

West Virginia Northern Community College

ETHICS/CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Effective Date: March 25, 2004

Date Approved by WVNCC Board of Governors: March 25, 2004

Authority Reference: WV Code 18B-1-6, 6B-2-5(1); HEPC Title 133, Series 9 and 31

Replaces previous policy dated: WVNCC Statement of Ethics, 1997 and WVNCC Policy No. 4.2.28 effective October 20, 1999

Rule: All employees are obligated to the code of conduct identified by the West Virginia Ethics Act and HEPC Series 31 and further refined by the WVNCC Statement of Ethics. WV Code 18B-1-6, 6B-2-5(1) (www.legis.state.wv.us/legishp.html) and HEPC Series 31 (www.hepc.wvnet.edu) are hereby incorporated into this rule by reference. This rule serves as an official statement affirming basic values expected to be upheld by all employees, full-time or part-time, and is made a part of the contractual employment agreement of all employees.

WVNCC STATEMENT OF ETHICS

Preamble: West Virginia Northern Community College (WVNCC) provides an environment that celebrates the freedom to learn and the freedom to teach. As a community of people providing education and a community of people seeking education, all associated with WVNCC will be committed to the College's mission and its focus on academic excellence. Choosing to join the college community obligates each member to a code of behavior, a code designed to protect the rights of all constituents of WVNCC by indicating the behavioral expectations for the professional conduct of all who work or do business with the College. Such a code is intended to promote a positive, supportive, and caring environment in which the mission of the College may be achieved.

The WVNCC Statement of Ethics has six principles as its foundation: autonomy, non-maleficence, beneficence, justice, fidelity, and veracity. For the purposes of the Statement, autonomy refers to the right to choose; non-maleficence, doing no harm; beneficence, actions promoting good; justice, being fair; fidelity, being faithful to an obligation, trust, or duty; and, veracity, conveying the truth.

Examples of behaviors which reflect each principle are delineated in the next section followed by the WVNCC statement on conflict of interest.

Principles of the statement of ethics

PRINCIPLE I -- AUTONOMY

Constituents of West Virginia Northern Community College will make choices within the guidelines of established rules and procedures.

EXAMPLES OF BEHAVIORS REFLECTING THE PRINCIPLE

- Respecting freedom of choice
- Fostering an environment where people feel empowered to make decisions
- Accepting responsibilities for decisions and their consequences
- Exercising the authority of office in ways that do not interfere with the rights of others
- Studying, discussing, investigating, teaching, conducting research, and publishing freely within the academic community

PRINCIPLE II -- NON-MALFEASANCE

Constituents of West Virginia Northern Community College will conduct themselves in a manner that is not intended to harm others.

EXAMPLES OF BEHAVIORS REFLECTING THE PRINCIPLE

- Interacting in ways that promote positive outcomes
- Creating an environment in which people feel safe and secure
- Exercising role responsibilities in a manner that respects the rights and property of others without exploiting or abusing power

PRINCIPLE III -- BENEFICENCE

Constituents of West Virginia Northern Community College will act in ways that promote good and demonstrate respect.

EXAMPLES OF BEHAVIORS REFLECTING THE PRINCIPLE

- Treating others courteously
- Considering the feelings of others
- Working toward positive and beneficial outcomes

PRINCIPLE IV -- JUSTICE

Constituents of West Virginia Northern Community College will treat all persons fairly and equitably.

EXAMPLES OF BEHAVIORS REFLECTING THE PRINCIPLE

- Extending due process to all persons
- Operating within the framework of laws and rules
- Treating people with respect
- Respecting the rights of individuals and all constituent groups to express their opinions
- Assessing students in a valid, open, and fair manner and one consistent with course objectives

PRINCIPLE V -- FIDELITY

Constituents of West Virginia Northern Community College will be committed to the College's mission and vision, keep agreements and promises made within the guidelines of established rules and procedures, and maintain privacy.

EXAMPLES OF BEHAVIORS REFLECTING THE PRINCIPLE

- Maintaining confidentiality of interactions, student records, and information related to legal and private matters
- Honoring commitments made within the guidelines of established rules and procedures
- Maintaining and upholding college rules on academic honesty

PRINCIPLE VI -- VERACITY

Constituents of West Virginia Northern Community College will communicate truthfully and behave honestly.

EXAMPLES OF BEHAVIORS REFLECTING THE PRINCIPLE

- Relaying information accurately
- Communicating all relevant facts and information without violating confidentiality

Statement on Conflict of Interest

The basic principle underlying the “Code of Conduct for Public Servants” created by the West Virginia Ethics Act is that those in public service should use their positions for the public benefit and not for their own private gain or the private gain of another. This statement of conflict of interest is designed to affirm the commitment of the WVNCC Board of Governors to the public trust and to clarify the trust which is placed with all employees through their acceptance of positions with the College.

While committed to assuring the academic, personal and individual freedom normally afforded to individuals as faculty, professional staff, and as citizens, the Board expects all employees to commit to performance of the established responsibilities of their position and to avoid actions which put the individual’s personal gain or interests in conflict with their public responsibilities, public trust and the College’s interest. As a teaching institution, faculty and others have responsibilities to encourage ethical actions of students -- by leadership, example, instruction, and expectations.

There may sometimes be appearances of conflict in the individual’s commitment or questions about conflict of interest. Consistent with the State’s Code of Ethics, WV Code 6B-1-1, the HEPC Ethics rules, Series 9 and 31, and the individual’s charter or job description, each individual employee is expected to report and clarify any questions about potential conflict of interest directly to the President of the College *prior to* action in question. The supervisor’s review and comment regarding petitions or questions of

clarification is required. Situations which raise a question of conflict of interest are identified in the Code of Conduct for Public Servants of West Virginia. (See web page) Outside employment will only constitute a conflict of interest if it has an adverse impact on WVNCC or the employee's work performance.

This statement is not intended to interfere with normal short-term professional activities such as participation in symposia, accreditation visits, speaking engagements, exhibitions, recitals, consulting service on boards, and other common expectations of professionals or when the employee is not within the term of his or her contract period or is on leave. It is also understood that even some limited external employment in the field assists the faculty member in keeping up-to-date with practices of the field when it does not interfere with responsibilities or schedules. The rule is also not meant to discourage such activity as faculty authorship of instructional materials. Departmental decisions regarding selection of materials required for student purchase must be based on academic merit with assurances that there is no significant conflict of interest or appearance of conflict in the selection of such materials. Work on a grant proposal in which the successful acquisition of the grant would result in a position for the grant writer will not be considered to be a conflict of interest.