

1 **Conflicts of Interest and Commitment**

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Policy Contents	Quick Links
Introduction	Procedures, Applications, and Guidance Document [PDF]
Policy Statement	FAQ - Conflicts of Interest and Commitment [PDF]
Definitions	Consulting Tips [PDF]
--Conflict of Commitment	Conflicts of Interest and Commitment website
--Conflict of Interest	
--Consulting	
--Covered Employee	COIC Policy Resources (below)
--External Activities	Procurement Services' Conflict of Interest Guidelines
--Immediate Family Members	Conflict of Interest Vendors/Employees, Procurement
--Management Role	
--Non-University Entity	Office of Research Ethics
--Professional Activity Leave	Vice President for Research
--Significant Financial Interest	Senior Vice President and Provost
Disclosure of Conflicts	Senior Vice President for Operations and Finance
Management Plans	
Disciplinary Actions	
Procedures, Applications, and Guidance	
Resources	

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6 **Introduction**

7 Iowa State University encourages active participation of university personnel in external activities
8 that promote the university's mission, enhance professional skills, expand knowledge, and/or
9 contribute to public service. At the same time, the university expects all employees to have an
10 allegiance to the university and to conscientiously guard against possible adverse effects of their
11 activities on the performance of their university duties and the reputation of the university. Possible
12 adverse effects of these activities include, but are not limited to:

- 13 • Failure to make decisions objectively and in the best interests of the university
- 14 • Inappropriate use of university or state resources
- 15 • Insufficient time and attention dedicated to university duties to perform them satisfactorily

16 Activities or financial interests with the potential to lead to such adverse effects are termed
17 "conflicts."

18 This policy provides a broad framework for understanding, disclosing and managing conflicts. Details
19 of procedures for disclosing and managing specific types of conflicts are provided in the guidelines
20 and policies linked at the end of this document. Included are guidelines related to:

- 21 • Financial conflicts of interest (financial interests in, management roles in and consulting for
- 22 external entities, as well as ownership of patents, patent applications and royalty rights)
- 23 • Professional Activity Leave
- 24 • Service to government and professional associations

25 The [Resources](#) below include related policies dealing with conflicts of interest in procurement
26 (conflict of interest vendors), nepotism, and consenting relationships.

27 The failure to perform university duties in a satisfactory manner, whether or not substantially related
28 to an external activity or financial interest, is expected to be handled as a performance issue by the
29 employee's supervisor. In the case of performance issues arising from activities covered by a conflict
30 policy or guideline, performance management measures may be invoked in addition to any
31 management required or recommended by the policies and guidelines.

32 This policy complies with federal and state law and Board of Regent policies and rules regarding all
33 forms of conflicts. All covered employees are required to comply with Iowa Code Chapters 68B and
34 71, Iowa Administrative Code Section 681, and the policies of the Board of Regents, State of Iowa.
35 Covered employees receiving sponsored funds must also comply with the policies of their
36 sponsoring agencies. The university must comply with federal circular OMB A110 which specifies
37 that universities receiving federal funding must maintain a written and enforced policy on conflict of
38 interest.

39 See the [Resources](#) section below for related laws, policies, and rules.
40 [top](#)

41 **Policy Statement**

42 Iowa State University requires the disclosure, review/approval, and management of external
43 activities or financial interests with the potential to interfere with one or more of the following:

- 44 • **Performance of Duties:** Covered employees are expected to devote sufficient time and
45 attention to their university duties to perform them conscientiously. An external activity with
46 the potential to interfere with the employee's university duties is known as a conflict of
47 commitment.
- 48 •
- 49 • **Objectivity:** Covered employees are expected to be objective in the decisions they make
50 while performing their university responsibilities. Financial or other personal considerations
51 with the potential to compromise an employee's objectivity are known as conflicts of interest.
- 52 •
- 53 • **Appropriate Use of State Resources:** State law prohibits the use of state resources,
54 including the university name and trademarks, for personal benefit when such use is
55 detrimental to the state or university.

