



Consensual Relationships

The integrity of the relationship between faculty/staff and students is the foundation of Southeastern's educational mission. This relationship places considerable trust in the faculty/staff member, who bears responsibility and accountability as mentor, educator, evaluator or supervisor. The unequal institutional power inherent in this relationship heightens the vulnerability of the student and the potential for coercion. Whenever a faculty/staff member is responsible for academic or administrative supervision of a student, a personal relationship of a romantic nature, even if consensual, is inappropriate. Any such relationship jeopardizes the integrity of the educational process.

These relationships between members of the Southeastern community, where the faculty/staff member has academic, administrative, or other evaluative authority over the student are highly suspect, even when consensual. The consensual relationship may create a real or perceived conflict of interest that tarnishes the objectivity of evaluations by the faculty/staff member of the student. Others may perceive that the relationship creates favoritism. There is risk of exploitation and coercion. Over time the line between consensual and non-consensual relationships may change, especially in the freedom of the student to end the relationship without fear of adverse consequences. This may create exposure of the faculty/staff member and the University administration to charges of sexual harassment. These problems are particularly grave when the student is an undergraduate, who may because of

