

# Faculty Development Committee Troy State University

## Policy on Professional Standards and Conflicts of Interest

September, 1999

<b>Committee Members</b>	<b>Academic/Administrative Unit</b>	<b>Term Expires</b>
<b><u>Appointed</u></b>		
Glenn Cohen, Chair	A & S	9-00
<b><u>Elected</u></b>		
Cathy Dunn	H & HS	9-01
David Hayes	UC	9-02
Carol Moore	PC	9-00
Ed Pappanastos	BUS	9-01
Forrest Petry	EDU	9-00
Patrick Rossi	A & S	9-01
Jim Zingara	CCFA	9-02
<b><u>Ex Officio</u></b>		
Gloria Griffin	Financial Affairs	--

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## Introduction

Faculty and administrative support for the Faculty Development Committee depends upon the professionalism of its members. The Committee expects all of its members to uphold the highest standards of personal responsibility. The Committee has written a *Policy of Professional Standards and Conflicts of Interest* to help clarify the specific professional and ethical issues that it faces.

The Committee will review its *Policy* each year or more frequently as necessary to 1) reaffirm its commitment to its goals, 2) instruct new members about its meaning, and 3) determine whether the current *Policy* meets its charge or requires revisions.

## I. STATUS AND CHARGE OF THE FACULTY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

### Committee Status

The Faculty Development Committee is a standing committee. Its authority, charge, faculty representation, and reporting responsibilities follow the guidelines outlined in Sections 2.2 through 2.5 of the *Faculty Handbook* of Troy State University. Committee membership and terms of service are published in the document *Standing Committees of Troy State University*. The latter document is revised annually.

### Committee Charge

The Committee is authorized to review proposals and make recommendations for their approval or rejection. It reviews applications for sabbatical leaves and five categories of grants:

- Instructional Improvement
- Research
- Summer Research
- Paper Presentation
- Page Charge and Reprint

The Faculty Development Committee reviews the proposals under its purview and submits its recommendations for funding to the Provost. In turn, the Provost reviews the Committee's recommendations and, if he approves them, submits the approvals to the Chancellor. The Chancellor authorizes funding and sends all notices of approval to the applicants.

### Committee Membership

The Committee membership consists of an appointed chair, an *ex officio* administrative officer, and seven elected members. Of the seven elected members, one comes from the TSU-Phenix City campus and one each from the six Colleges of the University. The apportionment by campus and college is listed below:

Phenix City campus	1
College of Arts and Sciences	1
Sorrell College of Business	1
College of Communication and Fine Arts	1
College of Education	1
College of Health and Human Services	1
University College	<u>1</u>
Total	7

## Committee Operations and Internal Procedures

The Committee is responsible for developing policies and updating procedures for reviewing proposals, writing disclosure forms, revising Grant formats, and other activities within its purview. As appropriate, the Provost will review the policies and procedures to ensure that they conform to University policy and applicable law.

## II. PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS

### Impartiality

Committee members must uphold the highest levels of professionalism when reviewing proposals. They must be able to justify both approvals and rejections with the same rigorous standards. They must never give the impression by word or action that personal biases influenced either the approval or rejection of proposals.

### Time Commitment

Committee members must review proposals in a timely manner. Committee members who are unable or unwilling to make this time commitment should not serve on the Committee.

### Financial Compensation

Faculty members serving on the Faculty Development Committee are not compensated financially for performing their duties. The University treats Committee service as constituting one part of faculty duties.

### Confidentiality

The chair serves as the spokesperson for the Committee. Committee members are not permitted to discuss their deliberations of proposals with applicants, or other parties. For example, they may not discuss

- the decision,
- the deliberative process in reaching the decision, or
- the vote (unanimous, split, etc.) of the Committee.

The Committee will disclose confidential information only to persons (administrators and legal council) who require access to such confidential information in the course of performing their duties. In turn, administrators and legal counsel are obliged to protect the confidentiality of the Committee's deliberations and votes.

#### Presence of Guests during Committee Meetings

The Committee sometimes needs to invite guests (administrators, faculty, and staff) to attend its meetings to provide clarifications of University policies, explanations of proposals, and answers to procedural and financial questions. The guests will come during the appointed time and leave the meeting upon completion of their contributions to the Committee. For reasons of safeguarding confidentiality, the guests will not remain during deliberations, discussions of proposals, and voting.

#### Advocacy Vs Explication

The Committee receives proposals from every academic unit of the University. These proposals represent a broad and diverse range of topics. Although proposals must stand on their merits, the Committee members sometimes lack the expertise to judge specific portions of proposals. On these occasions, the Committee might ask one of its members with the expertise to explicate particular portions of a proposal. Nonetheless, Committee members should not cross the line between serving as an explicator and becoming an advocate for an applicant.

#### Intramural and Extramural Reviews

If the Committee lacks the expertise to review a proposal, it may request intramural and/or extramural reviewers as necessary. External reviewers must follow the same professional standards explained in this *Policy* as Committee members.

#### Notices of Approval and Rejection

The Chancellor authorizes funding and sends all notices of approval to the applicants.

