Statement on Professional Ethics

The statement that follows, a revision of a statement originally adopted in 1966, was approved by the Association’s Committee on Professional Ethics, adopted by the Association’s Council in June 1987, and endorsed by the Seventy-third Annual Meeting.

Introduction

From its inception, the American Association of University Professors has recognized that membership in the academic profession carries with it special responsibilities. The Association has consistently affirmed these responsibilities in major policy statements, providing guidance to professors in such matters as their utterances as citizens, the exercise of their responsibilities to students and colleagues, and their conduct when resigning from an institution or when undertaking sponsored research. The Statement on Professional Ethics that follows sets forth those general standards that serve as a reminder of the variety of responsibilities assumed by all members of the profession.

In the enforcement of ethical standards, the academic profession differs from those of law and medicine, whose associations act to ensure the integrity of members engaged in private practice. In the academic profession the individual institution of higher learning provides this assurance and so should normally handle questions concerning propriety of conduct within its own framework by reference to a faculty group. The Association supports such local action and stands ready, through the general secretary and the Committee on Professional Ethics, to counsel with members of the academic community concerning questions of professional ethics and to inquire into complaints when local consideration is impossible or inappropriate. If the alleged offense is deemed sufficiently serious to raise the possibility of adverse action, the procedures should be in accordance with the 1940 Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom and Tenure, the 1958 Statement on Procedural Standards in Faculty Dismissal Proceedings, or the applicable provisions of the Association’s Recommended Institutional Regulations on Academic Freedom and Tenure.

The Statement

1. Professors, guided by a deep conviction of the worth and dignity of the advancement of knowledge, recognize the special responsibilities placed upon them. Their primary responsibility to their subject is to seek and to state the truth as they see it. To this end professors devote their energies to developing and improving their scholarly competence. They accept the obligation to exercise critical self-discipline and judgment in using, extending, and transmitting knowledge. They practice intellectual honesty. Although professors may follow subsidiary interests, these interests must never seriously hamper or compromise their freedom of inquiry.

2. As teachers, professors encourage the free pursuit of learning in their students. They hold before them the best scholarly and ethical standards of their discipline. Professors demonstrate respect for students as individuals and adhere to their proper roles as intellectual guides and counselors. Professors make every reasonable effort to foster honest academic conduct and to ensure that their evaluations of students reflect each student’s true merit. They respect the confidential nature of the relationship between professor and student. They avoid any exploitation, harassment, or discriminatory treatment of students. They acknowledge significant academic or scholarly assistance from them. They protect their academic freedom.

3. As colleagues, professors have obligations that derive from common membership in the community of scholars. Professors do not discriminate against or harass colleagues. They respect and defend the free inquiry of associates. In the exchange of criticism and ideas
professors show due respect for the opinions of others. Professors acknowledge academic debt and strive to be objective in their professional judgment of colleagues. Professors accept their share of faculty responsibilities for the governance of their institution.

4. As members of an academic institution, professors seek above all to be effective teachers and scholars. Although professors observe the stated regulations of the institution, provided the regulations do not contravene academic freedom, they maintain their right to criticize and seek revision. Professors give due regard to their paramount responsibilities within their institution in determining the amount and character of work done outside it. When considering the interruption or termination of their service, professors recognize the effect of their decision upon the program of the institution and give due notice of their intentions.

5. As members of their community, professors have the rights and obligations of other citizens. Professors measure the urgency of these obligations in the light of their responsibilities to their subject, to their students, to their profession, and to their institution. When they speak or act as private persons, they avoid creating the impression of speaking or acting for their college or university. As citizens engaged in a profession that depends upon freedom for its health and integrity, professors have a particular obligation to promote conditions of free inquiry and to further public understanding of academic freedom.
A Statement of the Association’s Council: Freedom and Responsibility

The statement that follows was adopted by the Council of the American Association of University Professors in October 1970. In April 1990, the Council adopted several changes in language that had been approved by the Association’s Committee on Professional Ethics in order to remove gender-specific references from the original text.

For more than half a century the American Association of University Professors has acted upon two principles: that colleges and universities serve the common good through learning, teaching, research, and scholarship; and that the fulfillment of these functions necessarily rests upon the preservation of the intellectual freedoms of teaching, expression, research, and debate. All components of the academic community have a responsibility to exemplify and support these freedoms in the interests of reasoned inquiry.

