Employee Standards of Ethical Conduct



Office of the Provost

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University of South Carolina

Employee Standards of Ethical Conduct

Preface

The Palmetto State established South Carolina College in 1801, the precursor to the University of South Carolina System (University). Today, the University is a complex organization comprised of eight institutions that serve the state of South Carolina through teaching, research, creative activity, and community engagement.

The University expects members of its community to demonstrate an unwavering commitment to the highest standards of excellence and ethical behavior. As individual members in the System, our behavior reflects who we are and affects the reputation of the University. This is reflected in our ***Carolinian Creed***, which represents the aspirational values for the Employee Standards of Ethical Conduct:

- *We will practice personal and academic integrity;*
- *We will respect the dignity of all persons;*
- *We will respect the rights and property of others;*
- *We will discourage bigotry, while striving to learn from differences in people, ideas and opinions;*
- *We will demonstrate concern for others, their feelings, and their need for the conditions which support their work and development;*
- *Allegiance to these ideals requires us to refrain from and discourage behaviors which threaten the freedom and respect every individual deserves.*

Definitions

University – the University of South Carolina System and all its members including the eight institutions and 20 locations comprising its System and its online programs.

University Employees – members of the University's Board of Trustees, and University officers, faculty, staff, and other individuals employed by the University regardless of classification, including all full-time, part-time, temporary, research grant, time-limited and contract employees.

Purpose

The Employee Standards of Ethical Conduct (Standards) articulates expectations for the behavior of University employees (as defined in the Definitions section). There are many

laws, regulations, policies, and ethical standards System employees are expected to follow. The Standards provide one guiding document highlighting many of these requirements. The Standards do not replace, limit, or otherwise alter any existing requirements.

All System employees must be familiar with and abide by the applicable guidance summarized by the Standards. Violations of these ethical standards have disciplinary consequences as summarized in the Violations section and in the relevant policies.

Additional information on University policies can be found at University Policies - Office of the Provost.

Honesty and Trust

Employees are expected to be honest, cultivate trust, and avoid subjecting the University to undue risk.

Inadequate governance, as well as biased decision-making by higher education employees, can facilitate corrupt behavior and erode public trust. As stewards of both public and private resources, each member of the System is expected to embrace a culture of honesty, ethics, and integrity. No member of the System shall use their position or authority improperly to advance the interests of themselves, their relatives, friends, or any individuals or businesses with whom the employee is associated.

Dishonest Acts and Fraud

A dishonest act or fraudulent activity is defined as *"an intentional or deliberate act to deprive the University or a person of something of value, or to gain an unfair benefit using deception, false suggestions, suppression of truth, or other unfair means which are believed and relied upon."* [1]

It is the responsibility of each member of the University to:

- Set the appropriate tone of intolerance for dishonest or fraudulent acts by complying with all laws, rules, regulations, and policies.
- Use University equipment and property only for University purposes or accepted incidental purposes. Safeguard the University from loss of these assets.
- Report suspected dishonest acts and fraudulent activity to their supervisor, department administrator, Audit & Advisory Services, or law enforcement for their campus.

Internal Controls

Internal controls are the policies and procedures put in place to safeguard University equipment and property, provide reliable financial information, promote efficient and effective operations, and ensure regulatory and policy compliance.

Faculty and staff in leadership roles should:

- Be aware of the risks and exposures in their area of responsibility.

[1] Policy BTRU 1.20 *Dishonest Acts and Fraud*

- Establish and maintain proper internal controls that will provide for the security and accountability of the resources entrusted to them.

System Policies

Policy Number	Policy Title
BTRU 1.20	*Dishonest Acts and Fraud*
BTRU 1.24	*Internal Control Policy*

Integrity Line

If you have a concern or question regarding a potential violation of the Employee Standards of Ethical Conduct and related policies, the first step is to discuss the matter with your immediate supervisor or a higher level of authority.

If discussing with your supervisor or other administrator is not an option in dealing with a workplace concern, or you are unsure who to contact or want to raise a question or concern anonymously, please visit the USC Integrity Line for additional information on available reporting options.