The Committee chair is authorized to send the notices of rejection to the applicants. At the request of the Committee, the chair will also include an explanation of the reason(s) that the Committee rejected the proposal in the notices. The chair will craft the notices in such a manner as to protect the confidentiality of individual Committee members by blending Committee evaluations into composite critiques.

#### Response to Criticism

As its most disagreeable responsibility, the Committee must reject those proposals that do not meet minimal standards. Despite the temptation to explain and justify, they must courteously but firmly decline to discuss the Committee's decisions with applicants (Also see Confidentiality and Notices of Approval and Rejection above). Committee members must maintain the confidentiality of votes and deliberations.

Applicants have the right to criticize Committee decisions. The applicants will generally direct their criticism by using one or more of three major routes

- Challenge Committee members directly through conversations, phone calls, and memos;
- Register complaints with department chairs, deans, or other administrators, hoping that these administrators will overturn the Committee's decisions; and
- Criticize Committee members through colleagues and other faculty committees.

The Committee will ignore the criticisms and approve or reject proposals based solely on their merits. Moreover, we shall uphold a standard of impartiality in reviewing future proposals submitted by those faculty members whose previous proposals we have rejected.

On the other hand, if an applicant's behavior rises to the level of misconduct, the chair will immediately notify the applicant's chair, dean, and the Provost and request that they intercede and take appropriate action.

### III. CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

#### Definition

Using language from the Alabama Ethics Commission, Committee members are prohibited from accepting "things of value" in return for any action taken as part of the Faculty Development Committee. In this context, things of value include any gratuity, favor, hospitality, and items having monetary value. Things of value also include promises to elevate the social or professional standing of a Committee member and to provide services of professional value such as guest lectures, letters of recommendation for promotion and tenure, and courtesy authorships on manuscripts.

#### Self-examination of Conflicts of Interest

Committee members must carefully examine their dealings to determine whether conflicts already exist or might arise. Committee members are required to report any attempts by applicants to give them things of value. They should document the attempts and report them to the Chair without delay.

#### Disclosures

The Committee does not require routine disclosures from its members. Instead, the Committee requires disclosures of potential and actual conflicts of interest on a need-to-know basis. The disclosures are narrowly focused only on situations that pose conflicts with Committee duties.

As necessary, Committee members must fill out a disclosure form and submit the disclosure form to the chair or the chair's designee. These disclosures will serve as the basis for determining the circumstances under which Committee members must abstain from deliberations, recuse (disqualify) themselves from voting, or resign from the Committee.

For reasons of maintaining confidentiality, a Committee member may consult with the chair to designate a college dean, Provost, Vice President for Financial Affairs, or other experienced administrator to review his/her disclosure. The chair will provide the guidelines. The administrative designee must write a letter to the chair explaining the criteria used for reaching the decision. The letter must be received within 10 working days from the date of the request. Members with serious conflicts must resign from the Committee; members with limited conflicts must recuse themselves from deliberations and voting on those matters related to the conflicts.

#### Submission of Proposals by Committee Members

Committee members are appointed in part because of their professional activity in their respective disciplines. Faculty members who are professionally active in their disciplines bring insights, experience, and vitality to the Committee. For these reasons, service on the Faculty Development Committee should not force members to limit their professional activities, such as proposal submissions, during their tenure on the Faculty Development Committee. However, to avoid conflicts of interest, Committee members who have submitted proposals to the Faculty Development Committee must abstain from participating in deliberations of their own proposals (and co-authored proposals) and recuse themselves during voting on them.

Committee members cannot

- vote on their own proposals or proposals in which they are co-investigators,
- remain in the presence of other members during voting or the counting of ballots, or
- discuss the outcome of the vote with other Committee members.

#### Safeguarding the Proprietary Information Contained in Proposals

The ideas (intellectual property) contained in proposals have potential monetary value and belong to the applicant. Committee members cannot use an applicant's ideas (intellectual property) for patents, copyrights, trademarks, business ventures, publications, proposals, or any public discussion.

Once a Committee member has reviewed a proposal, s/he is responsible for properly disposing of it, such as by shredding. The Committee must securely store archival copies.

#### IV. DISCIPLINARY ACTIONS

Committee members are obliged to uphold the *Policy* presented herein. If a Committee member believes that someone on the Committee has violated the *Policy*, whether willfully or unintentionally, then the Committee member should inform the chair in a timely manner. If the chair is the one who is accused of the violation, then the Committee member should go directly to the Provost. Charges of violations will be handled with the highest priority and confidentiality. The Provost will direct the Committee for the appropriate disciplinary actions.

However, the Committee member must exercise prudent professional judgment and document the alleged violations fully. The Committee member must work within the system and must not

propagate charges of alleged wrongdoing through administrators, faculty, students, journalists, and the community. Inaccurate, unsubstantiated, or frivolous allegations can damage the reputation and career of the Committee member and will be considered as an actionable violation of this *Policy*.

## V. REFERENCES

Alabama Ethics Commission. 1997. *Code of Alabama 1975. Code of Ethics for Public Officials, Employees, etc.* West Publishing, St. Paul, Minn.

Baylor University. 1991. *Conflict of Interest Policy (with IRB Clarification of October, 1994)*. Houston, TX.

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