

# CONFLICT OF COMMITMENT POLICY

Approved by the Board of Trustees 7/8/05

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## I. Preamble

Faculty at The Ohio State University accept an obligation to avoid conflicts of commitment in carrying out their university education, research, scholarship or service responsibilities. This policy is intended to assist faculty members, including administrators and staff with faculty appointments, in avoiding these conflicts and in finding a balance between activities that enhance the university's core purpose—to advance the well-being of the people of Ohio and the global community through the creation and dissemination of knowledge—and those that detract from it.

## II. State and Federal Laws and Regulations

Federal regulations require the university to adopt a policy governing conflicts of interest in research. In addition, faculty members should be aware that they are also subject to various provisions of Ohio law governing ethics and conflicts of interest in public employment. Additional information about the requirements of Ohio law may be obtained by consulting the Office of Legal Affairs.

## III. Definition

For purposes of this policy, a conflict of commitment exists when external or other activities are so substantial or demanding as to interfere with the individual's teaching, research, scholarship or service responsibilities to the university or its students.

## IV. Policy

Ohio State University full-time faculty members, including administrators with faculty appointments, owe their primary professional allegiance to the university, and their primary commitment of time and intellectual energies should be to the education, research, service and scholarship programs of the institution. The specific responsibilities and professional activities that constitute an appropriate and primary commitment will differ across schools and departments and will be based on academic practice and/or specific written agreement between the faculty member and his or her department chair and/or college dean.

Even with such understandings in place, however, attempts by faculty to balance university responsibilities with non-university related external activities can result in conflicts regarding allocation of professional time and energies. Conflicts of commitment usually involve issues of time allocation. For example, whenever a faculty member's outside consulting activities (as defined in the university's Policy on Paid External Consulting) exceed the permitted limits (normally one eight hour day per week or less, as may otherwise be established by formal college or departmental policy) or whenever a full-time faculty member's primary professional obligation is not to Ohio State, a conflict of commitment exists.

Faculty should disclose and discuss external commitments with their department chairs and/or deans. If an activity cannot be managed by the faculty member and his/her chair or dean to avoid a conflict of commitment or the reasonable appearance of a conflict of commitment, the faculty member must refrain from participating in the activity.

Examples of situations that, absent prior department or college review and approval, may create an actual or a perceived conflict of commitment are presented below. The examples are by no means exhaustive, and are provided only as samples of some commonly encountered situations.

- Teaching at another university during on-duty quarters in an academic year, or otherwise representing yourself as a faculty member of another university.
- Use of one's professional expertise during on-duty quarters in an academic year to provide services that compete with services provided by an academic or service entity within the university.
- Participating in private business activities to the detriment of your university education, research, scholarship or service responsibilities.
- Conducting research or novel scientific investigation as a private consultant to outside entities, which should be conducted more appropriately as research sponsored through The Ohio State University Research Foundation.

Failure to comply with this policy may result in administrative or disciplinary actions against the faculty or staff member in accordance with the procedures set forth in Faculty Rule 3335-5-04. If the conflict of commitment involves a research project administered by the university, whether or not that administration is through The Ohio State University Research Foundation, any action required by funding or regulatory agencies will also be taken. The procedures for reporting such conflicts and management plans shall be promulgated by the Office of Academic Affairs in consultation with the Conflict of Interest Policy Advisory Committee.