

Cornell University Statement of Ethical Conduct

Cornell University's reputation for excellence in the community, the state, the nation, and the world is sustained by the commitment embodied in its mission statement to "...foster initiative, integrity, and excellence, in an environment of collegiality, civility, and responsible stewardship." Executive officers, trustees, faculty, staff, student employees, and others acting on behalf of the university are expected to maintain the highest ethical standard, observing applicable policies, practices, regulations, laws, and professional standards. The absence of a specific guideline or instruction covering a particular situation does not relieve an individual of the responsibility to apply the highest ethical standards when reacting to that situation. Actions in accordance with these standards will be upheld by the university.

Conflicts of Interest and Commitment	All executive officers, trustees, faculty, principal investigators, staff, student employees, and others acting on behalf of the university hold positions of trust, and should conduct their activities accordingly. They must abide by university conflict statements, striving to avoid conflict between private and official responsibilities. Activities that impair or appear to impair the ability to perform their duties or affect independence and objectivity of judgment in the discharge of responsibilities to the university should be avoided.
Harassment and Abuse of Power	Cornell University supports an environment in which harassment of others is not tolerated. Executive officers, trustees, faculty, principal investigators, staff, student employees, and others acting on behalf of the university may not use positions of authority to influence others to perform inappropriate or illegal acts, or violate regulations, university policies or practices.
Laws, Grants and Contracts, Regulations, Policies, and Procedures	All executive officers, trustees, faculty, principal investigators, staff, student employees, and others acting on behalf of the university are expected to comply with relevant laws, grant and contract requirements, regulations, policies and practices, and all applicable university and professional standards. No unethical practice will be condoned on the grounds that it is "customary" or that it serves worthy or honorable goals.
Stewardship	All executive officers, trustees, faculty, principal investigators, staff, student employees, and others acting on behalf of the university have a responsibility to ensure that all funds received are used prudently, ethically, and for their designated purposes. Neither tangible nor intangible assets of the university may be used for personal or illegal gain. Permission must be obtained for personal use of facilities and equipment, in compliance with applicable procedures. It is imperative that those with access to confidential, proprietary, or private information not make unauthorized disclosures or use of this information.
Reporting	All executive officers, trustees, faculty, principal investigators, staff, student employees, and others acting on behalf of the university are expected to report violations of these or other applicable standards to appropriate university offices, e.g., the employee's supervisor, senior unit officer, University Audit, or University Counsel. Confidentiality of individuals reporting violations of these standards will be maintained whenever possible.

Listed above are some of the most prevalent areas of concern. This list is not intended to be comprehensive. See University Policy 4.6, Standards of Ethical Conduct, for guidance on specific issues.