Protection from Retaliation

The University prohibits retaliation against persons reporting dishonest and fraudulent acts in good faith (aka whistleblowers). Retaliation includes, but is not limited to, dismissal from employment, demotion, loss of salary or benefits, transfer or reassignment, denial of an earned promotion, and unwarranted written notice or negative performance review.

In addition, Title 8, Chapter 27 of the South Carolina Code of Laws (*Employment Protection for Reports of Violations of State or Federal Law or Regulation*) forbids retaliation against any University employee alleging in good faith waste or wrongdoing:

- *Section 8-27-20: "No public body may dismiss, suspend from employment, demote, or decrease the compensation of an employee of a public body because the employee files a report with an appropriate authority of wrongdoing."*

If you suspect retaliation in response to reporting a concern or participating in an investigation, please immediately contact the Vice President of Human Resources at (803) 777-7550 or please visit the USC Integrity Line for additional information on available reporting options.

Respect

The University community is diverse in many ways. As articulated in the ***Carolinian Creed***, all members of the System are expected to respect the rights of others regardless of their differences or points of view. We are strongest as an educational institution, employer, and community leader when we bring diverse thought and experience to our decision-making, teaching, research, and interactions with community members.

Academic Freedom

The University adheres in principle to the American Association of University Professors' "Statement of Academic Freedom."

> "Teachers are entitled to full freedom in research and in the publication of the results, subject to the adequate performance of their other academic duties, but research for pecuniary return should be based upon an understanding with the authorities of the institution.
>
> Teachers are entitled to freedom in the classroom in discussing their subject, but they should be careful not to introduce into their teaching a controversial matter which has no relation to their subject. Limitations of academic freedom because of religious or other aims of the institution should be clearly stated in writing at the time of the appointment.
>
> College and university teachers are citizens, members of a learned profession, and officers of an educational institution. When they speak or write as citizens, they should be free from institutional censorship or discipline, but their special position in the community imposes special obligations. As scholars and educational officers, they should remember that the public may judge their profession and their institution by their utterances. Hence, they should always be accurate, should exercise appropriate restraint, should show respect for the opinions of others, and should make every effort to indicate that they are not speaking for the institution."

Faculty who believes their academic freedom has been compromised may request in writing that the President or Chancellor initiate an investigation.

Workplace Civility

The University aspires to cultivate a community in which individual members treat each other with civility and respect. With our freedom as individuals, including academic freedom and freedom of speech, comes responsibilities for how we treat others.

Workplace incivility is unacceptable; it undermines our values, harms colleagues, and impedes the mission and commitments of the University.

Workplace incivility can be defined as behavior or a pattern of behaviors that would cause a reasonable person to experience substantial emotional distress and/or interferes with their ability to work.

Faculty who have workplace civility complaints should first work through their supervisory and department leadership to resolve them. If that is not an option, or has not resulted in an adequate resolution, the following are other available options. The parties involved can pursue mediation or consultation with the faculty ombuds if appropriate. The respondent's supervisor can impose a sanction of counseling, oral warning or written reprimand, following the procedures of policy ACAF 1.82 *Faculty Progressive Discipline*.

Any employee who wishes to file a formal complaint of incivility is encouraged to speak with the Faculty Civility Advocate (FCA). The FCA can help the employee understand what constitutes incivility and direct them in the filing of a formal complaint. Formal complaint procedures are initiated with a written request for an investigation of workplace incivility filed with the FCA. This request may be made by the complainant, the institution or any of the parties involved.

Staff who have workplace incivility concerns should work through Human Resources Employee Relations for their respective unit.

Per the Disciplinary Procedures section of the University's Division of Human Resources website regarding staff disciplinary measures, the employee should first be informed of their violation of university policies or rules. It is also important to provide an opportunity for behavior improvement unless the seriousness of the conduct or rule violation calls for immediate action to dismiss the employee. Supervisors should always inform employees of the time frame for expected improvements.

When further steps are necessary the University uses a progressive approach. These steps encompass the following:

1. Counseling or Oral Warning
2. Written Reprimand
3. Suspension
4. Dismissal

Office of Civil Rights & Title IX

The Office of Civil Rights & Title IX is on a mission to create an environment where all people are treated with dignity and respect and have an equal opportunity to learn and work at a university free from discrimination, harassment, and sexual misconduct. See policy CR 1.00 Policy Against Discrimination, Harassment & Sexual Misconduct.

