

UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA-LINCOLN

PROFESSIONAL ETHICS STATEMENT

Endorsed by the UNL Academic Senate April 10, 1990

The ethics of the academic profession derive from the collegial organization of Western higher education. Each professor is obligated to preserve the conditions which make teaching, research, and service effective by adhering to the integrity of these enterprises, by protecting the profession from outside interference, and by assuring that all judgments of intellectual work and all decisions about privileges and rewards within the collegial fellowship are free from irrelevant considerations. The general standards of the academic profession have been codified in documents such as those of the AAUP on Academic Freedom, Due Process, and Professional Standards and Conflicts of Interest; the AAU document on fraud in research; and in the "Statements of Professional Ethics" promulgated by organizations representing the academic disciplines. The standards and principles enunciated in such documents, many of which have been incorporated into the Regents By-Laws, are assumed as the reference for the principles set forth below.

Professors reserve the right to make judgments about the quality of intellectual work of students and colleagues, and about the granting of privileges and rewards within the community. This right presupposes that judgments are free from discrimination on irrelevant grounds such as race, sex, religion, sexual preference, marital status; that these judgments are free from conditions of threat or bribery, from personal interest, and from favoritism based on a personal relationship. The Professional Conduct Committee, a subcommittee of the Academic Rights and Responsibilities Committee, does not address criminal acts per se, since these offenses are normally handled through legal channels. If criminal activity is carried out, however, in connection with the performance of professional responsibilities, action by the Committee may be appropriate. Professors claim for themselves the freedom to pursue knowledge wherever it might lead them, to publish the results of this pursuit, and to address public issues without sanction. This claim, however, is dependent upon the faculty's adherence to high standards in research, teaching, and service, and to the recognition that all persons within the academic community possess an equal right to engage in research and to promulgate findings at an appropriate level. Faculty members accept that honest error and sincere differences of opinion in the interpretation of data are natural consequences of the free pursuit of knowledge.

The principles set down here, taken together with the Regents and the UNL By-Laws, are deemed appropriate to invoke in the preparation of departmental and collegiate policies; in appeals, grievances, and other actions brought before University, committees; as well as in the explanations of the University's internal procedures and public role. Although these principles appear to address particular problems, they are not to be considered complete or exhaustive statements of academic/professional standards. Faculty recognize that along with their academic freedom is associated greater responsibility

to the academic community.

1. RESEARCH AND CREATIVE ACTIVITY

Our primary goal as research faculty is to advance knowledge and understanding. As researchers we exhibit self discipline, academic honesty and critical judgment regarding the use, extension, and sharing of our knowledge and ideas. We acknowledge that research and teaching are based in free inquiry and access to all knowledge. Our goal to seek and state truth requires the discovery, development, and communication of new understanding; these tasks are seldom accomplished without utilizing knowledge gained by others. We recognize and indicate where the contributions of others (colleagues, students, or staff) have made our own discoveries possible; and we give due credit to those under our guidance who have contributed to our research.

As researchers we scrupulously gather and interpret data, employ the highest standards of intellectual honesty and accuracy, and critically evaluate results of our work and its applicability. Where research involves the use of human subjects, we exercise the highest level of human concern so as to preclude any harm to the subjects. In addition, all procedures are thoroughly pretested, all human subjects informed as to these procedures and their potential outcome, and all results made known to subjects, colleagues, and the institution. In our research we are sensitive to the principles that have been developed to protect our animal subjects from abuse.

We recognize that academic careers rest largely upon a record of creativity as presented through publication and assessed by peer review. Consequently we take seriously our obligation to maintain an open and disciplined mind as we assess the work of others; we abide by the canons of due process. In our research and in our teaching we give fair consideration to conclusions and theories not in agreement with our own. Only if we all respect and defend free inquiry, only if we all disseminate facts and ideas, only if we all credit and assess the work of others fairly and rigorously, only under these conditions can the academic community grow and develop to its full potential.

