

# Southwestern Oregon Community College

## BP 7036 Consensual Relationships

### Purpose

To establish parameters and define consensual relationships.

### Statement

Southwestern Oregon Community College must maintain an environment that is focused on individual learning and growth. This effort is promoted by professionalism in the relationships that faculty and staff have with students and each other. These relationships are intended to foster a free and open exchange of ideas, productive learning, and the work that supports it.

In addition, those who supervise or evaluate the work of students and staff must be perceived to be making their decisions fairly and without favoritism. This perception is potentially jeopardized when faculty/staff enter into consensual romantic relationships with their students or those employees with whom they hold a position of authority.

Therefore, no College employee shall enter into or sustain any romantic or sexual relationships with students or employees over whom they exercise any academic, administrative, supervisory, evaluative, counseling or extracurricular authority or influence.

Faculty and staff are cautioned that consensual romantic relationships with students and/or subordinates can prove to be unwise and problematic, and should be avoided. When consensual romantic relationships occur, questions of fairness, favoritism, and coercion arise.

Such relationships may undermine the real or perceived integrity of the supervision provided, and the particular trust inherent in the student-faculty or supervisor/subordinate relationship.

- Relationships in which one party is in a position to approve academic benefits, approve financial processes, and review the work of or influence the career of the other, may provide grounds for complaints when that relationship appears to give undue access or advantage, restricts opportunities, or creates a hostile and unacceptable environment for others.
- Such relationships may, moreover, be less consensual than the individual whose position confers the power believes. The relationship is likely to be perceived in different ways by each of the parties to it, especially in retrospect. While some relationships may begin and remain harmonious, they are susceptible to being characterized as unprofessional and disrespectful to others.
- Teaching professionals in particular are under a special obligation to preserve the integrity of their relationships with students and are expected to maintain the highest level of professionalism at all times, whether or not any real or perceived authority over the student exists.

The President or designee is responsible for establishing appropriate guidelines through policies and procedures based upon sound human resource management principles and promoting a work environment of collegiality, respect, and professionalism.

**Adopted:** 01/23/2023

*Southwestern is an equal opportunity employer and educator.*