Public Accountability

Statement of Ethical Principles
“Texas Tech University is committed to transparency in governance, personal responsibility, and both individual and organizational integrity. Being responsible requires us to be thoughtful stewards of our resources—accountable and respectful to ourselves, to each other, and to the publics we serve. A sense of institutional and public responsibility requires careful reflection on one’s ethical obligations and the duty to respect commitments and expectations by acknowledging the context and considering the consequences, both intended and unintended, of any course of action.
Public Accountability

(cont.)

We promptly and openly identify and disclose conflicts of interest on the part of faculty, staff, students, administration, and the institution as a whole, and we take appropriate steps to either eliminate such conflicts or ensure that they do not compromise our procedures and values. When we make promises, we must keep those promises. We strive to do what is honest and ethical even if no one is watching us or compelling us to ‘do the right thing.’”

Texas Tech University
Statement of Ethical Principles
This Module Examines

Public Accountability

TTU’s Statement of Ethical Principles

Responsibility

Transparency

Communication & Serving the Public

Integrity

Compliance & Conflicts of Interest and Commitment

Personal, Institutional, & Fiscal
Public Accountability

Accountability includes a network of obligations and responsibilities.

“Public accountability pertains to the obligation of persons or entities entrusted with public resources to be answerable for the fiscal, managerial and program responsibilities that have been conferred on them, and to report to those that have conferred these responsibilities.”

Boncodin, 2007
(drawing on the International Organisation of Supreme Audit Institutions' definition)
Public Accountability aims to ensure that
- public money is “spent with a minimum of irregularities and wastage”

-“such spending results in the maximisation of benefits with the minimisation of costs”

(Khan and Chowdhury, 2008)
Why does TTU need an accountability process?

✓ As the recipient of public funds, TTU is accountable to prospective students, current students and their parents; faculty and campus staff; public policy-makers and the funders of higher education.

✓ Accountability ensures that the resources of the University are managed to benefit the whole public.
The TTU System uses an Office of Audit Services to assure accountability. “The **Office of Audit Services** is independent, reporting directly to the Board of Regents. Independence includes not only ‘in fact,’ but also in mind and appearance.”

Some of the Office of Audit Services’ objectives:
- ✔ promoting appropriate ethics and values within Texas Tech and its components
- ✔ ensuring effective organizational performance management and accountability
- ✔ effectively coordinating the activities of and communicating information among our office, the Board of Regents, external auditors, and management

http://www.texastech.edu/audit/

Public Accountability

- **TRANSPARENCY**: inviting & encouraging public oversight of decision making processes of organizations entrusted with public resources.

- **RESPONSIBILITY**: requiring that individuals and institutions consider both the intended and unintended consequences of contemplated actions and be accountable for the fiscal & social consequences of decisions.

- **INTEGRITY**: examining situations that affect organizational and personal integrity, including conflicts of interest & commitment.
Transparency includes **public oversight** of decision making processes.

- The public served by TTU receives information about the university’s goals and priorities and how it measures progress towards these goals.
- University policies and procedures are open to public scrutiny.
- Communication and public service are key elements of transparency.
Sincere and clear communication is critical to the task of transparency.

Openness in governance to the public served by TTU helps prevent undue influence and corruption.

The university may communicate information about its work in several ways:

- internally
- externally
- formally, or
- informally
Transparency & Serving the Public

Transparency benefits the community

- encourages greater communication & cooperation among internal and external constituent groups
- provides a safeguard against undue influence and corruption in decision making
- increases accountability for decisions
- enhances trust and confidence in leadership and thus, in the University as a whole

Transparency benefits the community
Examples of transparency procedures

- open meetings
- budgetary review
- compliance with freedom of information legislation
- internal/external audits
- financial disclosure statements

Transparent Procedures
in the fiscal administration of Texas Tech University
Being a community of integrity requires that we uphold and comply with all applicable laws, statutes, contracts, policies, and regulations governing high education institutions.
Integrity

Institutional integrity inspires trust and confidence.

In this section, we review two important features of fostering a culture of integrity and public accountability:

- Compliance
- Conflicts of interest & conflicts of commitment

It is important to consider facts and perceptions surrounding these types of situations.
“How a university is perceived and evaluated by its governing accreditation body plays a major role in how a university is perceived by potential students, faculty and funding dollars.”

*Having an adequate student to faculty ratio is an important part of compliance.*

(Michael Castellon, “Committees Formed to Analyze Tech's Compliance,” 2004)
Here at TTU ~

✓ The University must comply with the requirements of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) in order to be reaffirmed as an accredited university.

http://www.irim.ttu.edu/SACS/index.asp

✓ The Protection of Human Subjects Committee and the Institutional Review Board (IRB) review all proposals for research with human subjects carried out at the University.

http://www.depts.ttu.edu/vpr/irb/committee.php
Conflicts of interest happen when people put their “private interests ahead of an institution—to the detriment of the latter”

✓ For faculty: conflicts “may occur in any one of their roles as teachers, researchers or scholars, and service providers.”

