Consenting Relationships Policy

Document Number: ACAD-0003 **Date Published(sys):** 8/2/2021

General Description

Policy Summary:

University personnel who hold positions of authority over students are not permitted to engage in a romantic or sexual relationship with a student.

Scope:

This policy applies to all faculty, staff, and other individuals holding a position of authority, such as an instructional or advisory role, over students. Graduate students, postdoctoral fellows, research technicians, student organization advisors, and volunteers in instructional or advisor roles are all covered by this policy.

Exceptions:

This policy does not prohibit consensual romantic or sexual relationships with a student that existed prior to (1) the student's application for admission to the University, (2) the employee's application for employment to the University, or (3) the earliest date of the volunteer's service to the University. In addition, this policy does not prohibit consensual romantic or sexual relationships between employees when one or both individuals are enrolled in a course under the employee tuition remission benefit, or between an employee and the employee's spouse. However, the existence of such a relationship in any of the foregoing circumstances must be promptly reported to the Vice President for Academic Affairs so that appropriate steps may be taken to manage any conflict of interest and to ensure the faculty, staff, or other individual does not have an advising or evaluative role over the student during the student's time at Trinity.

This policy only applies to circumstances where an individual is in a role where they hold a position of power over students. A graduate student who does not have such a role is not covered by this policy. Further, this policy does not prohibit a graduate student from having a consensual romantic or sexual relationship with another graduate student.

Policy Content

Statement of Policy:

Trinity University is committed to providing a robust learning environment for students, rooted in respect and trust. The integrity of the relationship between students and University personnel who hold a position of power over students is the foundation of the University's educational mission. Romantic or sexual relationships that might be appropriate in other circumstances can be inappropriate when they occur between a student and an individual who holds a position of power over a student, such as someone who serves in an instructional or advisor role.

Academic and professional trust and ethics are put at risk when members of the University community engage in or attempt to engage in romantic or sexual relationships that involve persons of unequal power. The unequal power inherent in such a relationship heightens the vulnerability of the student, has the potential for coercion, and can interfere with the learning and personal development of the student. When one person has a professional relationship involving another, or stands in a position of authority over another, even an apparently consensual amorous relationship may lead to sexual harassment or other breaches of professional obligations. In addition, such relationships can create general conflicts of interest and the concern from fellow students or co-workers of unfair treatment.

Therefore, faculty, staff, and other individuals who supervise, instruct, or advise students are prohibited from having a romantic or sexual relationship with any student, regardless of whether the individual currently exercises or expects to have any pedagogical or supervisory responsibilities over that student. The individual in the position of authority bears the primary responsibility for maintaining appropriate professional boundaries with students and complying with this policy.

Performance Evaluation

Consequences of Policy Violation:

Failure to follow this policy can result in disciplinary action up to and including dismissal.

When the Vice President for Academic Affairs (VPAA) receives a report that a faculty member has violated this policy, the VPAA or designee will gather and consider relevant information. In addition, the individual accused of violating the policy will be provided an opportunity to meet to discuss the matter. The VPAA or designee will then make a determination regarding whether a violation has occurred and will decide on the appropriate action or sanction, if any. The imposition of sanctions against faculty and any faculty appeals will be in accordance with Chapter 3A. VIII. or Chapter 3A. VI. C., of the Faculty and Contract Staff Handbook, as applicable.

Complaints against individuals other than faculty will be handled by the appropriate Vice President in accordance with existing policies pertaining to disciplinary action.

Related Documents

Related Documents:

Document Type:	Document Name:	Document Number:
Policy	Trinity University Sex Discrimination, Sexual Harassment and Sexual Misconduct Policy and Procedures	PRES-0004
Policy	Policy on Mandatory Reporting Requirements for Sexual Harassment and Sexual Misconduct	PRES-0002

Related Content:

Policy is effective upon approval of the President, following a majority vote by the Trinity Staff Engagement Council, majority vote of Faculty Senate, and majority vote by the Academic Faculty Assembly.

Subchapter E-2 of Chapter 51 of the Texas Education Code

Revision Management

Revision History Log:

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Vice President Approval:

Enter Vice President(s) that are responsible for approving this document

Name:	Title:
Claire Smith	Assistant Secretary to the Board of Trustees