
LAMAR UNIVERSITY
MANUAL OF ADMINISTRATIVE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

SECTION: Academic Affairs
AREA: ORSPA

MAPP 02.07.02

Conflicts of Commitment

I. POLICY

- A. At Lamar University, our commitment to fostering a culture of excellence in research, innovation, and academic pursuits is paramount. To ensure the integrity, quality, and effectiveness of our research endeavors, it is essential to address potential conflicts of commitment that may arise among our faculty and researchers.

II. PURPOSE AND SCOPE

- A. The purpose of this policy is to define a framework for identifying and addressing conflicts of commitment that may arise when university faculty and researchers engage in external activities that could interfere with their primary obligations to the University and its research mission.
- B. Continuous growth of research enterprises is a critical priority as Lamar University continues its mission to seek new knowledge and contribute to the larger academic and professional community. Promoting public good by fostering the transfer of knowledge gained through research to the private sector is a vital element of this mission. Lamar University recognizes – and even encourages – its researchers to be involved in professional and other outside activities (e.g., consulting, guest lecturing, serving in professional and community organizations, etc.) when such activities enhance the researcher’s professional discipline and do not conflict with their primary commitments to the University.
- C. The University recognizes it is not practical or desirable to define strict time and location restrictions on how researchers meet their primary professional commitments due to the nature of University-related educational, research, service, and other related activities. It is expected, however, that researchers will arrange any external activities they may engage in so as not to interfere with their commitment to the University and to its research mission.
- D. Thus, it may be necessary to disclose and clarify the extent of such involvement or the appropriateness of certain activities to determine if conflicts of commitment related to research and sponsored programs activities exist. This policy is intended to provide guidance to individual researchers in identifying and avoiding possible problems in this area.

III. REGULATORY BASIS

- A. This policy is applied in conjunction with the Lamar University Faculty Handbook, Chapter II, Section 39, Policy on Additional Employment of Faculty and Academic Administrators (Conflict of Interest) but is primarily focused on conflicts of commitment as they relate to research and sponsored program activities.
- B. This policy applies to all researchers and pertains to the period of their University contracts (nine-month, twelve-month, or other) and the percentage time they are paid by the University. For researchers on a less than twelve-month contract, it is not the concern of the University how those researchers spend the balance of non-contract time if they do not conflict with their obligations to the University or do not reflect unfavorably on the University.
- C. No more than 20% of a researcher's total professional effort during the period of time that is normally required to meet the primary obligation may be directed to outside work.
- D. As a rule, researchers should not take on substantial teaching or other commitments in another educational institution. Exceptions would include guest lecturing, participating in invited seminars, and similar activities.
- E. Researchers should not engage in external activities that are not consistent with good professional practices; that impose restrictions on the freedom to publish University-based work; or that involve any significant use of University facilities, materials, services, personnel, or restricted University information without specific advance written permission.
- F. The Chief Research Officer may appoint a committee to address specific concerns or other unique circumstances arising from conflicts of commitment in research and sponsored programs.

IV. DEFINITIONS

- A. **Chief Research Officer.** An individual ultimately responsible for the oversight of funded research and sponsored programs at Lamar University. At Lamar University, the Chief Research Officer is the Associate Provost for Research. The Chief Research Officer may designate an appropriate official to act on their behalf.
- B. **Researcher.** All Individuals who are engaged in research, whether funded or unfunded, or in sponsored programs activities. For the purposes of this policy, the term researcher refers to any Lamar University faculty or staff member having direct responsibility for the design, conduct or reporting of funded or unfunded research or other sponsored programs activities funded or proposed for funding by the federal government or other external funder.
- C. **Research Compliance Officer.** An individual responsible for interpreting and enforcing compliance across all research and sponsored programs enterprises across the University. This officer shall be appointed by the Chief Research Officer and work within the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs Administration.

D. **Sponsored Programs.** All externally funded activities, including but not limited to: research, training, instruction and/or public service projects involving funds, materials, or other compensation from sources (sponsors) outside of Lamar University, under a grant, contract or other agreement that meets any of the following conditions:

1. Lamar University is bound to a line of scholarly or scientific inquiry specified to a substantial level of detail. Such specificity may be indicated by a plan, by the stipulation of requirements for orderly testing or validation of particular approaches, or by the designation of performance targets.
2. The sponsor requires, or the proposal submitted for consideration contains, a line-item budget or modular budget. A line-item budget details expenses by activity, function, or project period. The designation of overhead (or indirect costs) qualifies a budget as the sponsor requires financial and/or programmatic reports.
3. The sponsor requires that the services performed, the funds awarded, or the materials supplied under the agreement are subject to internal and/or external audit.
4. The agreement provides for the disposition of either tangible (e.g., equipment, records, technical reports, theses, or dissertations) or intangible (e.g., rights in data or inventions) properties that may result from activities covered by the agreement.

V. REPORTING OBLIGATIONS

- A. All faculty members and researchers must promptly and fully disclose, in writing, any external commitments that have the potential to create an actual or perceived conflict of commitment as defined above to the Chief Research officer. In addition, per Policy on Additional Employment of Faculty and Academic Administrators, it may also be necessary and appropriate for them to notify their department Chair or other supervisor. Such activities may be significant even though they involve comparatively little time. For example, a single guest lecture or a one-time consulting visit may not normally be considered significant, but a lecture series or an on-going consulting relationship could be perceived in such a manner.
- B. In cases where the propriety of an activity is disputed, the Chief Research Officer, the appropriate Dean, and the researcher involved shall make their best efforts to arrive at a resolution consistent with the shared missions of the department and the University. The ultimate determination is reserved by the Chief Research Officer.

