

Relationships between Faculty/Staff and Students – policy updated December 2015

Otis College of Art and Design prohibits all faculty and staff members, including graduate teaching assistants, and others involved in teaching activities, from engaging in or pursuing dating, sexual, or intimate relationships with students, including consensual relationships.

Faculty and staff members are in a position of trust and power with respect to a student's educational activities. Relationships with students can jeopardize the effective functioning of the College's mission by the appearance of unfairness in the exercise of professional judgment. This includes, but is not limited to, those students whom faculty or staff currently, or may in the future, instruct, mentor, evaluate, supervise, advise, or exercise other forms of professional responsibilities towards, such as allocating resources, selecting students for scholarships and awards, and providing recommendations or references.

The purpose of this policy is to create and maintain a professional learning and work environment that is free from unlawful discrimination, harassment, and exploitation. This policy recognizes that there is often an inherent inequity in dating, sexual, or intimate relationships between faculty/staff and students. Such relationships often result in perceptions of favoritism, bias, or discrimination that undermine academic achievements or decisions affecting students. The College has a policy against discrimination and harassment including, without limitation, sexual harassment. Dating, sexual, or intimate relationships between faculty/staff and students may result in claims of sexual harassment and questions about the voluntariness of the relationship. Please refer to College policies on *Harassment*, *Sexual Harassment*, and *Non-Retaliation* for more details.

Administration

Any faculty/staff who is or has been involved in a dating, sexual, or intimate relationship with a student must promptly report this fact to his or her supervisor. The supervisor will review the context of the relationship in collaboration with Student Affairs, the Provost's Office, or Human Resources and then take appropriate actions. Actions taken may include, but are not limited to, a transfer, a change in shift, or a change in reporting structure so that the individual in authority does not evaluate or participate in discussions and decisions that affect the compensation, evaluation, employment conditions, instruction, and/or academic status of the student involved. Any person who believes that a faculty/staff is involved in a dating, sexual, or intimate relationship with a student under his or her direct authority or supervision is required to report the relationship to Student Affairs, the Provost's Office, or Human Resources.

Consequences

Violation of this policy may lead to disciplinary action, up to and including termination. The College considers the existence or pursuit of a dating, sexual, or intimate relationship under the circumstances described above to be a breach of professional ethics. This policy applies to all Otis employees, temporary/interim employees, independent contractors and external vendors.