



BOARD OF REGENTS POLICY: ***Neptism and Personal Relationships***

SECTION I. SCOPE.

This policy governs conflicts of interest that may arise due to personal relationships among members of the University of Minnesota (University) community.

SECTION II. DEFINITIONS.

Subd. 1. Nepotism.

Nepotism shall mean actions by a University member that directly influence the University employment (e.g., hiring, promotion, supervision, evaluation, and determination of salary) or academic progress (e.g., grading and advising) of any other University member with whom they have a personal relationship. This definition includes instances where there is no direct influence on employment or academics, but the relationship has a negative impact on the educational or work environment.

Subd. 2. Personal Relationship.

Personal relationship shall mean a marital or other committed relationship, significant familial relationship, including, relationships by blood, adoption, marriage, or domestic partnership; partner, parent, grandparent, child, sibling, first cousin, uncle, aunt, nephew, niece, spouse, brother- or sister-in-law, father- or mother-in-law, son- or daughter-in-law, step-parent, or step-child; consensual sexual or romantic relationship; a close personal friendship; or a significant business relationship.

Subd. 3. Member of the University Community.

Member of the University community shall mean any University faculty member, staff member, student, or other individual engaged in any University activity or program.

SECTION III. GUIDING PRINCIPLES.

The following principles shall guide the commitment of the University to govern conflicts of interest that may arise due to personal relationships among members of the University community.

- (a) Nepotism is prohibited at the University in the employment and educational context.
- (b) Faculty members and advisors are cautioned that romantic relationships with current students are unwise and may violate other University policies, even when activities prohibited by this policy have been avoided because of:

- (i) the trust accorded to faculty members and advisors by students;
- (ii) the power disparity inherent in academic associations;
- (iii) the difficulty of making alternative arrangements for grading and evaluation;
- (iv) the risk of real or perceived favoritism toward the student in the personal relationship; and
- (v) the potential harm to the student and other students.

SECTION IV. IMPLEMENTATION.

The University shall:

- (a) Require mandatory consultation for University members who are or will be in a position to engage in activity prohibited by this policy and ensure that appropriate, confidential steps that do not unreasonably disadvantage any University member, are taken to avoid the prohibited activity.
- (b) Require compliance with this policy by either structuring the conditions of the employment or academic association of the related parties to avoid or eliminate prohibited activities or avoid the personal relationship that may lead to prohibited activities. Such structuring shall occur after appropriate consultation and shall not unreasonably disadvantage either University member.
- (c) Protect the employment or academic interests of the subordinate party when structuring the association to avoid a prohibited activity.
- (d) Protect the interests of the subordinate when a power disparity exists in the employment or academic association of the individuals in the personal relationship.
- (e) Grant an exception to this policy in unusual circumstances, when eliminating a prohibited activity would unreasonably disadvantage one or both of the University members involved in a personal relationship. Safeguards will be implemented to ensure that any subsequent employment or academic decisions are made impartially.
- (f) Allow noncompetitive appointments of spouses and partners otherwise authorized by University policy and procedures.
- (g) Implement disciplinary action in response to violations of this policy up to and including termination of employment or academic dismissal. Participation in and adherence to the consultation process may mitigate disciplinary action.
- (h) Ensure a compliance monitoring process and remedy any practices that deviate from this policy.

REVISION HISTORY

Adopted: September 10, 1971

Amended: September 10, 1993; December 11, 1998; November 10, 2005; May 11, 2012

Last Comprehensive Review: 2020