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Graduate Student Association

Policy on Conflict of Interest

Introduction

1. This policy clarifies instances of a conflict of interest (COI) involving a Graduate Student Association (GSA) director, executive, employee or general member and sets out guidelines for the voluntary acknowledgement of a Conflict of Interest. This policy is designed to insure accountability. It is not the goal of this policy to find guilt or fault, rather to create a fair and transparent environment for decision-making. For this reason this policy has adopted many of the perspectives and recommendations outlined by Chris MacDonlad, Michael MacDonlad and Wayne Norman (2002).*

Definitions

2. Conflict of Interest (COI)

Any situation where a GSA director, executive, employee or general member is considered to hold a financial or personal interest, which is sufficient enough to influence the objective exercise of his or her official duties. These interests can be related to career development objectives, financial interests, resource allocation interests and social ties (i.e. friendships). These interests are also understood to provide a financial or personal advantage for either the GSA affiliated person or a relation, whether that relation be another person(s) or another group(s)/organization(s).

It is important to note that a Conflict of Interest situation is not an accusation of wrongdoing. Situations of Conflict of Interest are regular occurrences, however they must be acknowledged and addressed. All discussions and proceedings surrounding situations of a COI should be carried out through respectful dialogue.

Examples of COI

3. The following represents a few examples and is not meant as an exhaustive list. Other situations of Conflict of Interest may exist if they are consistent with the definition of a Conflict of Interest described above.

* MacDonald, Chris, Michael MacDonald and Wyane MacDonald. 2002. *Charitable Conflicts of Interest*. Journal of Business Ethics 39(1-2): 67-74.

- a. Whenever a director, executive, employee or general member is involved in a decision that can impact their intimate partner or family.
- b. Whenever a director, executive, employee or general member is involved in a decision regarding funding, resource or economic interests that will directly benefit them.
- c. Whenever a director, executive, employee or general member is involved in a decision regarding funding, resource or economic interests that will directly benefit a group or organization they are involved with.

Guidelines for Voluntary Acknowledgement of COI

4. All GSA directors, executives, employees and general members will strive to remain conscience of potential Conflict of Interest involving them. The only accountability measure of this policy comes from the voluntary acknowledgement of a Conflict of Interest. Whenever a director, executive, employee or general member recognizes a potential Conflict of Interest that person should follow the steps outlined below:
 - a. Immediately acknowledge the possibility of a Conflict of Interest
 - b. Disclose and describe the circumstances of the Conflict of Interest
 - c. Remove themselves completely from all decision-making involving the disclosed Conflict of Interest