



Bowling Green State University

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To all Faculty and Staff,

During the past two years, several universities have been in the news because a relationship between a supervisor and an employee or a faculty member and a student has ended badly (Chronicle of Higher Education: 6/15/01, 4/5/02, 12/13/02)

Rather than risk such an occurrence at Bowling Green State University, I would like to take this opportunity to remind all of us that engaging in such relationships can cause difficulties. Last year, the University's Equal Opportunity Compliance Committee (EOCC) drafted the following short statement, which I believe contains good advice and a good summary of the problems that can arise:

“Consenting romantic and sexual relationships, otherwise known as amorous relationships, between instructional staff and their students, or between supervisors and their employees, have been deemed inappropriate and unwise by many organizations. Such relationships are ethically troublesome because of the potential for conflict of interest and for the potential abuse of the subordinate member of the relationship. In amorous relationships between an instructional staff member and a student, or between a supervisor and an employee, a professional power differential exists, diminishing the student's or employee's actual freedom of choice.”

Consequently, an instructional staff member or supervisor who enters into such a relationship must realize that if charges of sexual harassment are subsequently lodged, that instructional staff member or supervisor may find it exceedingly difficult to prove that the relationship was indeed consensual and welcome. If a person enters into an amorous relationship with a student or employee under his or her supervision, that person is responsible for terminating any supervisory or evaluative role over the other party to the relationship, and making other arrangements for the student's or employee's supervision.”

While this statement is nowhere near as wide-ranging nor prohibitive as policies adopted by several institutions (Duke, William & Mary, and Ohio Wesleyan, for example), it may still serve as a reminder that certain relationships are not good practice at Bowling Green and should be avoided.

I understand that this is a sensitive topic and one that is difficult to acknowledge. The EOCC statement and this letter are in no way intended to impede freedom of association. Nor are we attempting to respond to a specific incident at Bowling Green State University. I believe the EOCC has done a good job of encapsulating some sound advice.

Thank you for taking a moment of your time and for helping to promote a positive learning and working environment at the University¹. For further questions on this issue, please feel free to contact Marshall Rose, Director of the Office of Equity, Diversity and Immigration Services at 372-8472 or you may contact me directly.

With regards for the new academic year,

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¹Faculty and staff are also encouraged to acquaint themselves with the University's new online training program, "Preventing Sexual Harassment." The program is available at www.newmedialearning.com/psh/bowlinggreen/index.htm