

Consensual Amorous Relationships Policy

CITATION REFERENCE

Official Title: Consensual Amorous Relationships Policy

Abbreviated Title: Consensual Relationships Policy

Volume: CCGA Policies

Responsible Office: Human Resources Department

Originally issued: June 1, 2010

Effective Date: June 1, 2010

Revised:

Policy Statement

The College of Coastal Georgia promotes an atmosphere of professionalism based on mutual trust and respect. The integrity of interaction among faculty, staff and students must not be compromised. Consensual amorous relationships are prohibited in certain instances as outlined in this policy.

Reason for Policy

The integrity of academic and work relationships is the foundation of the College's educational mission. These relationships vest considerable trust in persons with authority, whether as mentor, educator, evaluator and/or administrator. The unequal power inherent in college academic and work relationships heightens the vulnerability of those in subordinate positions. The College must protect itself from influences or activities that interfere with intellectual, professional and personal growth, or with the College's financial interests. Consequently, people in positions of authority within the College community must be sensitive to the potential for conflict of interest, as well as sexual harassment, in amorous relationships with people over whom they have a professional power/status advantage. The individual in authority bears the primary responsibility for any negative consequences resulting from an amorous relationship. It is in the interest of the College to provide clear direction to the College community about potential professional risks associated with consensual amorous relationships between members of the College community where a power/status advantage exists.

Entities Affected By This Policy

All employees at the College are covered by this policy.

Who Should Read This Policy

All employees at the College are should be familiar with this policy.

Contacts

Contact	Phone	E-Mail
Director of Human Resources	(912) 279-5740	hr@ccga.edu

Website Address for This Policy

<http://www.ccgga.edu/Policy/StudentAffairsPolicies.asp>

Related Documents/Resources

Human Resources Administrative Manual - [Amorous Relationships](#)

Definitions

These definitions apply to the terms as they are used in this policy:

- **Consensual Amorous Relationship:** For purposes of this policy, “a consensual amorous relationship” exists when two individuals mutually and consensually understand a relationship to be romantic and/or sexual in nature, except when those two individuals are married to each other.
- **Direct Evaluative or Supervisory Authority:** This exists when one participant is personally involved in evaluating, assessing, grading, or otherwise determining the other participant’s academic or employment performance, progress, or potential.

Overview

Consensual amorous relationships will sometimes develop between members of the College community, whether faculty members, students, administrators or staff. This policy requires that direct evaluative authority not be exercised in cases where amorous relationships exist between two individuals, whether of the same or opposite sex. Problems often arise with amorous relationships in situations where one party is the supervisor and the other the supervisee. In such situations, the integrity of academic or employment decisions may either be compromised or appear to be compromised. Further, amorous relationships between parties of unequal power greatly increase the possibility that the individual with the evaluative responsibility, typically a supervisor or a faculty member, will abuse her/his power and sexually exploit the student or employee. A relationship which began as consensual, may in retrospect be seen as something else by one or both of the parties. Moreover, others may be adversely affected by such behavior because it places the faculty member or supervisor in a position to favor or advance one student’s or employee’s interest at the expense of

others and implicitly makes obtaining preferences contingent upon romantic or sexual favors. This policy, consequently, is intended to: (1) establish a reporting structure to protect participants in these relationships from violations of College conflict of interest guidelines; and (2) provide direction concerning how to terminate evaluative responsibilities between the two parties in the reported relationship.

I. Generally

There is a conflict of interest when a direct evaluative relationship exists between two employees or between an employee and a student. In such circumstances, the following procedures will be used to resolve the conflict of interest:

- a. Faculty Member Direct Evaluative Relationship. If the amorous relationship exists in a faculty member/student direct evaluative relationship, a faculty member/faculty member direct evaluative relationship, or a faculty member/staff direct evaluative relationship, the relationship must be disclosed to the faculty member's Dean and Department Chair, with all parties present (including both parties to the relationship). The individual in the evaluative position shall recuse her or himself from all future evaluative actions involving the other person.
- b. Other Evaluative Relationships. If the amorous relationship exists in a form of supervisor/supervisee direct evaluative relationship other than those enumerated above (staff member/staff member), it must be disclosed to the supervisor's first-line manager, with all parties present.
- c. Responsibility to Report. In either of these sets of circumstances, the individual in the evaluative or supervisory position has an obligation to disclose the consensual amorous relationship to his or her administrative superior and to cooperate with the administrative superior in removing himself or herself from any such evaluative or supervisory activity in order to eliminate the existing or potential conflict of interest.
- d. Supervisory Action. Once a consensual amorous relationship of the types identified above has been disclosed, the supervisor of the employee in the evaluative will ensure that the individual in authority does not evaluate nor participate in discussions and decisions that affect the compensation, evaluation, employment conditions, instructions, and/or academic status of the subordinate involved.

II. **The Complaint Process**

The Board of Regents requires that each institution within the University System of Georgia “establish a reporting process such that any person who believes that a faculty member, administrator, graduate assistant or other employee is involved in a consensual amorous relationship with a person under his/her direct authority or supervision will have an avenue for reporting the perceived relationship.” At the College of Coastal Georgia, the following reporting process will be followed:

- a. Who May File a Complaint. A complaint alleging a violation of this policy may be brought by any person, including, but not limited to, any third party who believes that a conflict exists or that he or she may be or may have been disadvantaged by virtue of the existence of a romantic and/or sexual relationship prohibited by this policy.
- b. Where to File a Complaint. Complaints alleging a violation of this policy are to be brought to and investigated by the Director of Human Resources, who also acts as the College’s Equal Employment Opportunity Officer.
- c. Investigative Process. The Director of Human Resources will investigate the complaint, giving both the complainant and the respondent an opportunity to be heard. The respondent will have an opportunity to respond to the allegations and evidence provided by the complainant, and to provide a statement of the facts as perceived by the respondent. At the conclusion of the investigation, the Director of Human Resources will issue written findings as to whether there is a reasonable basis to believe there has been a violation of this policy.
 - Where the respondent is a faculty member, the written findings will be forwarded to the Vice President for Academic Affairs for appropriate action.
 - Where the respondent is a staff member, the written findings will be forwarded to the proper Cabinet member for appropriate action, depending upon the supervisory chain of the staff member.
 - Should any employee or student not involved in the consensual amorous relationship claim to have been adversely affected personally by a violation of this policy, the situation will be investigated by Director of Human Resources or, if that person elects to file a grievance, under the appropriate College grievance procedure.

III. Administrative or Disciplinary Action

Any individual who violates this policy is subject to disciplinary action commensurate with the offense. The College will take appropriate administrative and/or disciplinary action when disruptive conduct, job performance problems, or actions that reflect poorly on the College result from amorous relationships.

Consensual amorous relationships that are terminate by one party to the objection of the other may also lead to separate claims of sexual harassment. In such cases, the matter will be referred to the College’s Equal Employment Opportunity officer and pursued appropriately.

IV. Malicious Use of This Policy

It is important to avoid conflict of interests resulting from amorous relationships; it is equally important to recognize that malicious accusations of inappropriate amorous relationships have the potential to severely damage a person’s career and reputation. Therefore, the College prohibits making knowingly false accusations that an unreported amorous relationship exists or existed between two parties now in a position to evaluate each other.

Responsibilities

The responsibilities each party has in connection with the policy on consensual amorous relationships are:

Party	Responsibility
Human Resources Department	Ensure full compliance with this policy.
All Faculty and Staff	Ensure full compliance with this policy.

Forms

None

Appendices

None