The Office of Civil Rights and Title IX is here to help navigate options to address harassment, discrimination, and sexual misconduct at the University of South Carolina. If you or someone you know has been the victim/survivor of discrimination or harassment at the University of South Carolina, you can report it through any of the following methods:

Online	**E-Mail**
Complaint Form	civilrights@mailbox.sc.edu
Telephone	**Mail or in person**
(803) 777-3854	Office of Civil Rights & Title IX, Byrnes Building, 901 Sumter Street, Suite 401, Columbia, SC 29208

The Office of Civil Rights and Title IX serves as the lead office for the receipt and handling of discrimination and harassment. If you or someone you know has been the victim of discrimination or harassment, you can submit a Discrimination and Harassment Incident Form by visiting the Office of Civil Rights and Title IX at Report an Incident - Office of Civil Rights and Title IX Discrimination and Harassment Incident Form | University of South Carolina.

If you or someone you know has been a victim of discrimination or harassment at one of the System institutions other than the Columbia campus, upon receipt of the form, it may be referred to the appropriate official(s) at the other institution.

System Policies

Policy Number	Policy Title
BTRU 1.22	*Reporting Violations of State and Federal Laws or Regulations (the Whistleblower Policy)*
CR 1.00	*Policy Against Discrimination, Harassment & Sexual Misconduct*
CR 2.00	*Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action*

<u>Campus-Specific Guidance</u>

Policy Number	Policy Title
ACAF 1.80	*Faculty Workplace Incivility (USC – Columbia, Palmetto College)* *USC Aiken Values Statement* *USC Beaufort Statement on Systemic Racism and Racial Equity* *USC Upstate Civility Policy* *Faculty Manuals*

Confidentiality and Compliance

System employees are expected to comply with applicable laws, regulations, and University policies. When these laws, regulations, and policies are unclear, the employee is expected to make their best effort to obtain clarity. While there are many laws, regulations, and policies covering University activities, the most relevant areas are covered within this section.

The University expects its employees to report any concerns regarding noncompliance with laws, regulations, and policies. Concerns can be reported to your immediate supervisor or a higher level of authority within your department or division. If talking with your supervisor or other administrator is not an option in dealing with possible noncompliance, or you are unsure who to contact or want to raise a question or concern anonymously, please visit Audit & Advisory Services for additional information on available reporting options.

Confidentiality

The University retains confidential, proprietary, and private information for a variety of business needs, which must be kept confidential as required by applicable federal and state laws. All employees must understand the importance of maintaining the confidentiality of sensitive student, employee, and proprietary information. Simply because an individual has previously shared information does not automatically mean others can freely share that information without the individual's consent. Federal regulations to be aware of include:

- Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)
- Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA)
- Payment Card Industry Data Security Standards (PCI DSS)
- Export Control Laws
    - Export Administration Regulations (EAR)
    - International Traffic in Arms Regulations (ITAR)
    - Office of Foreign Assets Control Regulations (OFAC)

It is the responsibility of each System employee to:

- Be aware of and follow laws, regulations, and policies regarding access, use, protection, disclosure, retention, and disposal of public, private, and confidential information.
- Respect the privacy of all records containing personally identifiable information of students, employees, patients, donors, or other individuals whose information is accessible to you during your employment.
- Follow documentation retention and disposal policies.
- Maintain information security using appropriate electronic and physical safeguards.

System Policies

Policy Number	Policy Title
ACAF 3.03	*Handling of Student Records*
FINA 4.12	*University Identify Theft and Detection Program*
FINA 8.11	*Credit/Debit Card Processing and Security*
HR 1.69	*Official Personnel Files and Records Release*
IT 3.00	*Information Security*
UNIV 1.51	*Data and Information Governance*
UNIV 1.52	*Responsible Use of Data, Technology, and User Credentials*
UNIV 1.60	*HIPAA Compliance*
UNIV 2.00	*Freedom of Information Policy*

Financial Reporting Integrity

System employees involved in the preparation of financial and other reports and documents (and information included therein) filed with or submitted to federal, state, and local authorities by the University are required to make disclosures that are full, fair, accurate, timely, and understandable as required under generally accepted accounting principles for government entities, bond covenant agreements, and other requirements.

