



Policy

UNIVERSITY POLICY EO-03.00-12/01

TO: The University of West Florida Community

FROM: Dr. Morris Marx, President

SUBJECT: Consensual Relations Policy

Responsible Office/Executive: Equal Opportunity and Diversity/Assistant Vice President

Policy/Purpose: To provide policy on consensual relationships between faculty, staff and supervisors with students or employees.

The University of West Florida is committed to a learning and employment environment free from harassment, discrimination and unprofessional conduct. Accordingly, consenting romantic and sexual relationships between faculty and student or between supervisor and employee while not expressly forbidden, are discouraged. Codes of ethics for most professional associations forbid professional-client sexual relationships. Professor-student and supervisor-employee relationships are that of professional and client. The respect and trust accorded a professor by a student, as well as the power exercised by the professor or supervisor in giving grades, advice or recommendations for further study and future employment, etc., diminish the student's or employee's actual freedom of choice should sexual favors be included among the professor's or supervisor's otherwise legitimate demands. Outside third parties, students or employees, may view such relationships as unfair, disruptive, or discriminatory.

Faculty, staff and supervisors involved in a consensual relationship with a student or employee must disclose the situation to a supervisor and with the supervisor's assistance take action to insure no exercise of power or decision-making authority continues with the other party to the relationship.

Faculty and supervisors are warned against the possible consequences of even an apparently consensual relationship. A faculty member who enters into a sexual relationship with a student (or supervisor with employee) must realize that if a charge of sexual harassment is subsequently lodged, it will be difficult to prove immunity on grounds of mutual consent. It is difficult to prove a relationship is consensual where a power imbalance exists.