56 All covered employees are required to comply with this policy and the [Procedures, Applications, and](#)
57 [Guidance](#) established for disclosure, approval, and management of conflicts of interest and
58 commitment.
59 [top](#)

60 **Definitions**

- 61 • **Conflict of Commitment:** An external activity with the potential to reduce the time and
62 attention an employee can devote to his/her university responsibilities, and thus negatively

63 impact his/her performance of assigned university duties, constitutes a "conflict of
64 commitment."

- 65 • **Conflict of Interest:** Any external activity, significant financial interest or management role
66 that has the potential to negatively impact objectivity in the execution of university duties is a
67 "conflict of interest."
- 68 • **Consulting:** The term "consulting" refers to professional services to a non-university entity
69 that are not a part of the employee's position responsibilities.
- 70 • **Covered Employee:** Covered employees, for the purposes of this policy, include all persons
71 carrying out duties, whether paid or unpaid, on behalf of the university. This definition
72 includes full-time and part-time faculty, Professional and Scientific staff, Merit staff*, contract
73 employees, graduate assistants, and post doctoral scholars.
 - 74 ○ Those persons designated as emeritus faculty who receive sponsored funding
75 through the university and those persons with uncompensated faculty rank, such as
76 affiliates, collaborators, and visiting faculty are considered covered employees.
 - 77 ○ Temporary employees are not considered covered employees.
 - 78 ○ The definition of employee is different for conflict of interest vendor and nepotism
79 policies. See [Resources](#) below.
- 80 • **External Activities:** For the purposes of this policy, "external activities" means service
81 and/or organized activities/employment which require a substantial and regular commitment
82 of time, whether compensated or not, for a non-university entity. This term excludes scholarly
83 activities undertaken as a part of the employee's position responsibilities.
- 84 • **Immediate Family Members:** For purposes of this policy, an "immediate family member"
85 refers to spouse and dependent children. Domestic partners shall be treated as spouses for
86 purposes of this policy. The definition is different in policies related to nepotism and
87 purchasing.
- 88 • **Management Role:** Management role refers to a position in a non-university entity with
89 oversight over or responsibility for the entity's strategies and/or operations. Examples include
90 director, scientific director, board member, line officer, etc.
- 91 • **Non-University Entity:** The term "non-university entity" includes for-profit or not-for-profit
92 entities outside of the university, such as corporations, companies, partnerships, sole
93 proprietorships, associations and governmental entities (federal, state or local). The term
94 excludes affiliated entities which act for the benefit of the university (such as the Board of
95 Regents, Alumni Association, ISU Research Foundation, ISU Foundation or the like).
- 96 • **Professional Activity Leave:** Supervisor-approved leave granted to faculty and P&S staff
97 for external activity such as consulting.
- 98 • **Significant Financial Interest:** A "significant financial interest" is any financial interest that
99 has the potential to compromise an individual's objectivity. The dollar value that is
100 considered "significant" for the purposes of this policy is determined by the relevant federal
101 or state law, or agency policy. See the [Procedures, Applications, and Guidance](#) for dollar
102 values specific to each situation. Significant financial interest includes, but is not limited to:
 - 103 ○ Equity ownership or stock options. Excepted are equities held in retirement accounts
104 or mutual funds.
 - 105 ○ Sole proprietor, partner, owner or member of a partnership or limited liability for-profit
106 entity (includes remuneration from private consulting activities).
 - 107 ○ Consulting substantially related to patented or patentable intellectual property in
108 which the employee has an interest.
 - 109 ○ Consulting for an entity that has a financial interest in or sponsors the employee's
110 university scholarly activities.
 - 111 ○ Ownership of, or rights held in, intellectual property or research materials (which may
112 include rights to receive royalties), the value of which may be affected by the
113 outcome of the employee's university activities. Excepted are intellectual property
114 and research materials held by ISURF.
 - 115 ○ Any of the above applicable to the employee's spouse and/or dependent children

