

 <p>RHODE ISLAND COLLEGE</p> <p>OFFICIAL POLICY</p>	<p><i>Personal Relationships</i></p>	<p>EFFECTIVE DATE: 2014/07/31</p> <p>REVISION HISTORY: new policy</p>
<p>RESPONSIBLE OFFICE: Human Resources</p>	<p>POLICY OWNER: Director, Office of Human Resources</p>	<p>SUPERSEDES: N/A</p>

PART 1. RATIONALE

Except as provided in this policy, there are no laws or policies forbidding consensual romantic, dating, or sexual relationships between members of the RIC community. It is, however, in the best interest of the college and its employees to provide clear direction about the professional risks associated with consensual romantic, dating, or sexual relationships between members of the college community in which a conflict of interest and/or a power differential exists between the parties

PART 2. SCOPE

Applies to all employees of Rhode Island College

PART 3. DEFINITIONS

consensual	characterized by voluntary, positive agreement between or among all involved parties in any given situation
employee	any individual compensated directly by the college for services rendered

PART 4. STATEMENT OF POLICY¹

A. Policy

The college's educational mission is founded on an atmosphere of mutual trust and respect between all members of the academic community. Faculty members, as well as those individuals upon whom the institution confers managerial, supervisory, or evaluative responsibilities, (including graduate assistants) carry a special responsibility to adhere to the highest ethical and professional standards and to avoid any actions that may appear to undermine this atmosphere of trust and respect and thereby hinder the institution's educational mission.

Because of the inherent imbalance of power and need for trust, faculty members, supervisory staff, and those with evaluative authority should be aware that dating or sexual relationships that might be appropriate in other circumstances have inherent dangers when they occur between a staff member and a student as well as when they occur between a supervisor and employee.

Such relationships can create real conflicts, are susceptible to an appearance of exploitation, and can impair the trust and integrity of the teaching, coaching, or other supervisory or evaluative relationship and may cause a perception of favoritism or bias on the part of the staff. In addition, although these relationships may begin and remain consensual, they may easily be later characterized as non-consensual and could potentially lead to sexual harassment charges.

¹ Rhode Island College gratefully acknowledges that this policy language (Part 4) was taken from a policy of the Board of Regents for Higher Education, Connecticut State Colleges and Universities and modified only slightly (for example, the college's name was inserted, and references to reporting structure were changed.).

B. Prohibited

1. Between employee and student: Consensual romantic, dating, or sexual relationships between any employee and any student over whom that employee exercises direct or otherwise significant academic, supervisory, or evaluative authority or influence are prohibited at Rhode Island College. The evaluative relationship can take a variety of forms, such as teacher to student, advisor to advisee, coach to athlete, supervisor to student employee, or similar relationship.

C. Strongly Discouraged

1. Between employee and student: Romantic, dating or sexual relationships between employees and students over whom said employee does not have supervisory or evaluative authority are strongly discouraged. Such relationships are not only susceptible to future conflicts of interest, but also may present the appearance of impropriety.

If this situation exists, no employee should agree to supervise or evaluate a student with whom he or she has, or formerly had, a consensual relationship. A faculty member should inform the Dean if such a student wishes to enroll in a credit bearing course that he or she is teaching so that alternate arrangements can be made. Nor should a faculty member direct the student's independent study, internship, or thesis; participate in decisions regarding grades; or write letters of recommendation or reference.

2. Between employee and employee: Rhode Island College discourages employees with supervisory or evaluative authority from engaging in romantic, dating or sexual relationships with employees who they supervise or evaluate. If such a relationship exists or develops, the individual with the power or status advantage shall notify his or her supervisor. In the case of a faculty member, the dean should be notified. If the conflict of interest exists between the employee and the supervisor or dean, then the individual should notify the next person in the administrative chain of command. The supervisor or dean (or other appropriate administrator) shall have the responsibility for making arrangements to eliminate or mitigate a conflict in which consequences might prove detrimental to either party in the relationship or to the college. These situations are handled on a case-by-case basis and may require transfer or reassignment of one or more employees.

D. In the event of a Sexual Harassment Charge

Anyone who enters into a romantic, dating, or sexual relationship where a professional power differential exists must realize that if a charge of sexual harassment is subsequently filed, it may be difficult to defend the charge by claiming that there was mutual consent. Employees could be held personally liable in a criminal or civil lawsuit.

PART 5. PROCEDURES

N/A

PART 6. GUIDELINES

N/A

PART 7. RESPONSIBILITIES

Responsible Official	List of Responsibilities
individual with power or status advantage in a consensual romantic and/or sexual relationship	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. reporting of relationship to immediate supervisor2. adhering to arrangement referenced in Part 4 of this policy
immediate supervisor of individual with power or status advantage in a consensual romantic and/or sexual relationship	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. make arrangement(s) necessary to eliminate or mitigate any consequence(s) as referenced in Part 4 of this policy2. report to Director of Human Resources any non-compliance with such arrangement(s)
Director of Human Resources	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. take any necessary action(s) in instances of non-compliance

PART 8. CONTACTS

Subject	Office or Position	Telephone Number	Email
Policy Clarification	Office of Human Resources	(401) 456-8216	Employment@ric.edu

PART 9. POLICY ENFORCEMENT

Violation(s)	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. failure to comply with this policy2. failure to report a prohibited consensual romantic, dating, or sexual relationship3. failure to comply with an arrangement to mitigate such situation
Potential consequences	disciplinary action pursuant to appropriate collective bargaining agreement where applicable
Where to report violations	Director, Office of Human Resources

PART 10. FORMS/TEMPLATES/REFERENCE DOCUMENTS

Form, Template, or Document
Board policy on Conflict of Interest and Nepotism
College policy on Illegal Harassment
State law on sexual harassment R.I.G.L. §28-51
Statement on Personal Relationships , endorsed by the Council of Rhode Island College on 2009/10/09