

## Code of Conduct for Financial Aid Professionals

1. No action will be taken by financial aid staff that is for their personal benefit or could be perceived to be a conflict of interest.
  - Employees within the financial aid office will not award aid to themselves or their immediate family members. Staff will reserve this task to an institutionally designated person, to avoid the appearance of a conflict of interest.
  - The University has no preferred lending agreement with any lender of private educational loans and does not maintain a preferred lender list. Neither the University nor any employee shall enter into any revenue-sharing arrangement with any lender or accept offers of funds for private loans to students in exchange for providing concessions or promises to the lender for a specific number of loans, a specified loan volume, or a preferred lender arrangement.
  - A borrower's choice of a lender will not be denied, impeded, or unnecessarily delayed by the institution. Borrowers will not be auto-assigned to any particular lender.
  - No amount of cash, gift, or benefit in excess of a de minimis amount shall be accepted by a financial aid staff member from any financial aid applicant (or his/her family), or from any entity doing business with or seeking to do business with the institution (including service on advisory committees or boards beyond reimbursement for reasonable expenses directly associated with such service).
  - No compensation may be accepted for any type of consulting arrangement or contract to provide services to or on behalf of a lender relating to education loans.
2. Information provided by the financial aid office is accurate, unbiased, and does not reflect preference arising from actual or potential personal gain.
3. Institutional award notifications and/or other institutionally provided materials shall include the following:
  - A breakdown of individual components of the institution's Cost of Attendance.
  - Clear identification of each award, indicating type of aid, i.e. gift aid (grant, scholarship), work, or loan.
  - Standard terminology and definitions.
  - Renewal requirements for each award.
4. All required consumer information is displayed in a prominent location on the institutional web site(s) and in any printed materials, easily identified and found, and labeled as "Consumer Information."

5. Financial aid professionals will disclose to their institution any involvement, interest in, or potential conflict of interest with any entity with which the institution has a business relationship.

## Statement of Ethical Principles

The primary goal of the institutional financial aid professional is to help students achieve their educational goals by providing appropriate financial support and resources. To this end, this statement provides that the financial aid professional shall:

### **Advocate for students**

- Remain aware of issues affecting students and continually advocate for their interests at the institutional, state and federal levels.
- Support federal, state and institutional efforts to encourage students to aspire to and plan for education beyond high school.

### **Manifest the highest level of integrity**

- Commit to the highest level of ethical behavior and refrain from conflict of interest or the perception thereof.
- Deal with others honestly and fairly, abiding by our commitments and always acting in a manner that merits the trust and confidence others have placed in us.
- Protect the privacy of individual student financial records.
- Promote the free expression of ideas and opinions, and foster respect for diverse viewpoints within the profession.

### **Support student access and success**

- Commit to removing financial barriers for those who want to pursue postsecondary learning and support each student admitted to our institution.
- Without charge, assist students in applying for financial aid funds.
- Provide services and apply principles that do not discriminate on the basis of race, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, religion, disability, age, or economic status.
- Understand the need for financial education and commit to educate students and families on how to responsibly manage expenses and debt.

### **Comply with federal and state laws**

- Adhere to all applicable laws and regulations governing federal, state, and institutional financial aid programs.
- Actively participate in ongoing professional development and continuing education programs to ensure ample understanding of statutes, regulations, and best practices governing the financial aid programs.
- Encourage colleagues to participate in the financial aid professional associations available to them at the state, regional, or national level and offer assistance to other aid professionals as needed.

### **Strive for transparency and clarity**

- Provide our students and parents with the information they need to make good decisions about attending and paying for college.
- Educate students and families through quality information that is consumer-tested when possible. This includes (but is not limited to) transparency and full disclosure on award notices.
- Ensure equity by applying all need-analysis formulas consistently across the institution's full population of student financial aid applicants.
- Inform institutions, students, and parents of any changes in financial aid programs that could affect their student aid eligibility.

### **Protect the privacy of financial aid applicants**

- Ensure that student and parent private information provided to the financial aid office by financial aid applicants is protected in accordance with all state and federal statutes and regulations, including FERPA and the Higher Education Act, Section 483(a)(3)(E) (20 U.S.C. 1090).
- Protect the information on the FAFSA from inappropriate use by ensuring that this information is only used for the application, award, and administration of aid awarded under Title IV of the Higher Education Act, state aid, or aid awarded by eligible institutions.
- Note: The Higher Education Act does not allow us to share data from your FAFSA directly with certain outside agencies, even with your written permission.

\*This was adopted in part from the National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators' Statement of Ethical Principles and Code of Conduct for Financial Aid Professionals. The obligations in this Code of Conduct are in addition to any requirements imposed by state or federal laws, or Governors State University policies.