

## **FRATERNIZATION POLICY**

**Effective 06/01/2009**

### **POLICY:**

Fraternization between a North Carolina Wesleyan College faculty or staff member and a student is prohibited. For the purposes of this policy, fraternization will refer to the consensual romantic and/or sexual relationship between a faculty or staff member and a student. The College reserves the right to address such relationships with the involved parties to determine an appropriate course of action, up to and including termination of employment.

### **PURPOSE:**

North Carolina Wesleyan College is committed to fostering a learning environment characterized by professional behavior and fair and impartial treatment. In a small college environment, the faculty and staff represent some level of authority to students and thereby exhibit some level of power over them. It is in the interest of the College to provide clear direction to the College community about the professional risks associated with student fraternization, especially where a power differential between the parties exists. Fraternization, therefore, is a concern for two primary reasons:

*Conflict of Interest.* Conflicts of interest may arise in connection with fraternization between faculty or staff and students. General ethical principles preclude individuals from evaluating the work or academic performance of others with whom they have intimate familial relationships. The same principles apply to consensual romantic and/or sexual relationships, and require, at a minimum, that appropriate arrangements be made for objective decision-making with regard to the student. Such relationships can only be construed as appearing to be biased and providing favoritism.

*Abuse of Power Differential.* Although conflict of interest issues sometimes can be resolved, in a consensual romantic and/or sexual relationship involving a power differential the potential for serious consequences remains. Individuals entering into such relationships must recognize that:

- a. The reasons for entering such a relationship may be a function of the power differential;
- b. Initial consent to a romantic relationship does not preclude a charge of sexual harassment in the future;
- c. The individual with the superior power in the relationship will usually bear the burden of accountability though the College reserves the right to take disciplinary action on all involved parties;
- d. Such a relationship, whether in a class or work situation, may affect the educational or employment environment for others by creating improper, unprofessional, or possibly discriminatory conduct or treatment.

For these reasons, fraternization between a College faculty or staff member and a student is prohibited.

### **PROCEDURES:**

1. It is the responsibility of the faculty or staff member to inform his or her supervisor and/ or appropriate Vice President/Dean when a relationship exists. (In the event the relationship

involves a Vice President or the President, the reporting line will follow to the next level of supervision – President and Chair of Board of Trustees, respectively). When a consensual romantic or sexual relationship is identified, the supervisor and/or appropriate Vice President/Dean will talk with the parties involved to determine a course of action.

2. An appropriate course of action may include discipline up to and including termination of employment depending on the findings of an investigation. The action taken will be determined by the appropriate Vice President in consultation with the President. In the event that the violation of this policy involves the President, then the Chairman of the Board of Trustees makes the decision.
3. Nothing written in this policy is intended to weaken the College's position on fraternization. However, the College does recognize that under some very limited circumstances there could possibly be a reasonable or legitimate need to provide an exception to this policy (for example, a husband/wife or engaged couple relationship in which one person is the faculty or staff member and the other the student). If that is the case, it would be at the point of disclosure about the relationship to the appropriate level of supervision that the faculty or staff member should request the exception.