

SECTION 6: CONSENSUAL RELATIONSHIPS

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6.1. EMPLOYEE-TO-EMPLOYEE

Eastern Mennonite University strongly discourages romantic or sexual relationships between an employee and manager or between junior and senior faculty members. In these circumstances, even when both parties have consented, the relationship can give rise to problems that compromise the professional integrity of staff and faculty and may generate charges of unfair treatment or of sexual harassment.

The university views romantic or sexual relationships between employees and their managers and between administrators and students in the same light; these relationships are also characterized by significant power differentials and are subject to the same liabilities.

If you are engaged in a romantic or sexual relationship with another employee whom you instruct, supervise, evaluate, or advise, it is your professional responsibility to inform the director of human resources so that the director of human resources can discuss and assess the situation with you to determine whether it is appropriate to make changes to the instructional, advisory, evaluative, or supervisory relationship. Information disclosed in these discussions shall be treated as confidential, and disclosure to others shall be made only on a need-to-know basis.

Please note: In the event that you are the subject of a report of sexual harassment and if the facts show that you were engaged in a romantic or sexual relationship with someone whom you instructed, supervised, evaluated, or advised, and you did not advise the director of human resources of the existence of that relationship so that steps could have been taken to change, if appropriate or necessary, the instructional, advisory, evaluative, or supervisory relationship, the university may decline to assist you in your legal defense against the allegation(s), and you, not the university, may bear any litigation costs or fees associated with your legal defense. In addition, you may face disciplinary action, up to and including termination, for any substantiated misconduct resulting from such relationship.

6.2. EMPLOYEE-TO-STUDENT

Sexual or romantic relationships between employees and students are prohibited at EMU and are particularly problematic. The university agrees with the [American Association of University Professors statement on consensual relations between faculty and students](#):

“Sexual relations between students and faculty members with whom they also have an academic or evaluative relationship are fraught with the potential for exploitation. The respect and trust accorded a professor by a student, as well as the power exercised by the professor in an academic or evaluative role, make voluntary consent by the student suspect. Even when both parties initially have consented, the development of a sexual relationship renders both the faculty member and the institution vulnerable to possible later allegations of sexual harassment in light of the significant power differential that exists between faculty members and students.”

Employees are prohibited from engaging in romantic or sexual relationships with students. Consequently, should the university discover that an employee is engaged in this conduct, this will be deemed a policy violation and will be grounds for immediate dismissal from EMU.