✓ For students: “students who assume leadership positions in University-sanctioned organizations or student governance bodies take on special mantles of responsibility relative to their appointed duties.”

(Bob Smith, “No Conflicts—No Interest or Commitment . . .,” 2004)
Examples of potential conflicts of interest

“Faculty or staff use university facilities for personal or commercial activities.”

“A professor requires students to purchase materials when the professor derives direct/indirect financial benefits.”

“Employees are involved in the appointment, promotion, supervision, or management of immediate family members.”

“An employee accepts personal payments “or other benefits from organizations that propose or sponsor research at the University.”

(Bob Smith, “No Conflicts—No Interest or Commitment . . .,” 2004)
Conflicts of commitment involve “diverting one’s time or interest from activities understood by supervisor and employee as core responsibilities”

Examples of potential conflicts of commitment

An employee provides “expert testimony in cases that may harm the university”

Employees “devote time and efforts to extramural entities, including non-profit agencies, that interfere with their obligations, duties, and responsibilities at the University”

(Bob Smith, “No Conflicts—No Interest or Commitment . . .,” 2004)
Consequences of Conflicts of Interest

“A conflict of interest can create an appearance of impropriety and may compromise the integrity of an individual or institution.”

(Rial D. Rolfe, “Don’t Let Conflicts of Interest Mislead You,” 2011)

“Neglect or obfuscation of issues related to conflicts of interest and commitment can cause serious liabilities for individuals and the University.”

(Bob Smith, “No Conflicts—No Interest or Commitment . . .,” 2004)
“It is important to eliminate or minimize the deleterious impact that conflicts of interest have on decision-making.

This is best accomplished by individuals and institutions recognizing, declaring and managing their conflicts of interest.”

(Rial D. Rolfe, “Don’t Let Conflicts of Interest Mislead You,” 2011)
Managing or eliminating conflicts of interest and commitment in teaching-, research- and service-related efforts calls for a blend of sensitivity to civil norms, an understanding of governmental regulations, and adherence to University policies and procedures.

(Bob Smith, “No Conflicts—No Interest or Commitment . . .,” 2004)

- Prompt disclosure is key
- The facts of circumstances and the perceptions of unrelated observers are equally important
- The person in the conflict situation cannot be the decision maker about the situation
Institutional and personal responsibility requires that

✓ individuals and institutions consider the intended and unintended consequences of contemplated actions

✓ individuals and institutions be accountable for the fiscal and social consequences of decisions.
Responsibility

**Personal Responsibility**
- involves acknowledgement for the choices you make and the actions you take
- recognizes ethical issues in decision-making
- means involving the appropriate constituents in decisions

**Institutional Responsibility**
- protects public property and resources.
- considers the greater good—the many vs. the one—in decisions.
- avoids placing employees and students in untenable situations
- ensures policies and procedures are designed and functioning to protect institutional resources, including people.
Responsibility

Fiscal Responsibility
TTU resources come from...

- Taxpayers
- Federal Agencies
- State Agencies
- Students & Parents
- Donors & Other Consumers

All parties expect conservation and responsible use of resources.
Commitment to transparency involves every level of leadership, starting with the Board of Regents.

Students, teachers, researchers, administrators, and staff are accountable to one another; each has an obligation to accept responsibility for their actions.

As *members of a responsible institution, we routinely and carefully*

✓ reflect our ethical obligations
✓ respect commitments and expectations
✓ acknowledge the consequences of our actions
“Freedom is only part of the story and half of the truth.

Freedom is but the negative aspect of the whole phenomenon whose positive aspect is responsibleness.

In fact, freedom is in danger of degenerating into mere arbitrariness unless it is lived in terms of responsibleness.”

Viktor Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning* (1959)
“Any member of the campus community who has a reasonable basis for believing a fraudulent act has occurred has a responsibility to properly notify the Office of Audit Services, their supervisor, the appropriate administrator or the Texas Tech Police Department.

The Texas Whistleblower Act protects anyone who, in good faith, reports unlawful activity from retaliation for making such a report.”

Reports may be submitted by web or phone:

- EthicsPoint web site: [www.ethicspoint.com](http://www.ethicspoint.com)
- Toll Free: 1-866-294-9352 (also available in Spanish)

([http://www.texastech.edu/audit/fraud.php#report](http://www.texastech.edu/audit/fraud.php#report))
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References

The University's policies, procedures, regulations, and financial information can be accessed online:

- The Student Handbook
- The Faculty Handbook
- New Employee Forms and Processes
- Texas Tech Operating Policies and Procedures
- Regents' Rules and Policies Statements
- FY 2010 Operating Budget Policy and Guidelines
- Annual Financial and Non-Financial Reports
- IRB Policies and Procedures


Public Accountability

Questions? Comments?
Please contact:
TTU Ethics Center
806.742.1505
www.ethics.ttu.edu

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