

## CONSENSUAL RELATIONSHIPS

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### SUMMARY

Wake Forest University is committed to ensuring that relationships in the workplace and educational environment do not raise the perception of favoritism or bias or raise a concern regarding ethics or conflicts of interest. The purpose of this policy is to outline limitations on consensual romantic or sexual relationships between faculty, staff and students at Wake Forest.

### DEFINITIONS

For the purpose of this policy, a *consensual romantic or sexual relationship* is defined as a relationship of a romantic, dating and/or sexual nature entered into with the consent of both parties.

For the purpose of this policy, *supervisory or evaluative authority* is defined as the authority or power to control or influence another person's employment, academic advancement, or extracurricular participation, including but not limited to, hiring, work conditions, compensation, promotion, discipline, admission, grades, assignments, supervision of dissertations, recommendations, financial support, or participation in extracurricular programs.

### GUIDELINES

It is essential to the integrity of Wake Forest University's management, education and research practices to avoid real or perceived conflicts of interest that may be created by relationships in the workplace and in the educational environment. When a consensual romantic or sexual relationship exists or has existed between people of unequal power at the University, the person with the greater power must not hold any supervisory or evaluative authority over the other person in the relationship, except as provided below.

When undergraduate students are involved, the difference in power and the inherent risk of coercion is so great that no faculty member or other University employee may enter into a consensual romantic or sexual relationship with a Wake Forest undergraduate student, regardless of whether there is a supervisory or evaluative relationship between them. Accommodations for pre-existing consensual romantic or sexual relationships between a faculty or staff member and an undergraduate student may be permissible and will be considered on a case-by-case basis. In such circumstances, the disclosure process described below must be followed.

Consensual romantic or sexual relationships between University faculty and/or staff members, or between a faculty or staff member and a graduate/professional student **may** be permissible provided such relationships are permitted by the policy of the relevant graduate or professional school and provided no faculty or staff member enters into such a relationship with a Wake Forest graduate/professional student under the faculty or staff member's supervision. Should

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such a relationship be permitted and begin, the department chair or supervisor of the individuals involved in the relationship must be notified promptly so that arrangements for alternative supervision and removal of evaluative authority can be made.

### DISCLOSURE PROCESS

Any consensual romantic or sexual relationship permitted and described in this policy that pre-exists or develops during the course of a faculty or staff member's employment must be disclosed as directed below.

Any pre-existing consensual romantic or sexual relationship between a faculty or staff member and a newly enrolled student, or any new supervisory or research relationship involving a pre-existing consensual romantic or sexual relationship must be disclosed by the person in the position of greater power or authority through submission of the [Workplace Relationship Disclosure Form](#). The disclosure must occur within 30 days of the start of the faculty or staff member's employment with the University or within 30 days of the student's matriculation at Wake Forest.

If a new consensual romantic or sexual relationship develops during employment, an initial disclosure must be made by the person in the position of greater power or authority to Human Resources by submitting a [Workplace Relationship Disclosure Form](#).

A Human Resources Partner or the Conflict of Interest Office will consult with department and/or school leadership and Human Resources senior leadership, as necessary, to determine if a conflict exists, and if so, the appropriate action for minimizing or removing the conflict of interest.

The Conflict of Interest Office conducts an annual online disclosure process to identify all potential conflicts of interest, including those related to consensual romantic or sexual relationships. Consensual romantic or sexual relationships involving an employee with supervisory or evaluative authority over the other individual involved in the relationship must be disclosed as part of the annual process, in addition to the initial disclosure.

### HOW TO REPORT CONCERNS

Staff or faculty members or students who believe that they have been negatively impacted by a consensual romantic or sexual relationship as described in this policy should contact one of the following:

- a. Human Resources
- b. Compliance Office
- c. Compliance Hotline
- d. Title IX Coordinator or a Deputy Title IX Coordinator

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No retaliation may be directed toward a staff/faculty member or a student who reports a good faith concern about a workplace relationship. Please see the University's [Whistleblower/Non-Retaliation Policy](#) for more information.