The 1940 Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom and Tenure asserts the primacy of this responsibility. The Statement on Professional Ethics underscores its pertinency to individual faculty members and calls attention to their responsibility, by their own actions, to uphold their colleagues’ and their students’ freedom of inquiry and to promote public understanding of academic freedom. The Joint Statement on Rights and Freedoms of Students emphasizes the shared responsibility of all members of the academic community for the preservation of these freedoms.

Continuing attacks on the integrity of our universities and on the concept of academic freedom itself come from many quarters. These attacks, marked by tactics of intimidation and harassment and by political interference with the autonomy of colleges and universities, provoke harsh responses and counter-responses. Especially in a repressive atmosphere, the faculty’s responsibility to defend its freedoms cannot be separated from its responsibility to uphold those freedoms by its own actions.

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Membership in the academic community imposes on students, faculty members, administrators, and trustees an obligation to respect the dignity of others, to acknowledge their right to express differing opinions, and to foster and defend intellectual honesty, freedom of inquiry and instruction, and free expression on and off the campus. The expression of dissent and the attempt to produce change, therefore, may not be carried out in ways that injure individuals or damage institutional facilities or disrupt the classes of one’s teachers or colleagues. Speakers on campus must not only be protected from violence, but also be given an opportunity to be heard. Those who seek to call attention to grievances must not do so in ways that significantly impede the functions of the institution.

Students are entitled to an atmosphere conducive to learning and to even-handed treatment in all aspects of the teacher-student relationship. Faculty members may not refuse to enroll or teach students on the grounds of their beliefs or the possible uses to which they may put the knowledge to be gained in a course. Students should not be forced by the authority inherent in the instructional role to make particular personal choices as to political action or their own social behavior. Evaluation of students and the award of credit must be based on academic performance professionally judged and not on matters irrelevant to that performance, whether personality, race, religion, degree of political activism, or personal beliefs.
It is the mastery teachers have of their subjects and their own scholarship that entitles them to their classrooms and to freedom in the presentation of their subjects. Thus, it is improper for an instructor persistently to intrude material that has no relation to the subject, or to fail to present the subject matter of the course as announced to the students and as approved by the faculty in their collective responsibility for the curriculum.

Because academic freedom has traditionally included the instructor’s full freedom as a citizen, most faculty members face no insoluble conflicts between the claims of politics, social action, and conscience, on the one hand, and the claims and expectations of their students, colleagues, and institutions, on the other. If such conflicts become acute, and attention to obligations as a citizen and moral agent precludes an instructor from fulfilling substantial academic obligations, the instructor cannot escape the responsibility of that choice, but should either request a leave of absence or resign his or her academic position.

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The Association’s concern for sound principles and procedures in the imposition of discipline is reflected in the 1940 Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom and Tenure, the 1958 Statement on Procedural Standards in Faculty Dismissal Proceedings, the Recommended Institutional Regulations on Academic Freedom and Tenure, and the many investigations conducted by the Association into disciplinary actions by colleges and universities.

The question arises whether these customary procedures are sufficient in the current context. We believe that by and large they serve their purposes well, but that consideration should be given to supplementing them in several respects.

First, plans for ensuring compliance with academic norms should be enlarged to emphasize preventive as well as disciplinary action. Toward this end the faculty should take the initiative, working with the administration and other components of the institution, to develop and maintain an atmosphere of freedom, commitment to academic inquiry, and respect for the academic rights of others. The faculty should also join with other members of the academic community in the development of procedures to be used in the event of serious disruption, or the threat of disruption, and should ensure its consultation in major decisions, particularly those related to the calling of external security forces to the campus.

Second, systematic attention should be given to questions related to sanctions other than dismissal, such as warnings and reprimands, in order to provide a more versatile body of academic sanctions.

Third, the faculty needs to assume a more positive role as guardian of academic values against unjustified assaults from its own members. The traditional faculty function in disciplinary proceedings has been to ensure academic due process and meaningful faculty participation in the imposition of discipline by the administration. While this function should be maintained, faculties should recognize their stake in promoting adherence to norms essential to the academic enterprise.

