

# CONSENSUAL RELATIONSHIPS POLICY

Policies and Procedures: F-V-b

## A. Policy Statement

It is the policy of McLennan Community College that employees with direct teaching, supervisory, advisory, or evaluative responsibility over other employees, students and/or student employees recognize and respect the ethical and professional boundaries that must exist in such situations. Consensual relationships are prohibited between supervisors and subordinates, advisors and students, and teachers and students when in their class.

Consensual relationships, as defined in this policy, create conflicts of interest and/or appearances of impropriety that impair the integrity of academic and employment decisions. Such relationships also contain the potential for exploitation of the subordinate employee, student or student employee and the possible professional or academic disadvantage of third parties, and can subject both the College and individuals to the risk of liability. This policy sets a minimum standard for MCC employees.

## B. Scope

This policy applies to relationships between all staff (professional and support), faculty, and students – whether part time or full time – and regardless of gender; however, it does not apply to relationships between employees and their spouses or domestic partners.

## C. Definitions

A consensual relationship is a mutually acceptable, romantic and/or sexual relationship between an MCC employee with supervisory, teaching, evaluation or advisory authority and an employee, student and/or student employee who is directly supervised, taught, evaluated or advised by that employee.

A conflict of interest and/or an appearance of impropriety arises when individuals with the authority and the responsibility to evaluate the work or performance of an employee, student or student employee initiate, acquiesce or engage in an intimate romantic and/or sexual relationship with that employee, student or student employee.

A domestic partner requires that the employee and the partner either (1) be married to each other; or, in absence of marriage (2) be each other's sole domestic partner, be at least 18 years of age, be financially responsible for each other's welfare or at least financially interdependent, not be legally married to another person, and not be related to each other in a way that would prohibit marriage.

## D. Failure to Report or Cooperate

Employees who are found to have entered into consensual romantic or sexual liaisons with people over whom they have authority will be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination. In the event that a complaint of sexual harassment or sexual misconduct is brought by the subordinate party, there will be no presumption that the relationship was consensual in nature.

## E. Grievance of Disciplinary Actions

Disciplinary actions imposed for violations of this policy may be grieved or appealed by the individual who is disciplined pursuant to existing college policies and procedures.

**For Assistance: Questions regarding this policy should be directed to the Office of the Vice President of Student Services, the Vice President of Instruction, the Executive Vice President, or the EEO Officer.**