

Policy: 5.10

Consensual Relationships

Purpose

To address voluntary romantic or sexual relationships where a conflict of interest or power differential exists because of a person's role within the college, e.g., faculty/student or supervisor/employee.

Definitions

Consensual relationship – includes any intimate, romantic, dating, sexual relationship, or sexual conduct to which both parties have given consent.

Student – enrolled in credit and non-credit courses at all College locations.

Employee – any staff, faculty, or administrator employed by Kansas City Kansas Community College (“KCKCC”).

Policy Statement

KCKCC strives to provide an environment that is respectful, professional, and fosters trust and is free from unlawful discrimination or harassment and to prevent real or perceived conflicts of interest or favoritism.

There are risks in any consensual relationship between individuals where there is unequal power in positions. Because of the potential for conflict of interest, exploitation, favoritism, and bias such relationships may undermine the real or perceived integrity of the supervision and evaluation provided.

Consent is difficult to assess in a relationship where there exist positions of unequal power between the individuals involved in the relationship. Further, these relationships may not be consensual as the individual whose position confers power or authority believes. In addition, circumstances may change and conduct that was previously welcomed may become unwelcomed. Past consent does not remove grounds for a complaint based upon subsequent unwelcomed conduct.

Consensual relationships between individuals in unequal power positions should be avoided and in many circumstances are strictly prohibited by this policy. Since these relationships can occur in multiple contexts at the College, this policy addresses certain contexts specifically.

With Students

Consensual relationships between any KCKCC employee or Board of Trustees member and a current student are prohibited.

With Employees

Consensual relationships between any KCKCC employee or Board of Trustees member in which one person has influence, direct or indirect authority over the other are prohibited.

Notification

Because of potential issues regarding conflict of interest, discrimination and/or harassment, reporting of pre-existing or new relationships to the Chief Human Resources Officer or their designee is required. Failure to report in a timely manner will be considered a violation of policy.

Upon disclosure of a prohibited relationship, KCKCC will take appropriate and reasonable steps to mitigate any exposure to the College. Examples of appropriate and reasonable steps include, but are not limited to, changing the employee reporting structure or assigning a student to the same class with a different instructor.

Student

Consensual relationships between any KCKCC employee or Board of Trustees member with a current student must be reported to the Chief Human Resources Officer or their designee. Consensual relationships between students are not prohibited by this policy.

Employee

If an employee enters into or is in a consensual relationship with a Board of Trustees member or with an employee who reports directly or indirectly to that employee, or if one of the parties is in a supervisory capacity in the same department in which the other party works, the employees must report the relationship to the Chief Human Resources Officer or their designee.

Employees or students that have questions about specific relationships are encouraged to contact the Human Resources Department for guidance.

Confidentiality

KCKCC understands that romantic or sexual relationships are often private in nature. To the greatest extent possible, KCKCC will protect the confidentiality of individuals for any cases reported to the College.

Special Circumstances

Upon request of the involved parties, the Chief Human Resources Officer shall grant exceptions to this policy upon concluding that an otherwise prohibited consensual relationship existed prior to the effective date of this policy, and that the consensual relationship does not present the likelihood of abuse of power or exploitation by either party or there exists other good cause for granting an exception.

Consequences

Employees who engage in a consensual relationship with a student or other employee contrary to the guidance, prohibitions, and requirements provided in the policy are subject to disciplinary action up to and including termination, depending on the nature of and context for the violation. They will also be held accountable for any adverse consequences that result from those relationships.

Reference: 5.00 Discrimination and Harassment Policy

3.03 Title IX Policy

3.03A Title IX Procedure

2.01 Academic Nepotism Policy

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