Rules designed to meet these needs for faculty self-regulation and flexibility of sanctions should be adopted on each campus in response to local circumstances and to continued experimentation. In all sanctioning efforts, however, it is vital that proceedings be conducted with fairness to the individual, that faculty judgments play a crucial role, and that adverse judgments be founded on demonstrated violations of appropriate norms. The Association will encourage and assist local faculty groups seeking to articulate the substantive principles here outlined or to make improvements in their disciplinary machinery to meet the needs here described. The Association will also consult and work with any responsible group, within or outside the academic community, that seeks to promote understanding of and adherence to basic norms of professional responsibility so long as such efforts are consistent with principles of academic freedom.
The main practical activity of the American Association of University Professors, since its founding, has concerned restraints upon the right of faculty members to inquire, to teach, to speak, and to publish professionally. Yet throughout its existence, the Association has emphasized the responsibilities of faculty members no less than their rights. Both rights and responsibilities support the common good served by institutions of higher education which, in the words of the 1940 Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom and Tenure, “depends upon the free search for truth and its free exposition.”

In its Statement on Professional Ethics, the Association has stressed the obligation of professors to their subject and to the truth as they see it, as well as the need for them to “exercise critical self-discipline and judgment in using, extending, and transmitting knowledge.” Defending free inquiry by their associates and respecting the opinions of others, in the exchange of criticism and ideas, professors must also be rigorously honest in acknowledging their academic debts. In the light of recent concerns within and outside of the academic profession, it has seemed salutary to restate these general obligations with respect to the offense of plagiarism.

Definition
The offense of plagiarism may seem less self-evident in some circles now than it did formerly. Politicians, business executives, and even university presidents depend on the ideas and literary skills of committees, aides, and speechwriters in the many communications they are called on to make inside and outside their organizations. When ideas are rapidly popularized and spread abroad through the media, when fashion and the quest for publicity are all around us, a concern with protecting the claims of originality may seem to some a quaint survival from the past or even a perverse effort to deter the spread of knowledge.

Nevertheless, within the academic world, where advancing knowledge remains the highest calling, scholars must give full and fair recognition to the contributors to that enterprise, both for the substance and for the formulation of their findings and interpretations. Even within the academic community, however, there are complexities and shades of difference. A writer of textbooks rests on the labors of hundreds of authors of monographs who cannot all be acknowledged; the derivative nature of such work is understood and even, when it is well and skillfully done, applauded. A poet, composer, or painter may “quote” the creation of another artist, deliberately without explanation, as a means of deeper exploration of meaning and in the expectation that knowledgeable readers, listeners, or viewers will appreciate the allusion and delight in it. There are even lapses—regrettable but not always avoidable—in which a long-buried memory of something read surfaces as a seemingly new thought.

But none of these situations diminishes the central certainty: taking over the ideas, methods, or written words of another, without acknowledgment and with the intention that they be credited as the work of the deceiver, is plagiarism. It is theft of a special kind, for the true author still retains the original ideas and words, yet they are diminished as that author’s property and a fraud is committed upon the audience that believes those ideas and words originated with the deceiver. Plagiarism is not limited to the academic community but has perhaps its most pernicious effect in that setting. It is the antithesis of the honest labor that characterizes true scholarship and without which mutual trust and respect among scholars is impossible.
Precepts
Every professor should be guided by the following:

1. In his or her own work the professor must scrupulously acknowledge every intellectual debt—for ideas, methods, and expressions—by means appropriate to the form of communication.

2. Any discovery of suspected plagiarism should be brought at once to the attention of the affected parties and, as appropriate, to the profession at large through proper and effective channels—typically through reviews in or communications to relevant scholarly journals. The Association’s Committee on Professional Ethics stands ready to provide its good offices in resolving questions of plagiarism, either independently or in collaboration with other professional societies.

3. Professors should work to ensure that their universities and professional societies adopt clear guidelines respecting plagiarism, appropriate to the disciplines involved, and should insist that regular procedures be in place to deal with violations of those guidelines. The gravity of a charge of plagiarism, by whomever it is made, must not diminish the diligence exercised in determining whether the accusation is valid. In all cases the most scrupulous procedural fairness must be observed, and penalties must be appropriate to the degree of offense.

4. Scholars must make clear the respective contributions of colleagues on a collaborative project, and professors who have the guidance of students as their responsibility must exercise the greatest care not to appropriate a student’s ideas, research, or presentation to the professor’s benefit; to do so is to abuse power and trust.

