

Effective Date: July 1, 2011

Retired:

Revised:

Approved by: WAYNE J. RILEY, M.D., MPH, MBA, MACP, PRESIDENT AND CEO

Subject: Institutional – Amorous Relationships Policy

**PURPOSE:**

Meharry Medical College is committed to maintaining an environment in which learning takes place in a professional atmosphere of mutual respect and trust. Amorous relationships that occur in the context of educational or employment supervision and evaluation between a student and a faculty member, or any other Meharry employee who has educational responsibility over the student, or supervisor and subordinate undermine professionalism and are disruptive to the educational and work environment. Ultimately, amorous relationships hinder the fulfillment of the College's educational mission.

**POLICY STATEMENT:**

Meharry Medical College is committed to maintaining an environment in which learning takes place in a professional atmosphere of mutual respect and trust. Amorous relationships can develop within the College community between faculty, students and staff.

The disparity of power between persons involved in amorous relationships between a student and a faculty member, or any other Meharry College employee who has educational responsibility over the student, supervisor and subordinate, or senior and junior colleagues in the same department or unit makes them susceptible to exploitation. Amorous relationships that occur in the context of educational or employment supervision and evaluation between a student and a faculty member, or any other Meharry employee who has educational responsibility over the student, or supervisor and subordinate undermine professionalism and hinder the fulfillment of the College's mission. Relationships between faculty and students are particularly susceptible to exploitation. The respect and trust accorded a member of the faculty by a student, as well as the power exercised by faculty in giving grades, approvals, or recommendations for future study and employment, make voluntary consent by the student suspect.

Those who abuse their power in the context of an amorous relationship where there is educational or employment supervision and evaluation violate their duty to the College community. Voluntary consent by the student or subordinate in a romantic or

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sexual relationship is difficult to determine given the asymmetric nature of the power structure in the relationship. Because of the complex and subtle effects of the power differential in the relationship, the individual with power may perceive the existence of consent that may not exist or not exist at the level perceived by the individual with power. The possibility exists that, if the relationship sours, these individuals may be subject to a claim of sexual harassment.

Amorous relationships may have an effect on others in the course, department or unit. Others may perceive that the student or subordinate in the amorous relationships is favored and afforded undue access and advantage above others in the same course, department or unit. These individuals may perceive the environment created as a result of the amorous relationship to be hostile and/or perceive forward progress and benefits are obtained through engaging in a romantic or sexual relationship with the person in power.

Therefore, Meharry Medical College prohibits amorous relationships between a student and any Meharry employee who has educational responsibility over the student, supervisors and subordinates where there is a supervisory or evaluative relationship between the parties. Individuals engaged in an amorous relationship are in violation of this policy are subject to disciplinary action up to and including termination.

Individuals engaged in an amorous relationship prior to the existence of a supervisory or evaluative relationship within the educational and/or employment context, or who find themselves entering into such a relationship, have a duty to report the existence of the amorous relationship to the department or unit head who must ensure that arrangements are made to sever the supervisory or evaluative relationship between the parties.

Responsibility for the interpretation and enforcement of this policy rests with the Office of General Counsel.

**DEFINITIONS:**

**Amorous Relationships:** Romantic or sexual relationships between two individuals of the opposite or same sex who are not married to each other or in a domestic partnership with each other and who mutually and consensually understand the relationship to the romantic and/or sexual nature.



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**Educational or Employment Supervision and Evaluation:**

To (A) assess, determine or influence (1) one's academic or research performance, progress or potential, (2) one's employment performance, progress or potential, (3) one's entitlement to or eligibility for any institutionally conferred right, benefit or opportunity; or (B) to oversee, manage or direct one's academic, research, employment or other institutionally prescribed activities.