Rice University Faculty Policy No. TBD

CONFLICTS OF COMMITMENT

Outside professional activities are an important and valued part of academic life. Engagement with the community outside of Rice can improve both teaching and scholarship, facilitate the transfer of knowledge to society, and turn research into commercial ventures. Such opportunities also create the potential for a conflict of commitment between outside interests and commitments and responsibilities to the University. Even the appearance of a conflict can be harmful to both the faculty member and the University.

Full time Rice University faculty members owe their primary professional allegiance to Rice University. Their primary commitment of time and energy is to the teaching, scholarship, and service missions of Rice University. These responsibilities differ across schools and departments, but should be based on a general understanding between the school dean or department chair and the faculty member. A conflict of commitment arises when faculty members undertake external commitments that burden or interfere with their primary commitment to Rice University.

Specific standards for defining such conflicts are not feasible, and faculty with any question about conflicts of commitment should consult with their dean as soon as they arise. As a general rule, a conflict of commitment exists if full-time faculty members spend more than one day a week on average on outside activities such as consulting, public service, or pro-bono work on behalf of any outside organization. Any paid activity that crosses this threshold must be disclosed. Participation in outside activities beyond this level must enhance the professional development of faculty members (e.g., serving on editorial board and advisory panels, performing, attending conferences) and enhance the public recognition and prestige of the University. However, when these professional duties involve a particularly heavy commitment of time, faculty members should consult with their dean.

Travel to professional meetings and conferences are desirable but must not conflict with the primary duties of the faculty member at the University. See travel policy #806-93.

Significant public service may contribute to the recognition and prestige of Rice University. In cases of extensive service (e.g., a lectureship, Governmental policy committee work, service to a professional society, running for public office), department chairs and deans must be notified and appropriate arrangements made.

For faculty receiving full-time grant and contract support at any time during the year including the summer, the equivalent of one day per week on average for outside activities remains acceptable unless prohibited by the terms of the sponsor’s agreement. If questions arise about what is permitted by a particular grant or contract, clarification may be obtained by consulting with the Director of the Office of Sponsored Research.

Any significant appointment, position, or engagement with another University or educational organization, including digital education, whether degree or non-degree granting, must be disclosed and approved in writing in advance by the faculty member’s dean.

Faculty members who cannot satisfactorily discharge their obligations to the University as a result of their outside activities should consider a arranging a part-time appointment or a leave without pay at Rice.

DISCLOSURE

Faculty must disclose any outside activity that is, or may be perceived to be, a conflict of commitment to their dean. Faculty members should work with their dean and department chair to manage conflicts of commitment. If potential or real conflicts cannot be resolved by the dean, the matter will be referred for review to the provost, who has final authority.