

2007-2008 Group on Faculty Affairs
AAMC Listserve Queries & Responses

Query: Conflict of Interest in faculty deliberations and votes on appointment, promotion, tenure.

Question from Martin E. Feder, University of Chicago, (m-feder@uchicago.edu):

1. Do any of you have formal policies on the participation of faculty who are, for example,
 - a. Spouses or partners
 - b. In present or prior romantic relationships
 - c. Family members
 - d. Former trainors/trainees

in access to confidential letters, deliberations, and voting on candidates for appointment, promotion, tenure?

2. Do any of you have formal policies on the participation of faculty who are major collaborators in access to confidential letters, deliberations, and voting on candidates for appointment, promotion, tenure?

Thanks in advance for any information you are able to provide.

Responses:

Jennifer Allie, The University of Utah (jennifer.allie@hsc.utah.edu):

There is nothing in our policies that precludes collaborators from reviewing documentation or from participating in voting meetings.

University of Utah does have a written policy for employment and supervision of family that covers appointment, and RPT review and participation. This doesn't cover previous trainees/trainors but does address spouse/partners and family members:

<http://www.admin.utah.edu/ppmanual/2/2-5.html>

POLICY

1. University policy prohibits any individual holding a position for which payment is made from funds administered by the university to supervise, employ, appoint, or vote for the appointment of members of his or her immediate family, in or to any position or employment when the salary, wages, pay or compensation of such appointee is to be paid out of such funds administered by the university. Nor may an employee recommend the employment of a member of his or her immediate family when that family member will be directly supervised by the employee. The restraint extends further in that a subordinate supervisor may not hire or participate in cases of a member of the immediate family of his or her immediate supervisor. In addition, individuals may not supervise or participate in the processes (votes, meetings, or discussions) of review and decision-making on any matter concerning retention, promotion, tenure, salary, or discipline of members of their immediate family. (See 2-6A)

Robert Bornstein, Ohio State University (Robert.Bornstein@osumc.edu):

Below is the standard language that appears in our promotion and tenure documents:

Conflict of Interest:

Faculty members must evaluate the possibility of conflict of interest in relation to their participation in the promotion and tenure process. At a minimum, faculty members with a familial or comparable relationship with a candidate should not participate in the review of that candidate either as part of the Promotion and Tenure Committee or the body of eligible voters in the

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Departmental P & T meeting. In addition, a close professional relationship may give rise to a conflict of interest. For example, it may be difficult for a faculty member to objectively review a candidate when the faculty member is a co-author on a significant portion of the candidate's publications or when the faculty member is dependent in some way on the candidate's professional services. Each departmental faculty member must independently evaluate his or her relationship to the candidate for promotion or tenure, and withdraw from participation in the process for that candidate if a conflict of interest is recognized.

Rama C. Nair, University of Ottawa (rnair@uottawa.ca):

At the University of Ottawa, spouses and relatives, and colleagues with a close personal or professional relationship are excluded from any decision making, especially with respect to promotion and tenure. In seeking external references, we also stipulate that the 'referee' should be independent (not have been trained under, no recent - this is subjective, but often a ten year window is used- collaboration in research or other activities etc.) When a committee is considering promotion and/or tenure application, members have to declare conflicts of interest and abstain from any discussion/decisions if there is a declared relationship.