

Developing a New Consensual Relationships Policy

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As an institution where any person can find instruction in any study, Cornell demands ethical behavior from all who are engaged in its mission of teaching, research, service, and outreach. It is the responsibility of the institution to guarantee that every student has the freedom to pursue their academic and professional interests in an environment without preferential or unfair treatment, discrimination, or bias. Romantic or sexual relationships between instructors and students can jeopardize the integrity of that mission for the individuals involved and also for those around them.

The [Consensual Relationships Policy Committee](#) (CRPC) is charged by President Pollack to develop a policy, dubbed “Policy 6.x”, that addresses this issue. The policy is to be concerned with relationships where one individual (the *authority*) can influence the academic or professional progress of the other (the *subordinate*). It is to apply only in those situations where the subordinate is either a student or a postgraduate. The authority can be a member of the faculty (broadly construed), an employee, a postgraduate, or a student. The proposed policy must identify conflict-of-interest situations that require prohibitions and it must include a plan of for effective disclosure and enforcement.

After extensive research and broad consultation, the CRPC has identified three prohibitions that must be taken into consideration:

- P1. Any member of the Cornell community who has, or has had, a sexual or romantic relationship with a current student or current postgraduate is prohibited from exercising academic or professional authority over that student or postgraduate.
- P2. Sexual or romantic relationships between faculty members and undergraduate students are prohibited regardless of department, school, or college affiliation.
- P3. Sexual or romantic relationships between faculty members and graduate or professional students are prohibited whenever both parties are affiliated with the same graduate field or degree program.

The CRPC strongly supports P1 and P2 but has mixed views on P3. Accordingly, it has put together candidate policy [CRP-A](#) that includes P1, P2, and P3 and candidate policy [CRP-B](#) that includes just P1 and P2.

CRP-A and CRP-B are identical with respect to how they address disclosure and enforcement. They each require the creation of a “Policy 6.x Office” (located in central HR) that serves as a resource for both subordinates and authorities. The Office would work with department chairs, degree program directors, college deans, the dean of faculty, and others to ensure that effective recusal plans are put into practice and that enforcement procedures are properly executed.

The CRPC is asking the Faculty Senate and each Assembly to stage a 3-way vote whereby members are asked to indicate support for CRP-A or support for CRP-B or support for neither. The CRPC will take the outcomes of those votes into consideration when drafting its final recommendation to the President.