

Policy on Conflict of Commitment in Research

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Policy Title	Policy on Conflict of Commitment in Research
Policy #	01.018.1
Policy Owner	University of Rhode Island Board of Trustees
Contact Information	Questions about this policy can be directed to the Director of Research Integrity at 401-874-5467.
Approved By	University of Rhode Island Board of Trustees
Effective Date	
Next Review Date	No later than
Who Needs to Know About this Policy	All Employees of the University of Rhode Island ("University" or "URI") involved in the conduct, administration, or oversight of Research; as well as all Investigators associated with University Research regardless of professional affiliation.
Definitions	<p>Conflict of Commitment. Outside Activities for which the time of occurrence or duration would hinder the Employee from carrying out their University duties. A Conflict of Commitment can be paid or unpaid, may interfere, or appear to interfere, with fulfillment of the Employee's obligations to the University; even if the Outside Activity is valuable to the University or contributes to the Investigator's professional development and competence.</p> <p>Outside Activities. Includes any external consulting or other business activities and external professional or academic endeavors performed outside of the Employees' appointment to the University.</p> <p>University-Related Activity. Any activity undertaken by URI faculty, staff or students, by recognized student groups, or by contractors or agents on behalf of the University, which relate in whole or in part to any academic, research, public service, administrative, or other function or purpose performed under the auspices of the University, or in pursuance of University employment-related obligations, academic or curricular programs, or recognized extracurricular activities.</p> <p>Conflict-of-Interest Management Committee. A committee established in accordance with the University of Rhode Island Board of Trustees Policy on Public-Private Partnership in Research and Development to advise the Designated Responsible Official on Financial Conflicts of Interest in Research and Conflicts of Commitment.</p>

	<p>Designated Responsible Official (“DRO”). The individual responsible for reviewing disclosures on Financial Conflicts of Interest and Conflicts of Commitment. For the purposes of this policy, the Designated Responsible Official will be the Vice President for Research and Economic Development at the University of Rhode Island.</p> <p>Employee. Any person employed by the University, including but not limited to faculty, staff, or a student worker; regardless of the source of funds from which they are paid.</p> <p>Institutional Responsibilities. Investigator’s responsibilities associated with their University of Rhode Island appointment or position, such as research; teaching; service; support; administration;</p> <p>Investigator. Project director or principal Investigator and any other person, regardless of title or position, who is responsible for the design, conduct, and/or reporting of Research, which may include, for example, collaborators or consultants. Some sponsors have specific requirements for identifying Investigators.</p> <p>Research. A systematic investigation, including development, testing, and evaluation of ideas, designed to develop or contribute to general knowledge. Research includes all basic, applied, clinical, translational, and demonstration activities in all academic and scholarly fields.</p>
Statutes, Regulations, and Policies Governing or Necessitating This Policy	<p>Policy on Financial Conflict of Interest in Research</p> <p>Policy on Conflict of Interest and Commitment</p> <p>Policy on Malign Foreign Talent Recruitment Program Prohibition</p>
Reason for Policy/Purpose	<p>Many Investigators are involved in Outside Activities, including consulting, guest lecturing at other institutions, serving in professional and community organizations, and/or employment outside of standard URI work hours. This Policy is provided to assist Investigators in identifying (and, if possible, avoiding) possible Conflicts of Commitment.</p> <p>In addition, the Policy is intended to meet the requirements of all federal regulations regarding Conflicts of Commitment in Research; and to ensure Employees participating in research activities conduct themselves in accordance with those regulations and with all relevant University policies.</p>
Forms Related to this Policy	<p>University of Rhode Island Significant Financial Interest and Conflict of Commitment Disclosure Form</p>

Policy Statement

The University of Rhode Island (“University” or “URI”) encourages and values the Outside Activities of Investigators when it furthers their professional development, and especially when it enhances their teaching and Research capabilities. However, a potential Conflict of Commitment could exist when the time or effort that an Investigator spends on an Outside Activity directly or significantly interferes with or compromises, or appears to interfere with or compromise, the Investigator’s ability to fulfill their Institutional Responsibilities to the University.

A potential Conflict of Commitment includes but is not limited to situations that involve faculty personal consulting activities that could have a negative impact on URI’s federal funding and internal budget. Listed below are some examples of potential conflicts, though this is not an exhaustive list.

- A faculty member consults for a private company and uses the research to submit a federal grant proposal.
- A faculty member serves as PI on a federal grant and wants to subcontract work to their personal consulting business, which would result in personal financial gain.
- A faculty member’s consulting activities consume so much time that it compromises their research responsibilities and work product.
- A faculty member uses URI resources, including their email, office or laboratory space, and administrative services in support of their personal consulting activities.