System Policies

Policy Number	Policy Title
BUSA 7.00	*Purchasing*
BUSA 7.05	*Payment/Reimbursement for Personal Consumption Items at Employee's Official Headquarters*
FINA 1.00	*Chart of Accounts*

FINA 1.20	*Agency Funds (Z Funds)*
FINA 1.21	*Sales & Services Funds (E Funds)*
FINA 1.25	*State Funds (G Funds)*
FINA 2.12	*Accounts Payable*
FINA 2.14	*Acquisition and Payment of Goods and Services*
FINA 2.30	*Wireless Communication Stipends*
FINA 2.50	*Travel Expenditures*
FINA 2.82	*Asset Management*
FINA 5.40	*Financial Management Disclosure*
FINA 5.60	*External Audit Management*
FINA 7.00	*Capital Planning Policy*
FINA 8.10	*Receipt and Handling of University Payments*
FINA 8.13	*Allowance for Doubtful Accounts*

Contract and Grant Policies

Policy Number	Policy Title
FINA 3.00	*Sponsored Awards*
FINA 3.12	*Time and Effort Reporting*
FINA 3.31	*Grants and Funds Management – Subrecipient Monitoring Policy*
FINA 3.35	*Cost Transfers*
FINA 3.50	*Pre-Award Financial Review of Nongovernmental Entities*

Environmental, Health, and Safety

The University is committed to protecting the environment and human health and safety. All members of the System bear a responsibility for protecting human health and safety and the environment in those areas for which they are responsible. This includes:

- Following safe workplace practices, including participating in applicable training sessions, using appropriate personal safety equipment, and reporting accidents, injuries, and unsafe conditions.
- Protecting the environment, including the safe handling of hazardous waste and other potentially harmful materials.
- Complying with all health and safety laws, regulations, and University policies.

Environmental Health and Safety (EHS) is the University's lead office providing comprehensive environmental, health, and safety programs and services. For more information, visit Environmental Health and Safety - University of South Carolina.

Research and Human Subjects

The Office of Research Compliance (ORC), responsible for administering the University's program for protecting the rights of human research subjects, provides support to the University's research community by assisting researchers in staying abreast of and in compliance with regulatory requirements. The ORC can be contacted at Office of Research Compliance - University of South Carolina.

All projects involving human subject research must be approved by the University's Institutional Review Board (IRB). The Principal Investigator is responsible for submitting all required information to the IRB.

Care and Use of Laboratory Animals

Dedication to the care of animals used in research and teaching is part of the University's commitment to ethical conduct of research. Employees involved in related research and teaching activities are advised and encouraged to assess the potential risks and hazards associated with their involvement with animal care and use, including medical risks.

Drug-Free Workplace

No employee shall report for duty or remain on duty under the influence of any illegal drugs, unauthorized prescription medication or alcohol. Violation of this policy by System employees will be cause for disciplinary action up to and including termination.

System employees in safety-sensitive or security-sensitive positions will be required to submit to random drug testing and will be subject to reasonable suspicion testing.

The University recognizes drug and/or alcohol dependence as a treatable illness. Employees are encouraged to seek assistance for drug and/or alcohol problems before there is an incident which would cause the University to impose disciplinary actions.

System Policies

Policy Number	**Policy Title**
HR 1.01	*Drug-Free Workplace*
HR 1.95	*Drug and Alcohol Testing Policy*
RSCH 5.03	*Care and Use of Laboratory Animals*
UNIV 5.50	*University Environmental Policy Statement*
LESA 6.10	*Asbestos Management*
LESA 6.20	*Fire Drills*

Research Integrity

The Office of Research Compliance (ORC) works with the University's research community to ensure its faculty, staff, and students conduct research activities with the highest standards of ethical integrity, and in accordance with regulatory guidelines and organizational policies. All System employees involved in the conduct of research are expected to act with the highest integrity and be aware of and abide by all relevant laws, regulations, and University policies. Failure to do so can result in significant penalties and/or criminal prosecution for the employee and the University.

Classified Research

No research can be undertaken at the University that involves information, research, or results of research that are, or would be, classified by the sponsor or any third party. Faculty members may arrange individually to participate in projects involving such research through other institutions. The University does not have any level of institutional clearance, nor can it arrange clearance on its faculty's behalf.

