



University Policies & Procedures: [CONFLICTS OF INTEREST POLICY FOR EMPLOYEES \(107.03\)](#)

Attachment 1: Statement of Principles

**Statement of Principles Regarding Avoidance of
Conflicts of Interest For Employees of Thomas
Jefferson University**

Thomas Jefferson University is a nonprofit corporation organized under the laws of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. As a nonprofit organization, it is prohibited from engaging in any activity the primary purpose of which is to financially benefit any individual. Moreover, the tax-exempt status of the University further prohibits any corporate income to benefit any individual or group of individuals.

An important goal of Thomas Jefferson University is the advancement of scientific knowledge particularly that designed to improve the health of our citizenry. In order to preserve the continued growth of biomedical research and the delivery of quality healthcare, a principled partnership between academia and industry is essential. To facilitate the collaboration between academia and industry, Congress enacted the Bayh-Dole Act, which explicitly encourages academic institutions to seek private investment to facilitate the translation of academic biomedical research into medically useful products through commercialization of products arising from federally-sponsored research.

The resultant increase in academic involvement in commercially-sponsored research increases the occurrence of potential and actual financial conflicts of interest related to academic research. Such conflicts of interest arise in a variety of circumstances, including but not limited to, a University employee's opportunities to benefit financially either from the outcome of his/her research or from the legitimate activities conducted in the course of his/her responsibilities as an employee of the University.

Actual or perceived financial conflicts of interest may threaten public support for the research mission of academic institutions. Thus, the University is dedicated to fostering the public's continued confidence in the judgment of its employees and its dedication to the integrity of academic medicine and biomedical research.

Consequently, it is the policy of the University that all faculty, employees, students, and other persons covered under its policies avoid conflicts, or the appearance of conflicts, between their

personal interests and the interests of the University when dealing with any organization or individual having, or seeking to have, any business relationship with the University.

In connection with the restrictions encompassed in the foregoing, this statement of principles has been prepared to offer broad guidance to the employees of the University.

Conflict of interest is not a precise term, and it is subject to interpretation and degree. The provision of state-of-the-art, compassionate and cost effective healthcare services; the education of students; the collection, analysis and interpretation of research data; and the hiring of staff, acquisition of materials and other administrative tasks at Thomas Jefferson University must be free of the undue influence of outside interests. It is recognized that certain situations or issues involving ethical judgment may not always be free from ambiguity.

As a general rule, therefore, a person should consider not only the actual fact of conflict but also the appearance of conflict to an unknowing third party who might have occasion to judge or interpret the transaction. Perceived conflicts will be evaluated and managed the same as known conflicts. The highest standards of honorable and ethical conduct must be observed in all relationships.

- All individuals employed by or providing services to Thomas Jefferson University are charged with fidelity in the performance of their functional duties and should conduct such duties for the purpose, benefit, and interest of the University.
- Individuals shall be aware that their positions should not be used to gain favorable treatment or self-enhancement unless such occurs as a result of a primary effort to benefit the University and its patients, students, and the public.
- In supporting or protecting political and legal causes or issues, the use of one's title is not considered inappropriate; however, careful judgment should be exercised to preclude any inference that one is using his position or speaking on behalf of the University in such instances unless proper authorization has been obtained.
- On ethical as well as legal grounds, individuals should only have direct dealings with vendors that are consistent with the University's purchasing policies. No employee, officer, or agent must participate in the selection, award or administration of a contract supported by a Federal award if he or she has an actual or apparent conflict of interest. Such a conflict of interest would arise when the employee, officer, or agent, any member of his or her immediate family; his or her partner, or organization which employs or is about to employ any of the parties identified in this policy, has a financial or other interest in or tangible personal benefit from a firm considered for a contract.
- Information acquired in the course of service at Thomas Jefferson University that is known to be confidential or privileged should be used only for University purposes.

- All employees should be aware that they are expected to devote their best efforts in furtherance of the University's mission during the course of their service. Outside employment or personal commitments, if such activities would tend to impair an individual's ability to effectively fulfill his regular responsibilities, are not appropriate.
- Thomas Jefferson University, a health care and academic institution, encourages faculty and employee participation in various extramural organizations, government agencies and/or professional associations that are of service to the general public, the University, or the individual. If the nature of the association is such that the University's name may be identified with the outside organization, however, the individual must exercise caution and sensitivity to avoid any participation or affiliation that could be detrimental to the University. While recognizing the benefits of such activities, the University is committed to ensuring that they are conducted properly and consistently with the principles of openness, trust, and free inquiry that are fundamental to the well-being of the University. Individuals are expected to seek advice from the appropriate chairman, department head, administrator or University Counsel before making any commitments that may be potentially compromising to the University's interests.
- A conflict of interest occurs when University resources - including time of University personnel, funds, facilities, reputation, or other assets - are diverted from their intended purpose by virtue of an individual's outside activities, associations, or appointments. Therefore, any outside activities utilizing University resources, in whole or in part, should be cleared through the individual's department chairman, department head, or administrator. In certain cases, such outside activity may be approved.
- A conflict of interest may exist when individuals or members of their families acquire or hold investments in real estate or property in which the University may have an interest, or have a financial relationship with or an executive position in biotechnology companies or any entity engaged in the delivery of health care services or health care supplies.
- A conflict of interest also may occur when individuals or members of their families accept compensation, gifts, gratuities, or favors from any person or organization doing business or seeking to do business with the University or make clinical referrals to any entity in which the individual or a member of his/her family has a financial interest.

The mere existence of a conflict of interest does not necessarily imply wrongdoing on anyone's part. However, when the question of conflict of interest arises, it must be recognized, disclosed, and either eliminated or properly managed. In order to encourage full disclosure of potential conflicts, disclosures will be treated as confidential and will not be disclosed, except as is required by law or as may be necessary under the University's Conflicts of Interest Policy for Employees.

New employees will be required to read this Statement as part of their terms of employment. All faculty, administrators, and other designated employees also are required to sign a Disclosure of Conflicts of Interest and disclose any existing conflicts of interest or potential conflicts of interest when they are hired and annually thereafter in accordance with the University's Conflicts of Interest Policy for Employees. If, at any time, any employee becomes aware of a situation that may present an actual, perceived, or potential conflict of interest, s/he should report that situation to the Conflicts of Interest Officer and the person to whom s/he reports at the earliest practicable time. It will be the responsibility of the Conflicts of Interest Officer to review and evaluate potential conflicts of interest in accordance with the procedures for the management, reduction or elimination of conflicts of interest set forth in the University's Conflicts of Interest Policy for Employees. All identified significant conflicts of interest will be referred to the Standing Committee on Conflicts of Interest and Commitment for review and management.

Thomas Jefferson University expects its faculty members, officers, students, other employees, and agents to comply fully, promptly, and in a timely manner with the University's Conflicts of Interest Policy for Employees (No. 107.03). Failure to comply with all relevant policy provisions will result in the implementation of enforcement activities set forth in the University's Conflicts of Interest Policy - Enforcement and Sanctions for Non-Compliance (Policy No. 107.18).

Revised December 2014