

70.2.3 Non-Fraternization Policy

Policy Name: NON-FRATERNIZATION POLICY
Approval Authority: ADMINISTRATIVE COUNCIL
Responsible Executive: VICE PRESIDENT FOR HUMAN RESOURCES
Responsible Office: Division of Human Resources
Effective Date: Originally effective February 6, 2012; Revised January 19, 2016

1. Purpose and Summary of Policy

The Stevens Institute of Technology (“Stevens”) is committed to providing a learning environment that is free from conflicts of interest, exploitation, favoritism and sexual harassment.

Maintaining the integrity of the relationships between students and faculty or other Stevens’ personnel is essential to Stevens’ educational mission. The power differential inherent in these relationships makes them especially vulnerable to exploitation. Where a faculty member or other Stevens’ employee uses a position of authority to induce a student to enter into a non-consensual relationship, the harm to both that student and to Stevens is clear and non-consensual relationships will be subject to Stevens’ Policy on Gender-Based and Sexual Misconduct and applicable law. Even where the relationship is consensual, there is significant potential for harm when there is an institutional power difference between the parties involved, as is the case between faculty and student or academic advisor and advisee. Such relationships may cast doubt on the objectivity of any supervision and evaluation provided.

Engaging in a consensual relationship with a student is likely to interfere with the ability of the faculty member or employee to act and make decisions fairly and without favoritism. Even if the faculty member or employee is able to avoid this bias, other students are likely to see themselves as being less favored and as disadvantaged by their peer’s personal relationship. All faculty members and other Stevens’ employees have a responsibility to avoid any apparent or actual conflict between his or her professional responsibilities and personal interests in relationships with students.

This Policy prohibits all Stevens’ employees including faculty from engaging in amorous or sexual relationships with any student under their supervision, and prohibits engaging in amorous or sexual relationships with any undergraduate student whether or not a supervisory role exists. Stevens also strongly discourages its employees and faculty from engaging in consensual amorous or sexual relationships with graduate students.

2. Policy Statement

Stevens has determined that there is an inherent conflict of interest when a faculty member or Stevens’ employee engages in an amorous or sexual relationship with a student under his or her supervision. All Stevens’ employees including faculty members are prohibited from (i) entering into an amorous or sexual relationship with a student under his or her authority, and (ii) accepting authority over a student with whom he or she has an amorous or sexual relationship. This prohibition applies regardless of whether the relationship is consensual or not.

Undergraduate students are particularly vulnerable to the unequal power differential inherent in the student-teacher relationship and the potential for coercion because of their age and relative lack of maturity. No Stevens’ employee including faculty shall have a sexual or amorous relationship with any undergraduate student, regardless of whether the employee currently exercises or expects to exercise direct authority over that student. All Stevens’ employees including faculty members are strongly discouraged from engaging in amorous or sexual relationships with graduate students.

Teaching Assistants (“TAs”) who have final grading or assessment authority over students are prohibited from engaging in amorous or sexual relationships with a student under his or her supervision. If a TA is in a sexual or amorous relationship with a student in a class for which s/he serves as a TA, the TA is required to disclose this relationship to the faculty member who leads the class even if the TA does not have final grading or assessment authority.

Violations of this Policy shall be reported to the Vice President of Human Resources or the General Counsel, or by submitting a report to the Stevens compliance hotline.