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## Ethics and The University of Texas System A Brief Practical Guide

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*Ethical behavior means being honest, telling the truth,  
and doing what you said you were going to do.  
—Barbara Jordan*

### A Message from the Chancellor

High ethical standards and compliance with the law are of critical importance to The University of Texas System.

In order to achieve such standards and compliance, we provide to employees this brochure, a brief practical guide to some of the more common ethics or legal issues. The *Standards of Conduct Digest*, published by the U. T. System Office of General Counsel, is available on the World Wide Web at <http://www.utsystem.edu/ogc/ethics.htm> and provides greater detail.

In addition, I encourage you to contact your supervisor or the Ethics Officer on your campus if you have questions about matters involving ethics laws or issues. If you have further questions, I suggest that you follow up with the U. T. System Ethics Advisor.

For additional copies of this brochure, please contact the Office of General Counsel.

It is our obligation -- to the State of Texas, the U. T. System Board of Regents, and ourselves -- to be good stewards of the resources that have been entrusted to us. I am deeply grateful for your commitment to ethical behavior, and I am proud of your compliance with applicable laws, regulations, and U. T. System policies.

--Mark G. Yudof

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## Ethics Standards

### **Conflicts of Interests:**

Officers, faculty, and employees (collectively "employees") of the U.T. System may not have a direct or indirect interest, financial or otherwise, that is in conflict with the proper discharge of their duties. Potential conflicts of interest must be disclosed.

### **Adherence to Law:**

Employees shall adhere to applicable laws, rules, regulations, and policies of governmental and institutional authorities. The failure to do so will be grounds for disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment.

### **Gifts:**

No employee shall accept or solicit any gift, favor, service, or loan that might reasonably appear to influence the employee in the discharge of duties.

*Note: Making or receiving gifts, including honoraria, may constitute a criminal offense under certain circumstances.*

**Confidential Information:**

No employee shall disclose confidential information or use such information for his or her personal benefit.

**Self-Dealing:**

No employee shall transact any business in an official capacity with any business entity of which the employee is an officer, agent, or member, or in which the employee owns a substantial interest.

**Personal Investments:**

No employee shall make personal investments that could reasonably be expected to create a conflict between the employee's private interest and the public interest.

**Outside Employment:**

No employee shall accept other outside or dual employment or compensation that could reasonably be expected to impair the employee's independence of judgment in the performance of the employee's public duties.

*Note: Outside employment is further limited by other policies, laws, and regulations.*

**Sexual Harassment and Misconduct:**

Sexual misconduct and sexual harassment are unacceptable behaviors. Such unacceptable behavior includes verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature. Incidents of sexual misconduct or sexual harassment should be reported to the office charged with reviewing such complaints where the incident occurred.

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## Use of State Resources

**The Law:**

State officers or employees commit a criminal offense if they intentionally or knowingly misapply any "thing of value" belonging to the government that is in their custody or possession as a result of their state employment in order to obtain a benefit or to harm another person.

**Telephones and Electronic Mail:**

Telephones and e-mail are to be used for institutional purposes. Incidental use for local personal calls or messages not interfering with work responsibility, however, is not a misapplication of state resources. Personal long distance telephone calls should not be charged to the institution and must be reimbursed by the employee if charged inadvertently. U.T. telephone logs and e-mail are public property and may be subject to open information requests.

**Equipment and Supplies:**

State-issued machines, office supplies, and other equipment are to be used for institutional purposes, not for personal or private purposes.

**U.T. Vehicles:**

No U.T. employee shall use any U.T. vehicle for any purpose other than official business of the institution.

**Employee Time:**

Employee work time is a "thing of value" belonging to the state. Employees may not use work time for personal business.

**Political Campaigns and Elections:** An employee shall not use institutional time, funds, equipment, or other resource to work on a political campaign or to influence the passage or defeat of legislation.

**Expense Claims:**

Vouchers for travel expenses must be accurate and requested only for expenses related to official business.

**Liability for Property Loss:**

When institutional property disappears, whether through theft or other cause, as a result of an employee failing to exercise reasonable care for its safekeeping, such person shall be liable for the loss sustained by the institution.

**Institutional Credit Cards:**

Employees shall not use credit cards issued by the institution for personal expenses unrelated to institutional business.

**Internet:**

Access to the Internet via institutional computers is for institutional purposes. Incidental personal use not interfering with work responsibility, however, is not a misapplication of state resources. Improper or illegal use of the Internet by employees may subject them to disciplinary action.

**Software:**

Software licensed to the state is to be used for institutional purposes, not personal purposes. Only properly licensed software may be loaded on institutional computers.

**Consulting Contracts with Previous Employees:**

No funds shall be used to enter into a consultant contract with any individual who has been previously employed by the institution within the past 12 months.

**Purchases From/By Employees:**

Purchases are not permitted from an employee unless approved by the President, Executive Vice Chancellor, or Chancellor as appropriate. Similarly, no employee may purchase equipment or property from the institution without appropriate approvals.

*All topics in this brief guide are discussed in greater detail in the [U.T. System Ethics Policies and Guidelines](#).*

**U.T. System Ethics Advisor**

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**Institutional Ethics Officers**

Mr. Rusty Ward, U.T. Arlington  
Ms. Patricia C. Ohlendorf, U.T. Austin  
Mr. Lee Smith, U.T. Austin  
Ms. Rosemary R. Martinez, U.T. Brownsville  
Mr. Larry Terry, U.T. Dallas  
Mr. Richard Aauto, U.T. El Paso  
Mr. James R. Langabeer, U.T. Pan American  
Dr. Christopher R. Forrest, U.T. Permian Basin  
Ms. Elizabeth Mitchell, U.T. San Antonio  
Mr. Jim Ferguson, U.T. Tyler  
Ms. Leah Hurley, U.T. Southwestern Medical Center - Dallas  
Dr. Harvey Bunce, III, U.T. Medical Branch - Galveston  
Ms. Arlene Staller, U.T. Health Science Center - Houston

Mr. Dan Fontaine, U.T. M.D. Anderson Cancer Center  
Mr. Jack C. Park, U.T. Health Science Center - San Antonio  
Dr. Patricia Blair, U.T. Health Center - Tyler

### **U.T. Ethics Information**

The following ethics publications are available from the Office of General Counsel, U.T. System, or an institutional ethics officer:

Texas Ethics Commission Opinions  
Standards of Conduct Digest

Texas Ethics Commission  
P.O. Box 12070  
Austin, Texas 78711-2070  
(800) 325-8506  
(512) 463-5800

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