This policy is intended to establish a process whereby such Conflicts of Commitment may be managed or avoided and requires Investigators to disclose Outside Activities that may represent Conflicts of Commitment before they commence or before they participate in sponsored Research. Disclosure enables the University to determine if a Conflict of Commitment exists, and the proper management thereof depends on full and prompt disclosure.

In addition, this policy is intended to meet the requirements of applicable federal, regulations and policies regarding Conflicts of Commitment in Research. This policy applies to ongoing and future activities as of the policy Effective Date. Past professional activities are subject to applicable University policies in place at the time those activities were undertaken.

The following additional policies related to conflicts of interest or commitment apply to individuals engaged in specific activities, and may prescribe corresponding pathways for self-disclosure and conflict management:

- The Policy on Financial Conflict of Interest in Research additionally applies to Employees engaged in sponsored research activities;
- The Policy on Public-Private Partnership in Research and Development applies to Employees engaged in basic or applied Research and Development at the University;
- The Policy on Conflict of Interest and Commitment applies to all University Employees and guides compliance with the Rhode Island Code of Ethics; and
- The Policy on Consensual Relationships applies to Employees whose activity meets the definition of a consensual relationship as defined in that policy.

I. Applicability

This policy and its attendant procedures apply to any University Employee identified as an Investigator who receives and/or proposes to receive funding from external sources for Research at the University.

II. Disclosure Process

Investigators must disclose Outside Activities (before accepting a commitment) to the Office of Sponsored Programs (1) before submitting an application for external funding (2) at least annually thereafter and (3) within 30 days of acquiring a new Outside Activity.

The Associate Vice President for Research Administration, in consultation with the DRO and the Conflict-of-Interest Management Committee, has designated procedures for the reporting of Outside Activities. Investigators are responsible for completing disclosures of Outside Activities using the procedures attendant to this Policy.

III. Review and Evaluation of Disclosures

The Associate Vice President for Research Administration, in consultation with the DRO and the Conflict-of-Interest Management Committee, will review disclosures as described in the attendant procedures. The intent of the review is to determine:

- (1) Whether the disclosed Outside Activities constitute real or perceived Conflicts of Commitment; and
- (2) Whether the real or perceived Conflicts of Commitment should be managed or eliminated.

IV. Management and Elimination of Conflicts of Commitment

If it is determined that a Conflict of Commitment may be managed, the Associate Vice President for Research Administration will develop a draft management plan and submit it for review and approval to the Conflict-of-Interest Management Committee.

The Investigator may not commence or participate in the Research that gives rise to a real or potential Conflict of Commitment, or the appearance thereof, until the management plan is fully approved and executed. Once approved, the Investigator must adhere strictly to all aspects of the management plan.

If it is determined that a real or perceived Conflict of Commitment may not be managed, the Investigator must eliminate the conflict before commencing or participating in the Research that gives rise to the Conflict of Commitment.

V. Appeals

If an Investigator believes that a determination regarding a Conflict of Commitment is not appropriate or is based on erroneous information, they may request reconsideration by submitting a written request to the Associate Vice President for Research Administration. If, after a second review, the Investigator still wishes to appeal the decision, they may appeal to the DRO. The DRO's decision is final.

VI. Reporting

The Associate Vice President for Research Administration is responsible for reporting identified Conflicts of Commitment and any noncompliance with management plans in cases where federal regulation or the sponsor terms and conditions require reporting.

VII. Retrospective Review

If the University discovers a Conflict of Commitment that was not identified in the disclosure and evaluation process, the Associate Vice President for Research Administration, in consultation with the DRO and the Conflict-of-Interest Management Committee, will conduct a retrospective review to determine if a conflict exists and if any mitigating

actions are required. This review and any required mitigation report, if applicable, will be conducted, documented, and submitted according to federal regulation or sponsor terms.

VIII. Sanctions for Failure to Comply

Failure to comply with this policy or with an approved management plan will be subject to review by the Designated Responsible Official. If the DRO determines a policy violation has occurred, the Investigator may be subject to University discipline up to and including termination of external funding, limitation or revocation of authorization to request or receive external funding, and termination of appointment.

IX. Public Accessibility

This policy document will be posted on the University's public website. If it is required by federal regulation or sponsor terms and conditions, the Associate Vice President for Research Administration will make information regarding Conflicts of Commitment, including the management thereof, available to the public upon request.

X. Record Retention

The Associate Vice President for Research Administration will retain all disclosures, conflict management plans, and related documents for a period of at least three (3) years following submission of the final expenditure report for the applicable project to the sponsor of the Research that gives rise to the conflict unless any litigation, claim or negotiation, audit, or other action involving the records is commenced before expiration of the three (3)-year period, in which case, records will be retained until completion of the action and resolution of all issues.

Exceptions

None

Policy Review and Revisions

Policy #	Effective Date	Reason for Change	Changes to Policy
01.018.1		n/a	n/a