

PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS IN THE WORKPLACE

Policy Number: 135GS

Effective Date: 6/21/17

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Scope

This Policy on Personal Relationships in the Workplace applies to faculty, staff, predoctoral researchers, summer scholars, and applicants ("Covered Individuals") of The Graduate School of the Stowers Institute for Medical Research ("The School").

Purpose

The SGC is committed to maintaining an environment in which the work, discovery and learning of Covered Individuals take place in a professional atmosphere of mutual respect and trust, and engagement and advancement are based on qualifications, achievement and merit. While the SGC respects the privacy of Covered Individuals and recognizes that they are entitled to freely choose their personal relationships, the SGC is also mindful that certain familial or consensual relationships have the potential to negatively affect the fairness and objectivity that is essential to a healthy working and learning environment. Specifically, such relationships may create or result in a conflict of interest; the opportunity for exploitation, favoritism or other inappropriate use of power, trust or authority; or undermine professionalism. Therefore, this policy prohibits or imposes restrictions on certain personal relationships between Covered Individuals. Nothing in this policy limits or alters the SGC's policies on sexual harassment.

The School is included in the Stowers Group of Companies ("SGC") Organizations and has adopted the following policy as its own.

Policy

The SGC permits the employment or other association of Covered Individuals who are in a personal relationship, subject to the following restriction and prohibition:

- A Covered Individual who is in a **personal relationship** (i.e., a familial or consensual relationship) with another Covered Individual may not have supervisory or evaluative authority over the other Covered Individual or participate in a shared chain of approvals (referred to as a "Restricted Relationship").
- A **consensual relationship** is prohibited between (i) a Covered Individual who is a member of the faculty or staff of GSSIMR, or a principal investigator or core leader of SIMR, and (ii) a Covered Individual who is a student (referred to as a "Prohibited Relationship").

If (i) a Restricted Relationship develops subsequent to the effective date of this policy or (ii) a Prohibited Relationship exists as of the effective date of this policy or develops subsequent to the effective date, the Covered Individual in the position of greater power must immediately report the personal relationship to the Executive Vice President for Administration.

Management or Termination of Restricted or Prohibited Relationships

If a **Restricted Relationship** develops, the Covered Individuals must either (i) immediately end the relationship, in the case of a consensual relationship or (ii) agree to and abide by a management plan that terminates any supervisory or evaluative authority of the Covered Individual with the greater power and addresses and mitigates any concerns of conflict of interest, favoritism or exploitation.

If a **Prohibited Relationship** exists or develops, the Covered Individuals must immediately end the relationship, which will not be permitted to continue under any circumstances. Failure by the Covered Individuals to immediately end the relationship in all respects will subject the Covered Individuals to disciplinary action as set forth below. After the termination of the relationship, the relevant SGC Organization may take disciplinary action or require a management plan or other remedial efforts.

Reporting of Complaints and Concerns

Covered Individuals are encouraged to and should report any and all complaints or concerns about violations of this policy to the Executive Vice President for Administration. All such complaints or concerns will be handled on a timely basis. No Covered Individual will be retaliated against for reporting violations of this policy or raising any complaint or concern.

Confidentiality

In order to encourage disclosure of Restricted or Prohibited Relationships and reporting of complaints and concerns, disclosures and actions taken pursuant to this policy will be kept confidential to the extent possible. However, in order to allow for full and complete investigation of disclosures, complaints and concerns, and to properly develop and implement management plans, complete confidentiality cannot be guaranteed.

Noncompliance with Policy

Disciplinary action against a Covered Individual for any failure to comply with this policy or engaging in any retaliation will depend on the particular circumstances of the violation and may include a written reprimand, suspension of relevant responsibilities, or termination of employment or other association with the relevant SGC Organization.

Definitions

- “Adverse actions” are actions that would dissuade a reasonable person from reporting or supporting a complaint or concern about a violation of this policy. Examples of adverse actions include a significant change in one’s status, such as suspension, unsatisfactory or unfair evaluations, unfair grades, unfair assignments, firing, failing to promote, reassignment with significantly different responsibility or a decision causing a significant change in benefits, direct or implied threats, coercion, harassment, intimidation, or encouragement of others to retaliate.

- “Consensual relationship” is defined as a relationship in which two individuals are engaged by mutual consent in a romantic, dating or sexual relationship.
- “Familial relationship” means a person is related to another person in any of the following ways:
 - parent, child, grandparent, grandchild, brother, sister, uncle, aunt, nephew, niece, related by blood, marriage or through adoption; or
 - spouse, domestic partner, stepparent, stepchild, or other relation established by law or court order.
- “Greater power” is used to describe the situation that results when one individual in a personal relationship has direct supervision, direction, instruction, oversight, evaluation, advisement, or substantial influence over the employment, association or educational status of another.
- “Personal relationship” means a familial or consensual relationship.
- “Retaliation” is defined as adverse actions taken against a Covered Individual because of his or her participation in the following types of protected activities:
 - Seeking advice or assistance about this policy;
 - Reporting or filing an informal or formal complaint or concern regarding an alleged violation of this policy; or
 - Testifying, assisting or participating in an investigation or other proceeding related to an alleged violation of this policy.
- “Student” means an individual pursuing degree-associated studies at any level, whether full or part-time, including high school, undergraduate, and graduate programs, a Stowers Summer Scholar, or a research intern.
- “Supervisory or evaluative authority” is the power to control or influence another person’s employment, academic advancement, or extracurricular participation, including, but not limited to: hiring, appointment (or renewal of appointment) or admission; work conditions; assignments; mentoring; evaluation, assigning grades, supervision of thesis research or recommendations; salary, award, stipend or other compensation or financial support; promotion or transfer; discipline or termination; or participation in extracurricular programs, in each case directly or as a committee member and, if applicable, regardless of the source of funds.

This policy was approved by the GSSIMR Board of Directors on September 5, 2018.

This policy was last updated by the GSSIMR Board of Directors on November 09, 2020.

This policy will be reviewed by the GSSIMR Board of Directors in 2022.