Export Controls

Export Control is the regulation of commercial and military or proliferation items by the Bureau of Industry and Security. Any anticipated shipment or transfer of technology, data, or materials to a foreign country may be subject to export controls and must be classified, based on the regulation, to determine its control status and if it qualifies for an exception or requires a license. The University fully abides by federal and state laws and regulations, including the Export Administration Regulations (EAR), the International Traffic in Arms Regulations (ITAR), and the Office of Foreign Assets Control Regulations (OFAC)

University research can remain compliant with export control laws under the Fundamental Research Exemption by ensuring that it meets the definition of fundamental research. Fundamental research, as used in export control regulations, includes basic or applied research in science and/or engineering at an accredited institution of higher learning in the U.S. where the resulting information either is ordinarily published and shared broadly in the scientific community, or where the resulting information has been or is about to be published. For additional information on export control regulations and research, contact Sponsored Awards Management.

Misconduct in Research and Scholarship

Research misconduct is defined in Policy RSCH 1.00 *Misconduct in Research and Scholarship,* as *"fabrication, falsification, or plagiarism in proposing, performing or reviewing research results, or in reporting research results."* It does not include honest errors or honest differences in interpretations or judgments of data.

System employees are required to report observed, apparent, or suspected research misconduct to the ORC at (803) 777-7095. Individuals reporting suspected research misconduct in good faith will be protected from negative repercussions.

System Policies

Policy Number	Policy Title
RSCH 1.00	*Misconduct in Research and Scholarship*
RSCH 1.03	*Research and Human Subjects*
RSCH 1.06	*Disclosure of Financial Interests and Management of Conflicts of Interest Related to Sponsored Projects (Research)*
RSCH 5.03	*Care and Use of Laboratory Animals*

Ethics, Stewardship and Accountability

The University is committed to the highest standards of accountability and embraces a culture of honesty, ethics, and integrity in its operations, including the use of University resources. System employees are expected to be good stewards of these resources, consistent with laws, regulations, and University policies. University resources include cash and cash equivalents, equipment, vehicles, information technology hardware and software, and any other resource available to you in your employment with the University. Time is also a resource and therefore, during reported and paid working hours you are expected to devote your attention to your University responsibilities.

All employees, regardless of position, have an affirmative duty to report known or suspected instances of theft, embezzlement, or misuse of university property and equipment. Furthermore, System leaders are responsible for the design, development, implementation, and maintenance of an effective system of internal controls within their area(s) of responsibility and business function to aid in the detection and prevention of fraud.

Report any concerns regarding suspected theft, embezzlement, or misuse of University property and equipment to your immediate supervisor or a higher level of authority within your department or division. If talking with your supervisor or other administrator is not an option in dealing with fraud, or you are unsure who to contact or want to raise a question or concern, contact Audit & Advisory Services at (803) 777-2752 or AAServcs@mailbox.sc.edu.

If you wish to remain anonymous, please visit the USC Integrity Line for additional information on available reporting options.

Examples of what to report to the Integrity Line include, but are not limited to:

- Use of University purchasing card for personal use.
- Mismanagement of University or grant funds.
- Disclosure of sensitive or confidential information.
- Conflicts of interest.

Examples of what ***not*** to report to the Integrity Line include, but are not limited to:

- For campus emergencies, including an immediate threat to your health or safety, contact University Police at 803-777-4215, or dial 911.

- Allegations of discrimination or harassment should be reported to the Office of Civil Rights & Title IX at (803) 777-3854 or eop@mailbox.sc.edu.
- Research issues involving human subjects or animal resources should be reported to the Office of Research Compliance at (803) 777-7095.
- Student safety issues should be reported through the University's RAVE Guardian Safety App, available through the Apple App store for iPhones and Google Play for Android devices.

