Policy Number & Name: Conflict Management Involving Family or Household Members (Nepotism)

Approval Authority: President

Responsible Executive: President

Responsible Office: Office of the Provost and University Vice President

Effective Date: 9 March 2010

1. Policy Statement

The University recognizes that on occasion family or household members of Stevens’ employees may be selected for vacant faculty and staff positions. Similarly, it is not unusual for dependents or family members of employees to be students at the university. It is the University’s intention to ensure that the hiring and/or instruction of family and household members is done equitably and does not create an actual or perceived conflict of interest.

2. Reason/Purpose for Policy

To define what constitutes a family or household with regards to employment and academic instruction, and to establish guidelines to ensure that preferential treatment is not given to these individuals when applying for available university positions, or once they have been hired. The policy also provides guidance for handling situations where students may be family or household members of faculty.

3. Policy Scope

The policy is applicable to all members of the Stevens Institute of Technology.

4. Related Documents

- Conflict of Interest Policy (10.2.3)
- Faculty Handbook (20.1)
- Code of Ethics (10.2.1)

5. Contacts

- Office of Human Resources
- Office of the Provost and University Vice President
- Office of Audit Services

6. Policy

For the purposes of this regulation, family or household members include the following: spouse, domestic partner (including civil union partner), child, parent, sibling, in-law, aunt, uncle, niece, nephew, grandparent, grandchild, step-children or parents, or other members of the immediate household. This regulation also applies to romantic relationships, regardless of household status.

6. Policy

Employment

It is the policy of Stevens Institute of Technology to seek the most qualified employees for its faculty and staff positions. Members of the same family or household may be selected for faculty and staff positions when it has been determined that they are the most qualified for the position and their selection does not conflict with the provisions of this policy.
Members of the same family or household should not be selected for faculty or staff positions if selection would create a supervisor/subordinate relationship between family or household members, or if it creates a supervisor/subordinate relationship with a faculty or staff member’s direct report. (e.g. a relative of the Provost may not work for the Dean of the School of Engineering & Sciences since the Dean reports to the Provost). Similarly, family or household members should not be hired if their employment has the potential for creating an adverse impact on work performance; or would create either an actual or perceived conflict of interest. On the rare occasion it is determined that the benefit to the university outweighs the conflict of interest created by a potential supervisor/subordinate relationship between family/household members, established mitigation procedures will be enacted by the applicable Dean or Provost.

Further, no family or household member shall have hiring authority over another family or household member, or shall vote, make recommendations or in any other way participate in the decision of any matter that may directly affect the appointment, tenure, promotion, demotion, salary or other status or interest of a family or household member. Employees are expected to voluntarily recuse themselves from participation in personnel decisions in which a family or household member is involved.

The University will seek to mitigate any situations where a perceived bias could exist as a result of personal relationships. If mitigations are not feasible and successful, the employees will be permitted to determine which of them will resign. If the employees cannot make a decision, the university will decide in its sole discretion which employee will remain employed.

Academe

The University encourages its employees to further their education and offers the benefit of tuition remission to both employees and their dependents. As such, it is not unusual for family members of faculty to be students at the university.

In order to preserve the academic integrity of the university, conflicts of interest in the classroom must be avoided. Conflicts of interest occur when an instructor has direct oversight for academic grading in a course in which a family or household member is enrolled. In situations where avoidance is not possible, the following procedures are to be used.

Nepotism must be avoided in instructor/student cases. If alternate sections of the course involved exist, then students should always take the alternate section to avoid the conflict. In cases where this is not possible, or doing so will delay academic progress of the student, the department chair shall serve in an oversight capacity. The appropriate method of oversight will include, but will not be limited to:
- Evaluating grades on assignments for consistency with other students;
- Evaluating final grade assignments; and
- Submission of the final grade.

If there is a disagreement or any perception of favoritism, the dean will have the final authority on the assignment of grades. Documentation of any conflict of interest occurrence and the appropriate method of oversight must be submitted by the department and filed in the dean’s office.

Conflicts of interest should also be avoided in making decisions related to assigning scholarships, talent grants, and assistantships, or selecting award recipients. If such a conflict does occur, the person with the conflict must remove himself/herself from all discussion and voting on the case involving the conflict.