



Conflict of Interest (COI) Management Plan

A conflict of interest may arise when an individual's private interests, as they might be perceived by an external observer, overlap with their professional obligations to Auburn University (the University) in a way that could raise questions about whether decisions are influenced by personal considerations rather than the best interests of the University. The presence of an actual or perceived conflict of interest does not, by itself, indicate that an employee's judgment has been affected or that any ethical standards or policies have been violated.

The purpose of this document is to support the integrity of University research and related activities by addressing situations where there could be a perception of bias due to financial or other personal interests. At the same time, it is intended to accommodate appropriate entrepreneurial activity, uphold academic freedom, serve the best interests of students academically, protect institutional interests, and ensure compliance with applicable policies and regulations.

Description of the managed conflict(s):

Researcher Name is a **Title** of **Department** in the **College**. **Researcher Name** is the spouse of **Researcher Spouse Name**, **Title** of **Department** in the **College**. **Researcher Name** and **Researcher Spouse Name** collaborate on research, including federally funded projects, and related activities. The intersection of these relationships presents a conflict of interest that must be managed.

Oversight Manager(s):

Researchers' Supervisor(s) agree(s) to serve as the Oversight Manager(s) (OM) for this management plan, taking responsibility for the duties laid out in the attached "Guide for Oversight Manager of COI Management Plans¹."

In order to ensure that the potential for personal gain does not jeopardize or appear to jeopardize the integrity of research and related activities conducted collaboratively by **Researcher Name** and **Researcher Spouse Name** where either is responsible for the design, conduct, or reporting of such activities:

Researcher Name and **Researcher Spouse Name** agree to:

1. Disclose² in writing their relationship to the University through the Endeavor disclosure process;
2. Refrain from hiring, supervising, advising, or evaluating the performance of any immediate family members and refer such decisions to their respective **Associate** Dean for Research in the **College** and/or Oversight Manager(s) to evaluate the family members' relevant qualifications, knowledge, skills, and abilities for the sponsored project.
3. Disclose in writing to the sponsor their spousal relationship and how the conflict of interest is managed at the proposal stage and upon receipt of a new research award in which both parties will participate;
4. Forward any transactions requiring approval for payments to their spouse to their Oversight Manager(s) for approval;
5. Notify all relevant co-investigators of their relationship at the proposal stage;
6. Disclose² in writing their relationship to all Auburn students, post-doctoral fellows, and primary researchers participating in their collaborative research, and inform these individuals that any concerns about the conflicts of interest may be brought to the Oversight Manager(s) or the Office of Research Integrity & Compliance (ORIC);
7. Report the conflict and provide a copy of the COI management plan to the University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) if applicable;
8. If applicable, follow any requirements or limitations, in addition to the above, placed on his/her research by the IRB (e.g., the IRB stipulates disclosing their relationship in the IRB-approved consent or notifying potential third-party sponsors of the COI);

¹ [Guide for Oversight Managers of COI Management Plans](#)

² [Guide for Disclosing](#)

9. Inform committee members and any graduate student of their spousal relationship prior to joint service on a student's graduate committee. In such cases, the committee must include at least two other, non-conflicted members.. In other words, a Doctoral committee still needs at least 5 members while a Master's or Specialist in Education committee would require at least 4 members, up from the minimum of 3. Inform the student and committee members that any concerns about the conflicts of interest may be brought to the Oversight Manager(s) or the ORIC;
10. Inform the Oversight Manager(s) of plans to serve on the committees of each other's students and refrain from assembling such committees until the Oversight Manager(s)'s approval is secured.

Associate Dean for Research agrees to:

1. Review **Researcher Name's** qualifications, knowledge, skills, and abilities to affirm that **her/his** inclusion as sponsored project personnel where **Researcher Spouse Name** is the Principal Investigator is appropriate (can occur in Endeavor during proposal review);
2. Review **Researcher Spouse Name** qualifications, knowledge, skills, and abilities to affirm that **her/his** inclusion as sponsored project personnel where **Researcher Name** is the Principal Investigator is appropriate (can occur in Endeavor during proposal review).

Oversight Manager(s) agree(s) to:

1. Review **Researcher Name's** qualifications, knowledge, skills, and abilities to affirm that **her/his** inclusion as sponsored project personnel where **Researcher Spouse Name** is the Principal Investigator is appropriate (can occur in Endeavor during proposal review);
2. Review **Researcher Spouse Name's** qualifications, knowledge, skills, and abilities to affirm that **her/his** inclusion as sponsored project personnel where **Researcher Name** is the Principal Investigator is appropriate (can occur in Endeavor during proposal review);
3. Exercise reasonable oversight in compliance with this management plan and all relevant University policies to verify that **Researcher Name** and **Researcher Spouse Name** follow and comply with the terms stipulated in this plan;
4. Exercise reasonable oversight to ensure that reimbursement/compensation to **Researcher Name** on any projects where **Researcher Spouse Name** is the Principal Investigator is appropriate. Exercise reasonable oversight to ensure that reimbursement/compensation to **Researcher Spouse Name** on any projects where **Researcher Name** is the Principal Investigator is appropriate. This includes, but is not limited to, salary, time and effort certifications, travel, or other sponsor-related expenditures on funded research;
5. Exercise reasonable oversight to verify that **Researcher Name** and **Researcher Spouse Name** are not involved in the hiring, supervising, advising, or evaluation process of any immediate family members.

Foreign Interest Disclaimer:

The management of this conflict is limited to the financial or other interest(s) as stated in the Description of the managed conflict(s) and does not approve, condone, or provide any opinion as to the suitability of collaboration with the identified entity(s) nor the level of research security risk presented by the entity(s), if any. Foreign interests must be vetted and evaluated by The Office of Research Security Compliance who will advise the individual discloser on the appropriateness of collaboration with this entity given any research security risks presented.

Address Concerns:

All oversight management decisions made within the scope of this management plan shall be subject to the authority of the Senior Vice President of Research and Economic Development (SVPRED). The SVPRED, or their authorized representative, reserves the right to modify, suspend, or terminate any such decisions as deemed necessary to ensure the successful management of all conflicts, whether real or perceived, outlined in this plan. Any disputes concerning the governance of this management plan, brought forth by the conflicted parties or appointed OMs and ADRs, shall be referred to the ORIC for review and final resolution by the SVPRED or their authorized representative. Decisions rendered by the SVPRED shall be binding and final.

Monitor and evaluate:

Researcher Name and **Researcher Spouse Name** acknowledge that Auburn University (AU) will monitor and evaluate this plan, as well as policies related to it, and if at any time should AU decide, in its sole discretion, that the plan is not sufficient to guard actual or apparent conflicts of interest, or is otherwise not in the interest of AU, it will be determined that the conflicts are not capable of management. In such circumstances, **Researcher Name** and **Researcher Spouse Name** may be required to avoid pursuing the conflicting activities while employed at AU. **Researcher Name** and **Researcher Spouse Name** further acknowledge their personal duty to ensure compliance with the Alabama Ethics Law (as applicable) and that this Agreement is not a substitute for that responsibility.

Agreement:

By signing below, all parties agree that the terms of this Conflict of Interest Management Plan are acceptable to manage effectively any real or apparent conflicts arising from the intersection of relationships described here and that all individuals identified in this plan agree to fulfill their responsibilities as described.

Researcher Name
Title
Department
College

Date_____

Researcher Spouse Name
Title
Department
College

Date_____