

**BURRELL COLLEGE
OF OSTEOPATHIC MEDICINE
POLICY MANUAL**

SECTION: Faculty and Staff

BCOM Policy B7520

TOPIC: Consensual Relationships

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POLICY

BCOM strongly discourages romantic or sexual relationships between positions of unequal power because such relationships tend to create compromising conflicts of interest or the appearance of such conflicts. In addition, such a relationship may give rise to the perception by others that there is favoritism or bias in employment/academic decisions. Moreover, given the uneven balance of power within such relationships, consent by the employee/student is suspect and may be viewed by others, or at a later date by either party, as having been given as the result of coercion or intimidation. The atmosphere created by such appearances of bias, favoritism, intimidation, coercion or exploitation undermines the spirit of trust and mutual respect that is essential to a healthy work/academic environment.

When individuals involved in a romantic or sexual relationship are in positions of unequal organizational power such as faculty-student, staff-student, supervisor-supervisee, advisor-advisee, mentor-mentee, and faculty-staff, there is a potential conflict of interest, favoritism, and/or exploitation. The fact that a relationship is consensual does not insulate the person with greater organizational power from a claim of sexual harassment. To protect the integrity of the College's academic and work environment, when a consensual, amorous relationship exists between individuals of unequal power, the person with the greater organizational power must not hold a reasonable responsibility for supervisory or evaluative authority over the other person in the relationship. Evaluative authority includes the academic relationship between any faculty member and any student who has been, is, or may in the future be enrolled in any academic coursework for which the faculty member holds either full or shared grading authority.

In the event a romantic or sexual relationship exists, the person of greater organizational power must immediately report the relationship to his or her immediate supervisor and the Office of Human Resources. However, at no time is it acceptable for any faculty member teaching within years 1 and/or 2 curriculums, to engage in an amorous relationship with a student; at no time is it acceptable for a faculty member teaching within years 3 and 4 curriculum, to engage in an amorous relationship with a student participating in the faculty member's rotation, as BCOM prohibits both types of relationships between a student and a faculty member. It is the responsibility of both the person with the greater organizational power in the relationship and the individual to whom the relationship is reported to ensure that the individual with the greater organizational power is removed from a supervisory or evaluative authority over the other party to the relationship. In extraordinary circumstances where removal of supervisory or evaluative authority is not practicable, the parties must work with the Compliance Officer and Office of

Human Resources to determine whether a written management plan can be developed to manage the conflict of interest. Failure to comply with the notification, removal, or management plan requirement is a violation of the policy. BCOM reserves the right to determine the severity and extent of any disciplinary action based on the circumstances of each case for all parties involved.