



Teachers College
COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

Outside Interests
Quick-Guide:
**Examples of Conflicts of
Interest**

Teachers College
Office of Vice President for Administration
COL@tc.columbia.edu
525 W 120th Street
New York, NY 10027-6605

Title: Outside Interest SOP: Disclosee - Completing a Conflict of Interest (COI) Disclosure Form	Process Owner: Office of Vice President for Administration	Approved By: Akesia Phillip, Sr. Manager, Planning and Operations
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EXAMPLES OF CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

All faculty and staff are required to comply with the Teachers College COI Policies and its associated policies. We advise full disclosure of any potential conflicts of interest. When in doubt about whether a relationship might pose a conflict, please disclose it. Identified conflicts will be addressed through the creation of a management plan to mitigate potential risks. Visit [Conflict of Interest FAQs page](#) for a list of responsibilities related to conflicts.

What is a conflict of interest?

Conflicts of interest can arise from a variety of personal and professional relationships that could compromise or impact a person's judgement, decisions, or actions in the workplace. These may include, but are not limited to:

- Personal and familial relationships- Conflicts that family members, household members, or close associates may have.
- External commitments- Obligations or affiliations that could interfere with duties at Teachers College.
- International affiliations- Collaborations with foreign entities or memberships in international organizations.
- Financial interests- Financial relationships that might compromise professional judgment or objectivity.

When in doubt, disclose. If you are unsure whether a relationship might pose a conflict of interest, it is always best to err on the side of caution and report it on your COI disclosure form. Teachers College requires full disclosure of all potential conflicts.

Conflict of Interest Examples

1. A Conflict of Interest will arise in a situation in which an employee engages, directly or indirectly, in personal or professional activities that are in competition with or adverse to the College. Such situations include (a) holding, directly or indirectly, an ownership or other financial interest, or having an employment, management, or fiduciary role (such as serving as an officer or director) in an enterprise with which the College has a business, research or other relationship or that is a competitor or adverse to or potentially adverse to the College; (b) representing in a professional capacity, an individual or an enterprise that is a competitor or adversary, or potential adversary to the College, and/or (c) appropriating or diverting a business or financial opportunity that the College is pursuing, is considering pursuing or reasonably might be interested in pursuing if it were aware of the opportunity.
2. A Conflict of Interest will arise in a situation in which an employee has, directly or through a Family or Household Member, a material interest in a supplier of goods, services or other funding to the College, or a material interest in a contractor or potential contractor with the College, and acts on behalf of the College in any transaction involving that relationship.
3. A Conflict of Interest will arise in a situation in which an employee participates in the selection, award, or administration of a contract with any person or entity with whom they are negotiating regarding potential employment.

4. A Conflict of Interest will arise in a situation in which an employee obtains, uses or discloses non-public information learned or accessed through their role at the College for personal gain or for a purpose that may be disadvantageous to the College.
5. A Conflict of Interest will arise in a situation in which an employee solicits and/or accepts gifts, favors or hospitality of excessive value from a vendor or prospective vendor such that the acceptance of such gifts, favors or hospitality could reasonably be viewed as influencing their decision-making or compromising their judgment in taking action on behalf of the College. Ordinarily, the acceptance of promotional items that are routinely distributed by vendors and are of nominal value (approximately \$50 or less in total, calculated annually) and the acceptance of ordinary business courtesies, such as payment for a meal or an invitation to an event, would not be viewed as influencing decision-making or compromising judgment so long as the meal or event is not lavish or excessive.
6. No employee or any entity with which they are associated, may benefit from or exercise control over funds from gifts to the College donated by themselves or any entity with which they or their Family or Household Members are associated, or activities that have resulted, directly or indirectly, from such gifts.
7. A Conflict of Interest will arise in a situation in which an employee has a personal or professional relationship with a potential vendor, applicant for employment, applicant for student admission, applicant for financial aid, research sponsor or other person or entity with a potential relationship with the College, and the employee takes any action in connection with such potential relationship.
8. A Conflict of Interest will arise in a situation where faculty holds tenure simultaneously at two institutions, unless specially authorized by the President of the College.
9. A Conflict of Interest will arise in a situation where an employee attempts to exert influence in the admissions process.
10. A Conflict of Interest will arise when a full-time staff member regularly provides paid consulting services to a private company during normal work hours, causing delays in completing their assigned work.
11. A Conflict of Interest will arise when an IT employee is paid to consult for a software vendor that supplies products to the College, influencing procurement decisions. This creates a risk that the employee's judgment in procurement decisions could be biased in favor of the vendor.
12. A Conflict of Interest may arise when a marketing director is a consultant to another organization and advises them on a similar strategy to the College, potentially sharing proprietary knowledge. The sharing of confidential or strategic information that benefits a competitor may harm the College's interests.
13. A Conflict of Interest may arise when an employee uses company equipment, software, or staff to fulfill orders for their private enterprise.
14. A Conflict of Interest will arise from an employee accepting honoraria from a vendor after participating in product evaluation. This creates the appearance that the employee's decision was influenced by a personal financial benefit.
15. A Conflict of Interest will arise when a faculty member assigns their own self-published textbook to students without disclosing they earn royalties from its sale. The faculty member has a financial interest that could bias or appear to bias the course material decision.

16. A Conflict of Interest will arise when a staff member in procurement accepts tickets to sporting events from a vendor bidding for a campus contract. The gift could create bias or the perception of favoritism in vendor selection.
17. A Conflict of Interest may arise when a faculty member regularly leaves campus during office hours to provide paid expert testimony. The outside activity reduces the faculty member's availability for teaching, advising, and research obligations.
18. A Conflict of Interest may arise when a career services coordinator refers students to their own private résumé-writing business. The employee uses their institutional role to direct students to a personal, profit-making service.
19. A Conflict of Interest will arise when a department administrator approves payment to a consulting firm owned by their spouse.
20. A Conflict of Interest will arise when a faculty member serves on the hiring committee for a position for which their sibling is an applicant. The personal relationship could bias or appear to bias the hiring decision.