

University Senate

Proposed: April 27, 2018

Adopted: 28 in favor; 9 against; 7 abstaining

**RESOLUTION TO ADOPT A REVISED POLICY ON ROMANTIC AND SEXUAL
RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN FACULTY/STAFF AND UNDERGRADUATE
STUDENTS**

BE IT RESOLVED that the University Senate approve the attached revision of the policy on consensual romantic and sexual relationships between faculty and students.

Proponents:

Student Affairs Committee

Faculty Affairs Committee

Commission on the Status of Women

ROMANTIC AND SEXUAL RELATIONSHIP POLICY
REGARDING FACULTY/STAFF AND UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS

Background

Columbia University's educational mission is promoted by the professionalism of its faculty-student relationships. This professionalism is reflected not only in the quality of the intellectual exchange between faculty and students but also in the nature of their interactions as members of a community of scholars. The academic freedom traditionally accorded to members of the faculty imposes a correlative obligation of responsible self-discipline, one which acknowledges the power they exercise over students and the importance of protecting against its abusive or exploitative use.

Romantic and sexual relationships between faculty and students pose a threat to academic professionalism as they compromise the faculty members' judgment of students. More importantly, because of the power differential, romantic and sexual relationships between faculty and students are highly susceptible to being experienced as non-consensual or coercive.

Undergraduate students are particularly vulnerable to the power asymmetry of the student-teacher relationship. In recognition of that, this policy modifies the current policy of the University with respect to undergraduate students which states that no faculty member is to have a romantic or sexual relationship with any student over whom he or she has or might reasonably expect to have academic or professional authority. The current University policies with respect to romantic relationships between faculty and other students (including but not limited to graduate students, non-degree students, and/or executive students) remain in effect.

Policy Text

Rule

No faculty member may initiate or accept sexual or romantic advances or engage in a romantic or sexual relationship with any undergraduate student enrolled in Columbia College, the Fu Foundation School of Engineering and Applied Science, the School of General Studies, or Barnard College or other affiliate of Columbia, regardless of whether or not the faculty member has a supervisory role over the student.

These restrictions against romantic and/or sexual relationships with undergraduate students apply to all officers of instruction, research, administration, and the libraries. The restrictions also

apply to graduate students with appointments as student officers of instruction and research and graduate teaching assistants, postdoctoral fellows, graduate and undergraduate teaching assistants, and tutors, during any period of time they are teaching, advising or supervising an undergraduate student. “Undergraduate student” includes those enrolled in any program at the University or an affiliate as well as any undergraduate student employee or volunteer at the University. This policy is also applicable to any member of the Columbia community who has authority over a student such as directors of student organizations, athletic coaches, or supervisors of student employees, in addition to all staff and other members of the community who may mentor or evaluate students.

Sanctions

Failure to comply with this policy may lead to disciplinary action up to and including termination and may adversely affect decisions on promotion and tenure.

Reporting

Faculty or staff who observe, learn of, or otherwise know about a romantic or sexual relationship in violation of this policy must report what they know to the University’s Office of Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action (EOAA) (eoaa.columbia.edu).

Students, faculty, and staff concerned about consensual romantic relationships involving others in their programs or classes are encouraged to speak with their dean, chair or other head of unit in which they are working to ensure that they are able to complete their academic and/or professional work without issue. Students concerned about romantic relationships involving others in their programs or classes are encouraged to speak with EOAA.

For advice regarding disclosure, reporting or assistance on the appropriate course of action, any faculty member, staff member or student may consult with EOAA, consistent with University policies and federal regulations. At all times, the institutional response shall keep the student’s educational aims and needs foremost.

Responsibilities

Should a romantic or sexual relationship with a student lead to a charge of sexual harassment or sexual assault against a faculty member, the University is obligated to investigate and resolve the charge in accordance with the Columbia University Employee Policy and Procedures on Discrimination and Harassment, Sexual Assault, Domestic Violence, Dating Violence, and Stalking, a copy of which may be found online at: <http://eoaa.columbia.edu/>. Questions regarding the Consensual Romantic and Sexual Relationship Policies or the Employee Policy and Procedures on Discrimination and Harassment, Sexual Assault, Domestic Violence, Dating

Violence and Stalking should be directed to EOAA, 103 Low Memorial Library, 212-854-5918, eoaa@columbia.edu.

Exclusions & Special Situations

In certain unusual circumstances, where explicit written authorization has been obtained from the Provost (in matters involving faculty) or the Vice President of Human Resources (in matters involving staff) in consultation with Office of the General Counsel, romantic and/or sexual relationships with undergraduate students may be permitted.