VI. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

- A. The roles and responsibilities of individuals who participate in research and sponsored programs are defined in this section to comply with the Uniform Guidance and the policies of Lamar University and Texas State University System. The responsibilities of program administration are shared by the Chief Research Officer, the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs Administration, Academic Deans and Chairs, and researchers employed by the grant resources.

- B. **Chief Research Officer.** The Associate Provost for Research and the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs Administration bear responsibility for all sponsored grants and contracts and their possible conflicts by providing continuous support and oversight of these activities.
- C. **Office of Research and Sponsored Programs Administration.** The Office of Research and Sponsored Programs Administration shall be represented by the Research Compliance Officer as appointed by the Chief Research Officer. This individual has the following responsibilities:
1. Maintaining current and accurate files on every researcher involved in internal and external sponsored programs.
 2. Requesting updated disclosures from researchers at the time of funding.
 3. Developing approved management plans when applicable.
 4. Providing and maintaining relevant training to researchers.
 5. Investigating non-compliance or misconduct.
- D. **Academic Deans and Department Chairs** are responsible for awareness of their employees' conduct and actions while serving in their respective departments. Deans and Chairs are the first line of compliance, as faculty and researchers are required to report outside commitments to their Chair, Dean, or other direct supervisor. Deans and Chairs must, in turn, report any actionable information to the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs Administration.
- E. **Researchers** must promptly and fully disclose, in writing, any external commitments that have the potential to create an actual or perceived conflict of commitment, as defined above, to the Chief Research Officer. In addition, per the Policy on Additional Employment of Faculty and Academic Administrators, it may also be necessary and appropriate for them to notify their department Chair or other supervisor. Such activities may be significant even though they involve comparatively little time. For example, a single guest lecture or a one-time consulting visit may not normally be considered significant, but a lecture series or an on-going consulting relationship could be perceived in such a manner.
1. No more than 20% of a researcher's total professional effort during the period of time that is normally required to meet the primary obligation may be directed to outside work.
 2. As a rule, researchers should not take on substantial teaching or other commitments in another educational institution. Exceptions would include guest lecturing, participating in invited seminars, and similar activities.
 3. Faculty members may not use institution resources, including office or laboratory space, administrative services, or other equipment in support of their external endeavors unless these resources are specified in the contract.
 4. Researchers should not engage in external activities that are not consistent with good professional practices; that impose restrictions on the freedom to publish University-based

work; or that involve any significant use of University facilities, materials, services, personnel, or restricted University information without specific advance written permission.

5. The Chief Research Officer may appoint a committee to address specific concerns or other unique circumstances arising from conflicts of commitment in research and sponsored programs.
6. In cases where the propriety of an activity is disputed, the Chief Research Officer, the appropriate Dean, and the researcher involved shall make their best efforts to arrive at a resolution consistent with the shared missions of the department and the University. The ultimate determination is reserved by the Chief Research Officer.

VII. MITIGATION MEASURES

- A. If a conflict of commitment is identified, the University will work with the researcher to develop a mutually agreeable management plan to mitigate the conflict. Mitigation measures may include, but are not limited to:
 1. Adjusting the scope or timing of the external commitment to minimize interference with university responsibilities.
 2. Limiting the financial interests or compensation related to the external commitment.
 3. Establishing oversight mechanisms to ensure transparency and adherence to the University policies.
 4. The Research Compliance Officer shall develop an acceptable management plan in cooperation with the researcher and enforce it upon approval from the Chief Research Officer.

VIII. NON-COMPLIANCE

- A. Lamar University requires that all researchers comply fully, truthfully and in a timely manner with this policy. Instances of deliberate breach will subject the researcher to disciplinary actions under policies of Lamar University and the Texas State University System. Such action could result in a formal reprimand, non-renewal of appointment, termination of appointment, or other enforcement action.
- B. If the failure of a researcher to comply with this policy has biased the design, conduct or reporting of funded or unfunded research or sponsored programs activities, Lamar University will promptly notify the appropriate granting agency, sponsor, or other appropriate agency of the incident and corrective action will be taken.

IX. EDUCATION AND TRAINING

- A. The University will provide education and training sessions through the CITI system on conflict of commitment regulations and best practices to ensure researchers understand their obligations and responsibilities.

X. CONCLUSION

A. By adhering to this Conflicts of Commitment Policy, Lamar University reinforces its commitment to promoting a research environment that prioritizes transparency, accountability, and ethical conduct. Faculty members and researchers are essential stakeholders in upholding the University's reputation and advancing knowledge, and their dedication to managing potential conflicts of commitment will contribute to the sustained success of our research enterprise.

XI. REVIEW AND RESPONSIBILITY

Responsible Parties: Academic Policy Advisory Council; Office of Research and Sponsored Programs Administration.

Review Schedule: Every three years on or before the date the policy was last revised and/or approved.

XII. APPROVAL

 Dr. Brett Welch 11/08/2024
 Interim Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs Date

 Dr. Jaime Taylor 11/08/2024
 Lamar University President Date

POLICY LOG

Version	Date	Description of Changes
1	01/01/2011	Issued.
	02/01/2024	Last updated.
		Reviews by constituency groups completed.
		Review by campus community completed.
		Policy approved by President.

APPENDICES

Related Links

Office of Research and Sponsored Programs Administration (<https://www.lamar.edu/research/research-and-sponsored-programs.html>)

Faculty Information (<https://www.lamar.edu/faculty-staff/academic-affairs/faculty-info/index.html>)

Faculty and Staff Policies (<https://www.lamar.edu/faculty-staff/policies.html>)

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