Disclosures: Conflicts of Interest & Conflict of Commitments

Script

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Introduction

- Do you have outside financial interests related to the research you do for the University of California (UC)?
  - Do you engage in professional activities outside of the research you do for UC?
- UC encourages such pursuits as they facilitate opportunities for innovation and collaboration.
- However, they may also bias (or appear to bias) your use of time and research.
- Situations like this may present potential conflicts of interest (COI) and/or conflict of commitments (COC).
- Let’s talk more about these situations, disclosure requirements, and resources available to you.

Conflicts of Interest (COI)

- In sponsored research settings, COI focus on situations where personal financial interests may influence (or appear to influence) research decisions.
- While common in research universities, they must be disclosed and carefully managed.
- You must disclose certain financial interests, whether domestic or foreign.
- Why? Because it’s the law; it’s UC policy; and it’s the right thing to do.
- This helps ensure that the design, conduct, and reporting of your research is free from bias.
- What to disclose?
  - Disclosure requirements and processes vary by type of research funding.
  - In general, you must disclose economic interests if they relate to your UC professional responsibilities, including:
    - Investments (like stocks and bonds),
    - Income or payments for salaries,
    - Loans and intellectual property interests,
    - Gifts and honorariums, and
    - Travel funds or reimbursements.
  - You must also follow UC and campus intellectual property policies to disclose certain outcomes of research, such as patentable inventions or copyrightable software.
- How to disclose
  - Follow your campus process for submitting the required disclosure forms.
  - When your research is funded by certain private entities, you are required to report any personal economic interests in that entity on the Statement of Economic Interests for Principal Investigators, known as the Form 700-U.
  - Locate the form on your campus Contracts & Grants or Conflict of Interest website.
  - Remember, there are specific disclosure requirements for awards funded by Federal agencies, like the National Institutes of Health (NIH), and the National Science Foundation (NSF)
- Your campus may also have separate disclosure processes for financial interests related to human subjects research.
- Visit your campus and UCOP Conflict of Interest websites to learn more about disclosure forms, timing, and the process of disclosures.

Conflict of Commitment (COC)

- Per UC policy, faculty in certain roles must disclose, or report, outside professional activities.
- This is to protect your time, and ensure that you maintain your obligations to UC, your students, and your colleagues.
A conflict of commitment may occur when a faculty member’s **outside professional activities** interfere with their professional obligations to UC.

Such activities can be paid or unpaid.

They are separated into three categories, based on their likeliness to create a conflict of commitment.

Some require approval before engaging in the activity.

**What to disclose?**

a. **Types outside activities you must disclose** include (but are not limited to)

   i. **Category I activities**, which need to be reported and approved in advance, such as:
      1. Employment
      2. Holding executive or managerial positions, and
      3. Founding a company
      4. An example is teaching, research, or administration of a grant at another institution.

   ii. **Category II**:  
      1. Consulting,
      2. Testifying as an expert, and

   b. **Category III** activities do not need to be approved or reported. This includes:

      i. Serving on government panels,
      ii. Reviewing manuscripts, and
      iii. Attending and presenting at outside academic conferences

**How to disclose**

a. To disclose your outside professional activities, **submit an annual COC report through UC’S Outside Activity Tracking System**, known as **OATS**

b. Substantial penalties can result from failure to disclose conflicts.

**Foreign Talent Programs**

- Foreign talent recruitment programs are government-sponsored efforts to recruit researchers.
- While many recruitment programs are used for legitimate purposes, some promote unethical behavior.
- You should  
  - Carefully review the terms of any foreign institution employment agreements, and  
  - Ensure that you appropriately disclose participation.

**Conclusion**

**Confused about what to disclose?**

- When in doubt, err on the side of disclosure.
- Seek advice from university experts, who will help you maintain compliance and avoid penalty.
- For more information, **contact your local campus Research Compliance Office or Conflict of Interest Expert**.
- This message has been brought to you by the University of California Ethics, Compliance & Audit Services and Risk & Safety Training.

**Resources:**

- [Foreign Influence](https://ucop.edu/ethics-compliance/audit-services.html) (UCOP, Ethics, Compliance and Audit Services)
- [Training](https://ucop.edu/ethics-compliance/training.html) (UC Conflict of Interest for Researchers Briefing)
- [Form 700 – Statement of Economic Interests](https://ucop.edu/legal-office-of-the-general-counsel/conflict-of-interest-700.html) (UC Legal, Office of the General Counsel)
- [Conflict of Interest Coordinators](https://ucop.edu/ethics-compliance/conflict-of-interest-coordinators.html) (UCOP)
- [UC Conflict of Commitment Policies](https://ucop.edu/finance-policies/025-240-246-671.html) (APM 025, APM 240, APM 246, APM 671)
- [UC Outside Activity Tracking System](https://ucop.edu/ethics-compliance/outside-activity-tracking-system-oats.html) (OATS)