University of South Carolina Ethics Policy

The Ethics Policy states that System employees are subject to the provisions of the *State Ethics, Government Accountability, and Campaign Reform Act*, codified in Sections 8-13-100 through 8-13-1520 of the 1976 South Carolina Code of Laws. The Ethics Policy recognizes that employment at the University is a public trust and any effort to realize personal gain through official conduct is a violation of that trust. Accordingly, *Rules of Conduct* as codified in Sections 8-13-700 through 8-13-795 of the 1976 South Carolina Code of Laws:

- Prohibit employees from using their official position or office to obtain an economic interest for the employee or the employee's immediate family, an individual with whom the employee is associated, or a business with which the employee is associated.
- Prohibit employees from giving or offering, soliciting, or receiving compensation to influence the actions of public officials or employees.
- Prohibit offering, soliciting, or receiving money in addition to that received by the employee in their official capacity for advice or assistance given in the course of their regular employment.
- Prohibit the use or disclosure of confidential information for personal financial gain.
- Prohibit the use or disclosure of office materials, personnel, property, or equipment for personal gain or private economic benefit.
- Prohibit employees from membership or employment by a regulatory commission or agency that regulates any business with which the employee is associated.
- Provide for actions to be taken by employees where a decision would affect the employee's personal financial interest.
- Prohibit employees from appearing before certain regulatory commissions.

System Policies

Policy Number	Policy Title
BTRU 1.22	*Reporting Violations of State and Federal Laws or Regulations (the Whistleblower Policy)*
HR 1.02	*University of South Carolina Ethics Policy*

Internal Controls

Internal controls help ensure that University property is not exposed to unauthorized access and use, transactions are properly recorded in the financial records, and the resultant financial information is reliable. External organizations and supporters of the University rely on financial information to make decisions about appropriations, loans and debt, gifts and grants, and other contractual relationships. The University's resources are dependent upon strong internal controls.

Internal control is a process, effected by the Board of Trustees, management, and other personnel, designed to provide reasonable assurance regarding the achievement of objectives relating to operations, reporting, and compliance. System administration is responsible for establishing and maintaining an effective internal control environment. This is accomplished through policies and procedures that provide reasonable assurance that practices result in:

- Effective and efficient operations.
- Reliable financial reporting.
- Compliance with applicable laws and regulations.

Internal control consists of five integrated components:

1. Control Environment: The control environment is the set of standards, processes, and structure that provides the basis for carrying out internal control across the organization. The Board of Trustees and senior management establish the tone at the top regarding the importance of internal control including expected standards of conduct. Management reinforces expectations at the various levels of the organization.
2. Risk Assessment: Risk assessment is an iterative process for identifying and assessing risks that may impact the achievement of objectives.
3. Control Activities: Control activities are the actions established through policies and procedures that help ensure that management's directives to mitigate risks are carried out.

4. Information and Communication: Information and communication are necessary to carry out internal control responsibilities.
5. Monitoring Activities: Ongoing assessments, independent evaluations, or some combination of the two are used to ascertain whether each of the five components of internal control, including controls within each component, is present and functioning.

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System Policies

Policy Number	Policy Title
BTRU 1.24	*Internal Control Policy*
FINA 2.82	*Asset Management*

Authority to Sign Contracts

To help protect the interests of the University, the Office of General Counsel provides, manages, and coordinates all legal services, including review of contracts. You must have contracts reviewed by the Office of General Counsel.

Policy BTRU 1.04 *Authority to Sign Contracts,* authorizes the President of the University and the Secretary of the Board of Trustees to sign contracts and agreements binding upon the University. The policy also delegates signature authority to others such as the Vice President for Research to authorize research and research-related agreements, the Chancellors, the Athletics Director, and others. These delegated authorities are included within policy BTRU 1.04.

No contract or agreement shall become binding upon the University unless such contract or agreement is in writing and authorized as required by University policy.

Conflicts of Interest and Commitment

Conflicts of interest are situations in which an individual has financial, professional, or personal considerations that may directly or indirectly affect, or have the appearance of affecting, an individual's professional judgment in exercising any University duty or responsibility. A conflict of interest may arise when an individual has the opportunity or appears to have the opportunity to influence the University's business, administrative, academic, research, or other decisions in ways that could lead to financial, professional, or personal gain or advantage of any kind, whether the value is readily ascertainable. A conflict of commitment is a situation in which an individual engages in external activities,

either paid or unpaid, that may interfere with his/her primary obligation and commitment to the University.

