

CONSENSUAL RELATIONSHIP GUIDELINES

These guidelines are intended to provide clear direction and educational opportunities to the NCTA college community about the professional risks associated with consensual romantic and/or sexual relationships where a definite power differential between the parties exists. These relationships are of concern for two primary reasons:

1. **Conflict of Interest:** Conflicts of interest may arise in connection with consensual romantic and/or sexual relationships between faculty or other college employees and students, or between supervisors and subordinates. Conflicts of interest may also arise from personal relationships such as parent-child relationships. University policy and more general ethical principles preclude individuals from evaluating the work or academic performance of others with whom they have intimate relationships, or from making hiring, salary or similar financial decisions concerning such persons. The same principles apply to consensual romantic and/or sexual relationships, and require, at a minimum, that appropriate arrangements be made for objective decision-making with regard to the student, subordinate or prospective employee.
2. **Abuse of Power Differential:** Although conflict of interest issues can be resolved, in a consensual romantic and/or sexual relationship involving a power differential the potential for serious consequences remains. Individuals entering into such relationships must recognize that:
 - a. the reasons for entering such a relationship may be a function of the power differential;
 - b. where power differentials exists, even in a seemingly consensual relationship, there are limited after-the-fact defenses against charges of sexual harassment; and
 - c. the individual with the power in the relationship will bear the burden of accountability.

Guidelines for Implementation:

To make it clear that romantic and/or sexual relationships involving conflict of interest or abuse of power differential are unacceptable at NCTA and to ensure that members of the college community are alerted to the potential for abuse in power differential relationships, NCTA requires college employees to:

1. Refrain from becoming involved in relationships which create conflict of interest or result from abuse of power differential. An example of such a relationship could be a consensual romantic or sexual relationship with a student or subordinate.
2. Discourage activities which could lead to the development of relationships involving conflict of interest or abuse of power differential. Examples of such activities would be suggestive texting with students or subordinates, or spending time alone with a student in a hotel room while traveling for a college activity.
3. Recuse themselves from a supervisory or an evaluative role when a personal relationship develops between two members of the NCTA community. The person in the position of greater authority has the responsibility to initiate the recusal. The person in the position of greater authority shall inform the Dean, relinquish (with or without explanation) the supervisory or evaluative role, and make suitable arrangements for the objective performance or academic evaluation of the other. When recusal occurs, the person whose work is being supervised must be informed of the recusal in writing.