As members of a tax-exempt and tax-supported institution we accept our fundamental obligation to serve the welfare of the general community. We regard fundamental research as essential to that welfare even without immediate practical application or visible commercial benefit. As scholars whose research is conducted in the publicly supported facilities of a land grant university, we publicly disseminate the results of that research to assure that those results are accessible to others for replication, review, and potential benefit.

As researchers we avoid any exploitation of others for personal advantage, and we avoid any form of discrimination based on such factors as race, color, religion, national origin, sex, marital status, sexual orientation, age, physical disability, political beliefs or health conditions.

2. TEACHING

As teachers we exercise and defend the freedom to discuss our subjects in the classroom, remaining careful not to introduce controversial material unrelated to the subject or to the teacher's expertise.

We encourage the free pursuit of learning in our students, holding before them the best scholarly standards of our discipline. We demonstrate respect for students as individuals, and adhere to our proper role as intellectual guides and counselors. We make every reasonable effort to foster honest academic conduct by our students and to assure that our evaluation of them reflects their true academic or creative performance. We respect the confidential nature of the relationship between professor and student; avoid any personal exploitation of students; protect their academic freedom; and acknowledge any significant assistance from them.

As faculty of a research university, we seek to involve both our graduate and undergraduate students in our professional investigations by nurturing their opportunity to contribute to meaningful research, and by giving them appropriate credit for their work. When we accept the responsibility to supervise theses/dissertations, we commit ourselves to providing a proper level of attention during the expected time frame for completion of the project, even if we have to be absent from the campus for an extended period of time. As teachers we avoid any exploitation of our students for personal advantage and we avoid any form of discrimination based on such factors as race, color, religion, national origin, sex, marital status, sexual orientation, age, physical disability, political beliefs or health conditions. In so doing we are recognizing that discrimination against and harassment of students is not only unacceptable, but constitutes professional misconduct.

3. SERVICE

We accept it as our responsibility to make service contributions to the quality of life and work of our students, our disciplines, the university, the academy, and the public. We undertake service activities in our professional societies and in broader communities as a function of our community supported expertise. In all service activities we sustain for ourselves and expect of others adherence to recognized professional standards of ethical behavior.

a. Public Service, including Extension

By tradition and through adoption of land-grant responsibilities the University of Nebraska provides comprehensive public service and extension to all citizens throughout Nebraska. Services are provided through programs in (1) general extension, (2) continuing education for the professions, (3) cooperative extension, (4) cultural outreach and recreational programs, (5) direct patient and client care, and (6) non-traditional means of delivering education. Additionally, technical and advisory services are provided to agriculture, industry, community groups, business, education, the professions, and all levels of government. In these areas, the whole State is the campus of the University, with its personnel and

facilities providing service and extension in every county in Nebraska.

In research or consultation services we plan cooperatively with representatives of community groups; we develop clear contracts or memoranda of understanding as to working, sharing, or funding relationships, as appropriate.

b. University Service

As collections of professional specialists, Universities are run effectively only by shared governance. As faculty members we therefore expect to participate in governance functions, mindful both of the responsibilities that attend our expertise and of the legitimate role of others in the conduct of University affairs. We undertake various administrative tasks, committee assignments, and advisory responsibilities as part of our service to the institution.

In all our service work, we engage in no exploitation for personal advantage and we avoid any form of discrimination based on such factors as race, color, religion, national origin, sex, marital status, sexual orientation, age, physical disability, political beliefs, or health conditions. We recognized that discrimination against and harassment of others is unacceptable.

4. COLLEGIAL RELATIONS

As Professors we owe our colleagues our respect both as fellow scholars and as human beings possessed of dignity. Exploitation of colleagues for sexual or economic purposes or for professional advantage violates this obligation. As collegial courtesy we support the research efforts of our colleagues by making reasonable responses to requests to review their papers and to discuss their work with them; by acknowledging our debt to their scholarly contributions; and by bearing our fair share of the academic load.