Examples of conflicts include:

- Financial interests by a System employee in a company that has business relationships with the University.
- Substantial use of students, staff, or University equipment in external non-University activities.
- Consulting, administrative, board membership, or other financial or obligatory relationships by a Principal Investigator with a company that is sponsoring that individual's research.
- Speaking or writing in traditional ways or through social media by an individual receiving research funds from a private corporation, even if unrestricted, gives the appearance of having compromised objectivity.
- Improper acquisition or conversion of University intellectual property rights.
- Substantial work performed for a second job, consulting engagement, or private business that interferes with completing University obligations.

The acceptance of a small stipend by a faculty member to give a talk would *not* constitute a conflict of interest.

System employees must take particular care when relationships intersect with the University's interests and have the potential or appearance to influence factors to be considered in administrative decisions. Employees have a duty to immediately disclose, manage, or eliminate any real or apparent conflicts of interest or commitment. The following offices are responsible for administering the applicable conflict of interest and commitment disclosure processes:

- Board of Trustees – Board Office
- Faculty Disclosures – Office of the Provost
- Research Disclosures – Office of the Vice President for Research
- University Officers and Staff Members – Division of Human Resources
- Procurement Solicitations – Purchasing Department

Accepting Gifts

System employees are prohibited from accepting a gift or anything of value from a person or entity given because of a relationship established through their employment with the University with the following exceptions:

- Gifts given because of a relationship established prior to employment with the University
- Gifts given by co-workers
- Promotional, informational, or educational items with a value of less than $10
- Personalized trophy or plaque with a value of less than $150

Items given to an employee or department, not otherwise excluded from this rule which are not easily returned may be donated to a charity or, if food, placed in a common area for the benefit of all employees.

Nepotism

No System employee may cause the employment, appointment, promotion, transfer, or advancement of a family member to a University position that the employee supervises or manages.

Intellectual Property

The University wants to encourage and reward research and scholarship that results in the creation of intellectual property (IP), and to recognize the rights and interests of the inventor or creator, the public, the external sponsor, and the University. Policy ACAF 1.33, *Intellectual Property* addresses the rights to, interests in, and protection and transfer of, intellectual property created by University faculty, staff, and students.

Inventions must be disclosed to the Technology Commercialization Office. The owner of the invention may be the inventor/creator or, more commonly, it is an organizational entity that supported the inventor/creator's work by providing resources, facilities, or salary. When it is determined that the owner of the IP is the University, employees must assign rights, title, and interest to inventions to the University and complete papers necessary to file patent applications on inventions.

System Policies

Policy Number	Policy Title
ACAF 1.33	*Intellectual Property Policy*
ACAF 1.34	*Use of Self-Authored Materials by Instructor*
ACAF 1.50	*Outside Professional Activities for Faculty*
BTRU 1.04	*Authority to Sign Contracts*
BTRU 1.18	*Conflicts of Interest and Commitment*
HR 1.27	*Nepotism*
HR 1.30	*Outside Employment*

RSCH 1.06	*Disclosure of Financial Interest and Management of Conflicts of Interest Related to Sponsored Projects (Research)*

Computer Use

In our daily responsibilities, we have access to University information technology equipment and services such as computers, information systems, or electronic services, including e-mail, networks, and data. This imposes certain responsibilities and obligations, which when granted, are subject to University policies and procedures. Users who have access to this equipment and these services must follow all relevant and applicable security policies, procedures, standards, and guidelines to:

- Ensure that access to protected data and information owned and/or used by the University is provided only to those authorized, and authenticated users who have a right to view and use such data.
- Understand and abide by the rights and protection given to student information, health information, financial information, and human, health, and science research information that may contain personally identifiable information and is classified as confidential and protected according to all applicable laws, regulations, and University policies.
- Demonstrate responsible use, care, and protection of usernames, passwords, and multi-factor security authentication.
- Protect the sharing or transmitting of University data or information concerning University constituents, operations, or business processes with an external entity by ensuring an *External Data and Information Sharing Certification* is executed prior to any sharing or transmission. The *Certification* can be found in Policy UNIV 1.52 *Responsible Use of Data, Technology and User Credentials*.

