

## University of St. Thomas Policies

### PROFESSIONAL ETHICAL CONDUCT FOR FACULTY      Policy Number: F.07.04

Scope:            All faculty

Purpose:            To articulate the professional ethical conduct responsibilities of faculty

#### POLICY FOUNDATION

Ethics refers to a system of moral values and beliefs that govern an individual's or group's conduct. Professional refers to a person competent or skilled in a particular activity.

The commitment of the University of St. Thomas to professional ethics is framed first by the *Apostolic Constitution of the Supreme Pontiff John Paul II on Catholic Universities* (1990), referred to as *Ex Corde Ecclesiae*, and the subsequent description of its application to universities in the United States, *The Application for Ex Corde Ecclesiae for the United States* (2000). Of particular emphasis in these resources is research: "Because knowledge is meant to serve the human person, research in a Catholic University is always carried out with a concern for the *ethical* and *moral implications* both of its methods and of its discoveries." (See *Ex Corde Ecclesiae*, 18). More broadly, an expectation of ethical conduct includes all professional responsibilities and relationships, maintaining a high standard of personal integrity and respect and regard for others.

Moral conduct is also linked to the ministry of the academic professional, "that activity of the University which offers the members of the University community an opportunity to integrate religious and moral principles with their academic study and non-academic activities, *thus integrating faith with life*." (See *Ex Corde Ecclesiae*, 38). The Application to the United States expands this concept: "In collaborating with governmental agencies, regional associations, and other universities, whether public or private, Catholic universities should give corporate witness to and promote the Church's social teaching and its moral principles in areas such as the fostering of peace and justice, respect for all human life, the eradication of poverty and unjust discrimination, the development of all peoples and the growth of human culture." (See Application of *Ex Corde Ecclesiae*, Article 7.2).

The University's policy on professional ethics requires of faculty a capacity to model ethical conduct to students, as reflected in the University mission statement assertion that "As a comprehensive university grounded in the liberal arts, we educate students to *think critically, communicate effectively, succeed professionally and lead ethically*." This implicitly indicates that faculty will "lead ethically."

#### POLICY STATEMENTS

1. Faculty are expected to maintain the highest standards of professional ethics in their teaching, scholarship and service responsibilities. As members of the academic profession, who bear the responsibility for advancing knowledge and forming others intellectually and who serve as role models, faculty must adhere to rigorous standards of intellectual honesty, sound

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judgment, fairness and restraint in practicing their disciplines and in dealing with students, colleagues and the community. Every member of the faculty has the right to be treated fairly, courteously, and professionally by students, colleagues and all members of the University administration, protected from arbitrary or capricious actions by any persons. Concurrently, they are responsible for treating others at all times with comparable fairness, courtesy and professional ethical conduct.

2. As teachers, faculty are responsible for encouraging the pursuit of learning and truth among their students, holding before them the highest scholarly standards of their discipline and adhering faithfully to their role as intellectual guides and advisors. They must demonstrate respect for students' dignity as persons and be particularly respectful of the confidential nature of the relationship between student and faculty member. Faculty must make every reasonable effort to foster honest academic conduct among their students. They must take care to treat all students with fairness and impartiality, to protect the students' academic freedom, to assure that their grading procedures reflect their students' true merit, and to make their academic expectations reasonable and explicit in each course.
3. It is the responsibility of the faculty to refrain from violating the dignity, trust and rights of those whom they serve. Because of the potential for exploitation, abuse or the appearance of abuse, implicit conflict of interest, and the inherent differential in power and authority, faculty are required to respect the human dignity of each student by avoiding intimate or sexual relationships. Truth and respect, indispensable to the well-being of the University, are violated when faculty engage in intimate or sexual relationships, with students, even if those relationships are consensual. Intimate and sexual relationships between faculty and students are prohibited. Sexual harassment and exploitation of students are prohibited as serious breaches of professional ethics with consequences as detailed in the University's policy on Sexual Misconduct and Sexual Assault G.02.06.
4. As colleagues, faculty have obligations that derive from membership in the community of scholars. They are therefore required to respect and defend the academic freedom of associates and abide by the University's policy on academic freedom. In the exchange of criticism and ideas, they must show due civility and respect for the opinions of others. They must acknowledge their academic debts and strive to be objective in their professional judgment of colleagues. They must accept their share of faculty responsibilities for collegial governance by their service on task forces, special projects, councils and committees, participating in a respectful and responsible manner. In all their actions, faculty must, in their work together, consistently demonstrate respect for colleagues' dignity as persons.
5. As members of the University community, faculty seek above all to be effective teachers and scholars. They therefore agree to abide by University policies and procedures, including those governing outside employment. When considering the interruption or termination of service, recognizing the effect of this decision upon the University, they will give due written notice of their intentions. They have the responsibility to comply with all confidentiality requirements imposed by law or by University policy.

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6. As members of the academic community, faculty have the rights and obligations of every citizen. They measure the urgency of these obligations in light of their responsibilities to their discipline, to their students, their profession and the University and its mission. When faculty speak or act as private persons, they must explicitly avoid creating the impression of speaking or acting on behalf of the University. They must clearly communicate that their comments apply only to their personal views and cannot be generalized to other members of the University community.
7. Faculty members have a responsibility to respect the religious beliefs and practices of all members of the University community while recognizing and respecting that the University of St. Thomas is a Catholic University committed to Catholic beliefs and values. Faculty members are not obliged to concur with respect to their personal beliefs and religious practices.
8. Complaints alleging faculty behavior inconsistent with the University's professional ethics policies will be directed first to the dean of the faculty member for an initial investigation. If unresolved at this level, the complaint is forwarded to the Vice President for Academic Affairs for further investigation and action. This may in time involve the initiation of the University's grievance procedures and resources as necessary or appropriate. The dean and the Vice President for Academic Affairs will monitor the grievance process to intervene in any potential retaliatory behavior.
9. All retaliatory behavior is prohibited by the University. Retaliation refers to actions aimed to harming another because of perceived harm to oneself. Such an act of revenge stands in direct and specific contradiction to the professional ethical conduct that is the responsibility of all faculty as affirmed in this policy. Retaliation is faculty behavior inconsistent with the University's professional ethics policies as described in #8 above, evoking the processes described there.
10. This policy, which describes a central valued responsibility of faculty members, is counterbalanced by Policy F.06.01 Academic Freedom, which describes a central valued right of faculty members.

**APPROVED: Board of Directors**

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