, performance appraisals, work assignments or other working conditions for an employee with whom such a relationship exists.

Any supervisor involved in a consensual romantic or sexual relationship, in the context of employment supervision, must discuss the matter on a confidential basis with his or her own supervisor or with the Office of Human Resources to assess the implications for the workplace and make arrangements to ensure that employment–related decisions are made in an appropriate and unbiased setting.

Although both employees involved in a consensual relationship are individually responsible for disclosure, a supervisor's failure to report such a relationship will be regarded as a serious lapse in his or her management of the workplace and grounds for appropriate disciplinary action, including termination of employment (particularly in cases where bias or harassment has occurred in connection with a benefit).

Supervisor’s Responsibility

A supervisor bears an **affirmative responsibility** for sustaining a positive workplace environment and one which is conducive to the professional growth of all employees.

A supervisor must be regarded as trustworthy and fair for such an environment to exist. It is important to understand that, even when arrangements have been made to minimize conflicts of interest regarding particular employment–related decisions, it is necessarily more difficult for a supervisor to be fair when a close relationship exists with an employee.

Disruption to the workplace can be particularly acute when a sexual or romantic relationship involving a supervisor is known to exist but cannot be discussed openly.

Supervisors should also understand that even in a consenting relationship there are substantial risks of charges of sexual harassment or favoritism when supervision is involved.

Report of Relationship

Any supervisor who receives the report that someone who reports to him or her is involved in a consensual romantic or sexual relationship with an employee he or she supervises will be expected to speak confidentially with the person(s) involved. If the relationship exists, appropriate steps should be taken to ensure that employment–related decisions are made in an unbiased setting.

Annual Disclosure Form

All employees must complete the **Conflict of Interest & Conflict of Commitment — Annual Disclosure Form**. The supervisor should review the disclosure form with the employee and confirm that no potential for conflict of interest exists.

Resources

Individuals who have questions or are uncertain as to the application of this policy should speak in confidence to the Office of Human Resources or with an employee assistance counselor through Carebridge Corporation.
Related Documents

**Other Policies**
- Conflict of Interest & Conflict of Commitment — Annual Disclosure Form
- 2.1.5 Employment of Members of the Same Family or Household
- 5.2.1 Conflict of Interest
- 5.2.3 Consulting & Other Outside Activities
- 5.2.4 Purchasing and Contracts
- 5.2.5 Use of University Resources
- 5.2.6 Gifts and Gratuities
- 5.2.7 Solicitation and Distribution

Contacts

**Office of Human Resources**
- hr@princeton.edu
- (609) 258-3300