System Policies

Policy Number	Policy Title
IT 3.00	*Information Security*
UNIV 1.51	*Data and Information Governance*
UNIV 1.52	*Responsible Use of Data, Technology and User Credentials*
UNIV 1.60	*HIPAA Compliance*

Violations of Applicable University Policies

1. Faculty, Staff, and Administrators

a. Faculty, staff, and administrators suspected of violating the policies summarized by the Standards will be investigated in accordance with the appropriate office for the area of the Standards violated. Based on the severity of the violation and in accordance with HR Policy 1.39, *Disciplinary Action and Termination for Cause*, and the applicable Faculty Manual, the employee may be suspended without pay during the investigation.

b. After consultation with appropriate System officials, faculty, staff, and administrators found to have violated any applicable University policy will be subject to appropriate disciplinary action, up to and including termination from employment and may be subject to criminal prosecution and/or other civil action.

2. Associates of the University of South Carolina

   a. The relationship of individuals or entities associated with the University found to have violated any applicable University policy will be reviewed to determine if the relationship should be modified or terminated.

   b. Appropriate action will be taken after consultation with appropriate System officials.

   c. Associates found to have violated any applicable University policy may also be subject to criminal prosecution or other civil action.

System Policies

Policy Number	Policy Title
HR 1.02	*University of South Carolina Ethics Policy*
HR 1.39	*Disciplinary Action and Termination for Cause*
HR 1.42	*Grievance*
	Faculty Manuals

Campus-Specific Guidance

Policy Number	Policy Title
ACAF 1.80	*Faculty Workplace Incivility (USC – Columbia, Palmetto College)*

History of Revisions

DATE OF REVISION	REASON FOR REVISION
February 19, 2021	New policy approval
January 16, 2024	Policy revision to include changes since last review
September 10, 2025	Updated to reflect changes in referenced policies
March 5, 2026	Updated for accessibility and to reflect changes to OCRTIX content.
November 2, 2026	Updated to reference the USC Integrity Line website in lieu of detailed reporting instructions and contact information.

Appendix A

Additional Resources

You are urged to contact your immediate supervisor or department management for more information on the Employee Standards of Ethical Conduct. You may also contact the compliance partner responsible for the related area as listed below.

System-wide Compliance Partners

Office	Address	Contact Information
Audit & Advisory Services	1600 Hampton St. Suite 610 Columbia, SC 29208	(803) 777-2752 aaservcs@mailbox.sc.edu
Division of Human Resources – Employee Relations	1600 Hampton St. Suite 117 Columbia, SC 29208	(803) 777-3821 uscer@mailbox.sc.edu
Environmental Health and Safety	306 Benson School 226 Bull St. Columbia, SC 29208	(803) 777-5269 tsyfert@mailbox.sc.edu
Office of the Controller	1600 Hampton St. 6th Floor Columbia, SC 29208	(803) 777-2602
Office of Civil Rights & Title IX	901 Sumter Street James F Byrnes Building Suite 401 Columbia, SC 29208	(803) 777-3854 civilrights@mailbox.sc.edu
Office of General Counsel	Osborne Admin. Bldg. Columbia, SC 29208	(803) 777-7854
Office of Research Compliance	1600 Hampton St. Suite 805 Columbia, SC 29208	(803) 777-7095

Palmetto College

Office	Address	Contact Information
Office of Human Resources	Thornwell Adm. Annex 1420 Pendleton Street Suite 329 Columbia, SC 29208	(803) 777-4025

University of South Carolina - Aiken

Office	Address	Contact Information
Human Resources Title IX Coordinator – Faculty and Staff	Human Resources Penland 116 471 University Parkway Aiken, SC 29801	(803) 641-3645

University of South Carolina - Beaufort

Office	Address	Contact Information
Human Resources	Human Resources One University Blvd. Bluffton, SC 29909	(843) 208-8144 hr@uscb.edu
Title IX Coordinator – Faculty and Staff	Hargray Building One University Blvd. Bluffton, SC 29909	(843) 208-8120 adsimmons@uscb.edu

University of South Carolina - Upstate

Office	Address	Contact Information
Human Resources	Stockwell Admin. Bldg. 800 University Way, Suite 309 Spartanburg, SC 29303	(864) 503-5322
Title IX Coordinator	Stockwell Admin. Bldg. 800 University Way, Room 314 Spartanburg, SC 29303	(864) 503-7193