

# ARKANSAS TECH UNIVERSITY

## BOARD POLICY

Policy Number: 505

Subject: Consensual Relations Policy

Date Adopted: 05/06

Revised: \_\_\_\_\_

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Sexual relations between students and faculty members with whom they also have an academic or evaluative relationship are fraught with the potential for exploitation. The respect and trust accorded a professor by a student, as well as the power exercised by the professor in an academic or evaluative role, make voluntary consent by the student suspect. Even when both parties initially have consented, the development of a sexual relationship renders both the faculty member and the institution vulnerable to possible later allegations of sexual harassment in light of the significant power differential that exists between faculty members and students.

In their relationships with students, members of the faculty are expected to be aware of their professional responsibilities and to avoid apparent or actual conflict of interest, favoritism, or bias. When a sexual relationship exists, effective steps should be taken to ensure unbiased evaluation or supervision of the student.

An employee, whether faculty or staff, should not develop a dating or sexual relationship with a student whenever the employee is in a "position of authority" over that student. An employee is in a "position of authority" whenever he or she is that student's teacher, or when the employee is either evaluating or supervising the student. The "position of authority" may also include formally advising the student or when that student is a major in the employee's department.

A supervisor, whether faculty or staff, should also not develop a dating or sexual relationship with an employee when the supervisor has a "position of authority" with respect to the employee.

Should a dating or sexual relationship develop or exist, the person with the greater position of authority must consult with an appropriate supervisor. The supervisor, with advice from University Counsel, shall develop a mechanism to ensure that objective evaluation is achieved, that conflicts of interest are avoided, and that the interest of the other individual and University are fully protected. If this policy is violated, any discipline, if necessary, shall be reviewed on a case by case basis.