116 [top](#)

117 **Disclosure of Conflicts**

118 It is the responsibility of every university employee covered by this policy to fully disclose the nature
119 and degree of conflicts of interest and conflicts of commitment, as defined above. (*Any disclosures
120 made by Merit employees are not made through the online disclosure system as described in
121 the [Procedures, Applications, and Guidance](#).) The disclosures must be made prior to initiating the
122 activity, annually, and whenever the employee's situation changes. The appropriate method of
123 disclosure varies with the type of activity as described in the [Procedures, Applications, and](#)
124 [Guidance](#).

125 **Management Plans**

126 Management plans are required for external activities, significant financial interests and/or
127 management roles with the potential to impair an employee's ability to perform his/her university
128 duties responsibly and with integrity. The form and content of management plans vary depending on
129 the nature of the financial interest or management role and the presumed risks. For some activities,
130 disclosure and approval by the supervisor may be sufficient. Other activities require a written plan
131 that describes the conflict; specifies the actions to be taken to manage, reduce, or eliminate the
132 conflict; and defines the effective period of the plan.

133 Specific guidelines for when and how to develop management plans are described in
134 the [Procedures, Applications, and Guidance](#). All written plans must be reviewed and updated no less
135 than annually for as long as the conflict exists.

136 **Disciplinary Actions**

137 Failure to comply with this policy may result in sanctions or disciplinary actions in accordance with
138 the Iowa State University misconduct policies and procedures.

139 [top](#)

140 **Procedures, Applications, and Guidance**

141 The principles underlying disclosure and management, as described in this policy, are similar for a
142 wide variety of types of conflict. However, because of the diversity of applicable federal and state
143 laws and rules and funding agency policies, the precise mechanisms for disclosure and
144 management vary depending on the type of conflict and the applicable laws, rules and policies.

145 For guidelines on the application of this Conflicts of Interest and Commitment policy to various types
146 of conflict, see the online [Procedures, Applications, and Guidance](#) document. Included are:

147 ***General Application of the Conflict of Interest and Commitment Policy***

- 148 • Disclosures
- 149 • Review of Disclosures
- 150 • Retention of Disclosures
- 151 • Supervisory Responsibility
- 152 • Professional Activity Leave
- 153 • Use of Facilities

154 ***Application of the Conflict of Interest and Commitment Policy in Specific Situations***

- 155 • Management Role and/or Significant Financial Interest
- 156 • Consulting

- 157 • Service to Government and Associations
- 158 • Multiple Interests or Roles
- 159 • Other Outside Employment
- 160 • Special Conditions in Sponsored Agreements

161 See also the [Frequently Asked Questions](#).

162 [top](#)

163 Resources

164 Links

- 165 • [Conflict of Interest website - Senior Vice President and Provost](#)
- 166 • [Ethical Research Conduct](#)
- 167 • [Procedures, Applications, and Guidance - Conflicts of Interest and Commitment \[PDF\]](#)
- 168 • [FAQ - Conflicts of Interest and Commitment \[PDF\]](#)
- 169 • [Conflict of Interest Vendors / Employees, Procurement \(ISU Policy\)](#)
- 170 • [Procurement Services' Conflicts of Interest Guidelines](#)
- 171 • [Extension COIC Policy \[PDF\]](#)
- 172 • [Nepotism: Employment and Supervision of Immediate Family Members \(§2.1.4.F, Regents Policy Manual\)](#)
- 173
- 174 • [Consenting Relationships \(ISU Policy\)](#)
- 175 • [Conflict of Interest – Duty of Loyalty \(§1.3, Regents Policy Manual\)](#)
- 176 • [DHHS Office of Research Integrity](#)
- 177 • [Government Ethics and Lobbying Act \(Iowa Code Chapter 68B\)](#)