

NKU Values and Ethical Responsibilities

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I. Policy Statement

Northern Kentucky University (NKU) is entrusted with resources by students, parents, taxpayers, sponsors, alumni, donors and other community members with the responsibility to fulfill our educational mission. This trust and responsibility require a commitment to ethical standards to assure others that our activities are executed to serve the mission of the university. This policy documents values and ethical standards at NKU.

II. Entities Affected

Faculty, staff and administration, members of the Board of Regents, any individual employed by the university, using university resources or facilities, receiving funds administered by the university and other representatives when speaking or acting on behalf of NKU. These individuals may be referred to as “community members”.

III. Core Values

The NKU community is committed to these core values:

- Excellence
- Integrity
- Inclusiveness
- Innovation
- Collegiality

As a reflection of these core values, NKU Community Members strive to behave ethically, and with integrity, at all times. University community members seek to fulfill obligations towards students, co-workers and other members of the university community with honesty and transparency, and to behave according to the highest ethical and professional standards of conduct.

NKU is committed to tolerance, inclusion and respect for others, regardless of differences. All members of the NKU community strive to treat others with professional courtesy and civility, regardless of position or status and work cooperatively with others. University community members seek to promote equality and collaboration among faculty, staff and administrators. NKU provides equal access to programs, facilities and employment; and seeks to foster positive campus change through greater diversity, equity, inclusion and accountability.

IV. Ethical Responsibilities

It is expected that the faculty, staff, administrators, student-workers, members of the Board of Regents, and other affiliated individuals in conducting the affairs of NKU will comply with all federal, state and local laws and regulations as well as university policies, procedures, codes and guidelines in the performance of job-related duties. The values, principles and standards of conduct in this policy are supported through university policies, procedures and guidelines and provide guidance for making decisions as well as document NKU's commitment to responsible and ethical behavior.

All NKU faculty, staff, administrators, and members of the Board of Regents who are members of occupations or professions that have established standards or codes of ethics shall, in addition to the responsibilities referenced in this document, be bound by the standards of conduct and/or codes of ethics that apply to such occupations or professions.

The university and community members have the following ethical responsibilities:

Manage Responsibly

University community members who supervise, instruct and/or advise faculty, staff and student workers are entrusted with significant responsibility. Those university community members are expected to:

- Foster an environment of transparency and integrity.
- Ensure compliance with applicable laws, policies, regulations and workplace rules;
- Evaluate performance impartially and conscientiously;
- Ensure access to and delivery of proper training on applicable workplace and educational rules, laws, policies and procedures (including these principles);
- Foster opportunities for intellectual growth and professional development both on and off campus; and
- Promote a productive, innovative and professional atmosphere that encourages dialogue and is responsive to concerns.

Protect and Preserve University Resources

University members are responsible for integrity in the stewardship of resources entrusted to us and are expected to:

- Exercise responsible and ethical behavior regarding stewardship of university resources;
- Protect university property, equipment, data and other assets of the university;
- Prevent waste, abuse and misuse of university resources;
- Follow guidelines, procedures and/or manuals regarding the use of financial assets, including university procurement cards;
- Comply with government grants and contract terms and conditions;
- Follow sound financial practices, including accurate financial reporting, controls and processes to protect assets and responsible fiscal management; and
- Engage in appropriate accounting and monitoring.

Promote a Culture of Compliance

NKU is committed to meeting legal requirements as well as fostering a culture of ethics and compliance. University community members are expected to:

- Be aware of, understand and comply with laws, regulations, contracts and university policies and procedures applicable to their duties;

- Seek to prevent, detect and report suspected compliance violations to the appropriate university official. Supervisors will ensure that reports of violations within their area of responsibility are properly resolved, including disclosure to any authority as appropriate; and
- Participate in mandatory education opportunities available to faculty, staff, administrators and student-workers provided by Human Resources and/or the Office of Compliance and Institutional Ethics.

NOTE – No employee is permitted to engage in retaliation, retribution, adverse employment consequences or any form of harassment against an individual for a good faith report of misconduct or other ethics or compliance-related concern, or participation in an investigation of a good faith report of misconduct, ethics or compliance-related concern or retaliation.

Preserve Academic Freedom and Meet Academic Responsibilities

Academic freedom is essential to NKU's mission. University community members are expected to:

- Encourage students in the free pursuit of learning;
- Demonstrate respect for the student as an individual, adhere to the proper role as an intellectual guide and advisor, make every effort to foster honest academic conduct, and assure that the evaluation of students reflects their true merit;
- Respect the confidential nature of the relationship between professor and student;
- Avoid exploitation of students for private advantage and acknowledge significant assistance from them;
- Promote academic freedom, including the freedom to discuss relevant matters in the classroom, with fellow NKU community members, and with the public. Academic freedom includes the freedom to explore all avenues of scholarship, research and creative expression, to participate in the shared governance of the University, and to speak and write as a public citizen without institutional restraint;
- Accept his/her share of responsibilities for the governance of the university; and
- Where appropriate, assist the university in meeting its public engagement mission.

The academic freedom of faculty members includes the freedom to express their views on matters having to do with their institution and its policies. This freedom should be accorded—and rights to it protected—because grounds for thinking an institutional policy desirable or undesirable must be heard and assessed if the community is to have confidence that its policies are appropriate. Protecting academic freedom on campus requires ensuring that a particular instance of faculty speech will be subject to discipline only where that speech violates some central principle of academic morality, as, for example, where it is found to be fraudulent (academic freedom does not protect plagiarism and deceit). Protecting academic freedom also requires ensuring that faculty status turns on a faculty member's views only where the holding of those views clearly supports a judgment of competence or incompetence.

