

**MORGAN STATE UNIVERSITY BOARD OF REGENTS POLICY ON  
CONFLICTS OF  
INTEREST IN RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT**

**References: Replacement for Morgan State University Board of Regents Policy on Conflict of Interest for Faculty Interest in Sponsored Research and Economic Development**  
University of Maryland Procedures on Conflict of Interest and Conflict of Commitment, 11-3.10(8); Maryland Annotated Code, Maryland Public Ethics Law, General Provisions Article §5-101 et seq., and Maryland Public-Private Partnership Act, §5-525 (Institutions of higher education).

**POLICY ON CONFLICTS OF INTEREST IN RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT**

**I. Introduction**

Maryland law encourages public senior higher education institutions to promote economic development in the State and to increase their financial resources through arrangements with the private sector, including collaborative research and development, commercial application of institution-owned intellectual property, and provision of technical assistance. To facilitate these purposes, the Maryland Public Ethics Law allows for the exemption of Morgan State University (“University”) personnel from some of that law's conflict of interest provisions. This policy establishes the essential elements of the procedures, to be adopted by the University, for obtaining such exemptions.

**II. Policy**

A. A present or former official or employee of a unit of the University may have a relationship (as defined herein) with an entity engaged in research or development, or an entity having a direct interest in the outcome of research or development, which relationship would otherwise be prohibited by the conflict of interest provisions of the Ethics Law, if such relationship is disclosed and approved by the President in accordance with the University's faculty conflict of interest procedures developed pursuant to this Policy.

B. The President, or a Vice President or one holding a similar such position may have such a relationship only if the Board of Regents makes the following findings:

- 1) that participation by, and the financial interest or employment of, the official is necessary to the success of the research or development activity; and

- 2) that any conflict of interest can be managed consistent with the purposes of relevant provisions of the Public Ethics Law.

The Board shall promptly notify the State Ethics Commission in writing of any approval given under this paragraph. In the event that the Commission disagrees with any approval and provides notice to the Board within 30 days of the Commission's receipt of notice of the approval, the Board shall reexamine the matter. The Board shall adopt procedures for handling request for approval under this paragraph.

C. If the above conditions are not met, this Policy does not exempt a former or present official or employee from any of the provisions of the State Ethics Law.

D. Nothing in this Policy allows an exemption on the part of any official or employee of Morgan State University from the provisions of §5-505 ("Gifts or honoraria") of the General Provisions Article. Further, an official or employee of the University may not (1) represent a party for contingent compensation in any matter before the Board of Regents or before the State's Board of Public Works, or (2) intentionally misuse his or her position with the University for personal gain or for the gain of another person.

E. The approval of a relationship under this policy does not relieve the official or employee from the obligation to comply with other University policies, including the University Policy on Professional Commitment of Faculty.

F. The President is encouraged to consult periodically with the Maryland Department of Commerce and with Federal agencies that regulate federally-funded research concerning the implementation of this policy.

### **III. Procedures**

A. The University shall develop procedures based on the above policy and the purposes of the Maryland Public Ethics Law as stated at Section 5-102 of the General Provisions Article of the Maryland Annotated Code. The procedures shall be approved by the Office of the Attorney General and approved as to conformity with the Maryland Public-Private Partnership Act by the State Ethics Commission. The approved procedures shall be filed with the Office of the President and the Board of Regents.

#### **B. Procedures shall:**

- 1) Require timely disclosure of any relationship. The disclosure shall be filed with the State Ethics Commission, and maintained as a public record at the University.

2) Subject to paragraph (5), require review of all disclosed relationships by a designated official who shall determine what further information must be disclosed and what restrictions shall be imposed in order to manage, reduce, or eliminate any actual or potential conflict of interest. The designated official shall also determine whether or not the disclosed relationship represents a harmful interest, as defined herein. If so, approval shall not be granted.

3) Include guidelines to ensure that relationships do not improperly give an advantage to entities with which the relationships exist, lead to misuse of University students or employees for the benefit of such entities, or otherwise interfere with the duties and responsibilities of the official or employee maintaining the relationship.

4) Subject to paragraph (5), require that each relationship be approved or disapproved by the President, with such determination to be the final decision.

5) Require that any relationship maintained by the President or a Vice President, and by one holding any other position designated by the Board of Regents be approved by the Board of Regents.

#### **IV. Reporting**

Divisions shall submit to the President in a format determined by the President a quarterly report which shall include all approvals granted under this Policy. The Board of Regents shall report to the Governor, the Legislative Policy Committee of the General Assembly, and the State Ethics Commission, the number of approvals granted under this Policy and how this Policy and the procedures adopted pursuant to it have been implemented in the preceding year.

#### **V. Definitions**

A. "Harmful interest" means an interest which is found to be so influential as to impair impartiality in the conduct of the research, the interpretation of the results of the research, and/or the determination of research or other professional and employment priorities.

B. "Unit" as used in this policy means any constituent unit of the University (e.g. departments, schools, etc.), centers and institutes and any other unit of the University that the President shall designate.

C. "Relationship" means any interest, service, employment, gift, or other benefit or relationship with an entity that would be prohibited by Title 5, Subtitle 5 of the State's Public Ethics Law if not disclosed and approved pursuant to this Policy and procedures adopted pursuant to it. "Relationship" includes any relationship of the spouse or other relative of an officer or employee if such relationship creates restrictions on the officer or employee under the conflict of interest provisions of the Ethics Law.

D. "Research or development" means basic or applied research or development, and includes the development or marketing of university-owned technology, the acquisition of services of an official or employee by an entity for research and development purposes, or participation in State economic development programs