

## **CONFLICT OF INTEREST POLICY REGARDING FAMILY MEMBERS**

*(Initially drafted 6/3/04; last revised 5/31/05)*

It is the policy of Muhlenberg College to employ individuals who can best achieve the College mission. Muhlenberg College does not prohibit the employment of relatives within the College, even when those relatives work in the same organizational units (academic or administrative department). However, Muhlenberg College administrators, faculty and staff will not participate in institutional decisions involving direct benefits such as appointment, retention, promotion, salary determination, leaves of absence, stipends or awards to members of their immediate families, whether those members of their immediate families are in the same or different organizational units.

All College employees are expected to use good judgment to avoid conflicts of interest\* and the appearance of conflicts of interest. Should an employee question whether a situation would be a conflict of interest, Human Resources and the appropriate Vice President, Dean or Provost should be consulted. Family members who work in the same organizational unit shall complete a document that lists aspects of their job that could represent a conflict of interest with respect to their relative(s). Relatives of that person shall recuse themselves from institutional decisions involving direct benefits to that relative or relatives. The list and the statement of recusal shall be reviewed by Human Resources and the appropriate Vice President, Dean or Provost and appended to the parties' personnel files. Should family members change positions within the College, the document and statement of recusal shall be updated to reflect their new positions.

Due care will be taken to ensure that no person is excluded from positions of responsibility or authority, or denied opportunities for professional advancement at Muhlenberg College simply because a family member is also employed by Muhlenberg. In the event that the reporting structure involving family members is problematic, the Provost and/or the President will create an alternate reporting structure. In the eventuality that the President is in such a position, the alternate reporting structure will be created by the Chair of the Board of Trustees.

In order to protect both faculty and students from real or apparent conflicts of interest, students will avoid enrolling in classes taught by their spouse, domestic partner, parent or other related person wherever possible. Students may pursue other available alternatives (such as LVAIC cross-registration or courses taught by non-family members) to avoid instruction by family members. However, in small departments or specialized programs or courses, this avoidance may not always be possible. In any case in which a faculty member plans to teach a class in which a related person is enrolled, the faculty member shall confer with the Dean of the College for Academic Life prior to the start of the semester. Should the Dean of the College for Academic Life agree that alternatives have been exhausted and an exception is warranted, another member of the department will be asked to oversee the evaluation process of the student. The purpose of this oversight is to protect both the faculty member and student from the appearance of bias and to maintain the integrity of the academic experience. Such oversight would include reviewing the work of the student being evaluated and comparable work by one or more other students in the class.

Faculty members are not to serve as the main academic adviser to a student who is a spouse, domestic partner, parent or other related person. Likewise, faculty are not to work one-on-one with related students (for example, in situations such as an honors thesis, independent study, practicum, DANA mentoring, or an internship). Any exceptions to this policy must similarly be requested of the Dean of the College for Academic Life in advance.