Teach and Conduct Research Ethically

University researchers have an obligation to the university, and the larger global community as they seek knowledge and understanding. University community members are expected to:

- Propose, conduct and report research honestly and with integrity;
- Follow the practical and ethical professional standards appropriate to a discipline in order to protect people and appropriately care for animals in the context of teaching;
- Protect the welfare and dignity of human participants and properly care for animals in compliance with current federal regulations and NKU Institutional Review Board (IRB), Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC), and/or Institutional Biosafety Committee (IBC) policies in the context of research. Individuals uncertain about whether a teaching or research activity is governed by federal guidelines and NKU IRB, IACUC, and/or IBC policies can contact the NKU Office of Research Compliance for guidance.
- Faithfully transmit research findings;
- Refrain from engaging in copyright infringement or plagiarism;
- Ensure originality of work, provide credit for the ideas of others upon which their work is built;
- Be responsible for the accuracy and fairness of published information; and

- Truthfully report authorship.

Teachers are entitled to full freedom in research and in the publication of the results, subject to the adequate performance of their other academic duties; but research for pecuniary return should be based upon an understanding with the authorities of the institution.

Teachers are entitled to freedom in the classroom in discussing their subject, but they should be careful not to introduce into their teaching controversial matter which has no relation to their subject.

Avoid Conflict of Commitment and Interest

University community members have a responsibility to maintain objectivity and impartiality when making decisions on behalf of NKU. To ensure objectivity, community members are expected to:

- Base decisions on judgment free from conflicting interest;
- Avoid conduct that may in any way lead members of the general public to conclude that he or she is using an official position to further professional or private interests or the interests of any members of his or her family;
- When conducting or participating in any transaction, disclose any real or perceived conflict with personal interests and remove himself or herself from further participation; and
- Ensure personal relationships do not interfere with objective judgment in decisions affecting university employment and/or the academic progress of a community member.

Carefully Manage Public, Private and Confidential Information

University community members are the creators, custodians and stewards of many types of information, much of which is confidential. Access to this data and the individual's right to privacy are governed by both laws and university policies. In order to meet our responsibilities, university community members are expected to:

- Learn and follow laws, regulations and university policies regarding access, use, protection, disclosure, retention and disposal of public, private and confidential information;
- Follow document retention and disposal guidelines;
- Maintain data security using electronic and physical safeguards;
- Protect data quality and integrity; and
- Ensure that data provided to the university community and other entities is accurate and consistent.

Promote Health and Safety in the Workplace

All university community members have a shared responsibility to ensure a safe, secure and healthy campus for all faculty, staff, students, volunteers and visitors. University community members are expected to:

- Follow federal and state safety laws and university policies and practices, including: participating in appropriate education, using appropriate personal safety equipment, and reporting accidents, injuries and unsafe situations promptly;
- Maintain security, including securing university assets and facilities;
- Report suspicious activities and suspected abuse;
- Protect the environment, including carefully handling hazardous waste and other potentially harmful agents, materials or conditions; and

V. Annual Acknowledgement

Understanding your responsibilities as a member of the NKU community is important in maintaining ethical standards across campus and ensuring compliance with federal and state laws.

Annually, all faculty members, staff members, administrators, and Members of the Board of Regents will acknowledge their awareness and understanding of this policy.

VI. Violations of this Policy

Any individual found to have violated policies set forth in Section IV of this policy may be subject to discipline up to and including termination of employment and criminal prosecution. Any adverse employment action shall be taken only pursuant to applicable institutional handbooks, policies and procedures.

VII. Non-Discrimination Statement

Northern Kentucky University does not discriminate based on national origin, race, color, age, gender, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, religion, physical or mental disability, genetic information, pregnancy, and Uniform Service or veteran status in its education programs, activities, employment, daily operations or admissions policies, in accordance with all applicable federal, state and local laws. NKU will not tolerate retaliation against any individual who makes a good faith report of a violation.

VIII. Reporting Suspected Ethical or Compliance Violations

All faculty, staff and administrators have an obligation to report conduct that violates our Ethical Standards. Examples of violations that should be reported include but are not limited to:

- Fraud, waste, abuse or misuse of university resources
- Financial misconduct/wrongdoing
- Violation of federal law, state law, university policy or procedure
- Ethics and/or compliance violations
- Research misconduct
- Harassment

Violations can be reported to:

- Your supervisor
- [Financial and Operational Auditing](#)
- [Compliance and Institutional Ethics](#)
- [Ethics and Compliance Helpline](#)

The NKU Ethics and Compliance Helpline is administered by a third-party and is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. Reports can be made anonymously.

Website: www.nku.ethicspoint.com

Toll-Free Telephone: 1-855-597-4539

NOTE – The helpline is **NOT** a 911 or emergency service. If you need immediate assistance, contact 911 or university police at 859-572-7777.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding ethics or compliance, or wish to discuss a situation before making a decision that may constitute a violation, please contact the Compliance Officer in the Office of Compliance and Institutional Ethics:

Dawn Bell-Gardiner
Compliance Officer
Office of Compliance and Institutional Ethics
AC 503B
859-572-7843
bellgardid1@nku.edu

Or
comply@nku.edu

References and Related Materials

References: [Faculty Handbook \(Full-Time\)](#), [Faculty Handbook \(Part-Time\)](#), [Chase Faculty Handbook](#); [Code of Student Rights and Responsibilities](#), [Chase Student Handbook](#), [Graduate Student Honor Code and Appeals Policy](#)

Related Policies: [Intellectual Property](#), [Sexual Misconduct](#), Reporting Misconduct and Prohibition of Retaliation

Related Forms:

Revision History:

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