We evaluate a colleague's professional performance based on sound criteria and due process rights. Where there is reasonable expectation of privacy, we respect the confidentiality of information given by or about our colleagues. Either as colleagues or supervisors we avoid the exploitation (economic, emotional, intellectual or sexual) of others for personal advantage, we avoid any form of discrimination based on factors such as race, color, religion, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, age, physical disability, marital status, political beliefs, or for health conditions. Any discrimination against or harassment of colleagues is deemed unacceptable and constitutes professional misconduct.

5. FACULTY-STAFF RELATIONS

As members of the University Community we share-in the responsibility to provide creative and healthy

work environments at all levels: managerial/professional, office/service, or graduate assistants. We respect the rights of staff members to a clear work description, to fair pay for their services, and to an awareness of the supervisory lines affecting their work; we avoid making requests that are in conflict with either their job descriptions or work priorities.

Because teaching and research rely upon various forms of staff assistance, we accept our responsibility to create and maintain a professional and productive work setting. If required to evaluate or supervise staff members we are aware of their rights to access information and to due process, and we acknowledge their significant contributions. We avoid any economic, intellectual, or sexual exploitation of staff for private advantage. Furthermore, we avoid any form of discrimination based on such factors as race, color, religion, national origin, sex, marital status, sexual orientation, age, physical disability, political beliefs, or health conditions. We recognize that discrimination against and harassment of staff is unacceptable and constitutes professional misconduct.

6. FACULTY AS ADMINISTRATORS

When we have administrative status, we uphold the ethical standards of the academic community. We insure that each member of the University community is accorded fair access to opportunities, rewards, and desirable conditions of work and to due process. We do not limit the expression of dissent; we do not coerce persons into suppressing their opinions nor into expressing opinions they do not hold; we do not penalize the expression of sincere opinions on professional or civil matters. Such activities chill discussion and that prevents the advancement of knowledge and hinders the development of programs. As administrators we exploit no one for our own advantage, and we avoid any form of discrimination based on such factors as race, color, religion, national origin, age, sex, marital status, sexual orientation, physical disability, political beliefs, or for health conditions. We recognize that discrimination and harassment are unacceptable and constitutes professional misconduct.

7. FACULTY AS CITIZENS

As citizens, we exercise our rights to speak and write without institutional interference or reprisal. At the same time, we recognized that what we say is often associated with our institution and profession, so we carry a special burden to be accurate, to be appropriately restrained, to be respectful of the opinions of others, and to indicate that we are not institutional spokespersons when that is the case.

8. FAMILIAL RELATIONSHIPS AND CONSENSUAL INTIMACY

Familial relationships such as those of husband and wife, cohabiting partners, or parent and child sometimes occur in supervisory or student-teacher situations. In employment situations, the University's regulations apply (see ByLaws of the Board of Regents of the University of Nebraska, 1979, Section 3.8). In teaching situations, faculty must avoid even the appearance of a conflict of interest.

Because romantic or sexual relationships between teacher and student are fraught with dangers of exploitation or favoritism, we avoid such relationships. For those same reasons, faculty members also avoid romantic relationships with any individuals over whom they have any academic, professional, or supervisory power.

9. HEALTH CONSIDERATIONS

Faculty members, like other human beings are subject to illness and disability, sometimes physical, sometimes mental and sometimes (as is apparently the case with alcoholism) a combination of both. We do not discriminate against one another on the basis of disability unrelated to our professional tasks. Further, we try to seek remedy for such illnesses we suffer so they do not substantially interfere with legitimate work expectations. It is sometimes legitimate to revise those expectations in view of a person's reduced range of capacity. Sometimes, however, the illness or disability is so severe as to require, with sufficient due process protection, severance from the University.

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SUGGESTIONS

- Have this statement printed into a booklet style.
- Ask the Chancellor or Senior Vice Chancellor to include the document in ALL faculty handbooks on the web. It should also be included in all Chair handbooks (which some colleges do have).
- Ask the Chancellor for a cover letter, including some context, and send out to all faculty next fall (perhaps jointly from the Chancellor and Academic Senate President).
- Include in materials given to new faculty at "New Faculty Orientation".

- Have a forum on this topic hosted by the Chancellor's office.