5. In dealing with graduate students, professors must demonstrate by precept and example the necessity of rigorous honesty in the use of sources and of utter respect for the work of others. The same expectations apply to the guidance of undergraduate students, with a special obligation to acquaint students new to the world of higher education with its standards and the means of ensuring intellectual honesty.

Conclusion
Any intellectual enterprise—by an individual, a group of collaborators, or a profession—is a mosaic, the pieces of which are put in place by many hands. Viewed from a distance, it should appear a meaningful whole, but the long process of its assemblage must not be discounted or misrepresented. Anyone who is guilty of plagiarism not only harms those most directly affected but also diminishes the authority and credibility of all scholarship and all creative arts, and therefore ultimately harms the interests of the broader society. The danger of plagiarism for teaching, learning, and scholarship is manifest, the need vigorously to maintain standards of professional integrity compelling.

Notes
2. Ibid., 171.
3. On the question of due process for a faculty member who is the subject of disciplinary action because of alleged plagiarism, see Regulations 5 and 7 of the Association’s “Recommended Institutional Regulations on Academic Freedom and Tenure,” Policy Documents and Reports, 26–28.
Statement on Recruitment and Resignation of Faculty Members

The statement printed below was adopted by the Association of American Colleges (now the Association of American Colleges and Universities) in January 1961 with the following reservations as set forth in a preamble prepared by that association’s Commission on Academic Freedom and Tenure:

1. No set of principles adopted by the Association can do more than suggest and recommend a course of action. Consequently, the present statement in no way interferes with institutional sovereignty.
2. The commission realizes that the diversity of practice and control that exists among institutions of higher learning precludes any set of standards from being universally applicable to every situation.
3. The statement is concerned only with minimum standards and in no way seeks to create a norm for institutions at which “better” practices already are in force.
4. The commission recognizes the fact that “emergency” situations will arise and will have to be dealt with. However, it urges both administration and faculty to do so in ways that will not go counter to the spirit of cooperation, good faith, and responsibility that the statement is seeking to promote.
5. The commission believes that the spirit embodied in the proposed statement is its most important aspect.

In view of these reservations, the Council of the American Association of University Professors in April 1961 voted approval of the statement without adopting it as a binding obligation. Endorsement of the statement in this form was voted by the Forty-seventh Annual Meeting.

The governing bodies of the Association of American Colleges and the American Association of University Professors, acting respectively in January and April 1990, adopted several changes in language in order to remove gender-specific references from the original text.

Mobility of faculty members among colleges and universities is rightly recognized as desirable in American higher education. Yet the departure of a faculty member always requires changes within the institution and may entail major adjustments on the part of faculty colleagues, the administration, and students in the faculty member’s field. Ordinarily a temporary or permanent successor must be found and appointed to either the vacated position or the position of a colleague who is promoted to replace the faculty member. Clear standards of practice in the recruitment and in the resignations of members of existing faculties should contribute to an orderly interchange of personnel that will be in the interest of all.

The standards set forth below are recommended to administrations and faculties, in the belief that they are sound and should be generally followed. They are predicated on the assumption that proper provision has been made by employing institutions for timely notice to probationary faculty members and those on term appointments, with respect to their subsequent status. In addition to observing applicable requirements for notice of termination to probationary faculty members, institutions should make provision for notice to all faculty members, not later than March 15 of each year, of their status the following fall, including rank and (unless unavoidable budgetary procedures beyond the institution forbid) prospective salary.

1. Negotiations looking to the possible appointment for the following fall of persons who are already faculty members at other institutions, in active service or on leave of absence and not on terminal appointment, should be begun and completed as early as possible in the academic year. It is desirable that, when feasible, the faculty member who has been approached with regard to another position inform the appropriate officers of his or her institution when such negotiations are in progress. The conclusion of a binding agreement for the faculty member to accept an appointment elsewhere should always be followed by prompt notice to the faculty member’s current institution.
2. A faculty member should not resign, in order to accept other employment as of the end of the academic year, later than May 15 or thirty days after receiving notification of the terms of continued employment the following year, whichever date occurs later. It is recognized, however, that this obligation will be in effect only if institutions generally observe the time factor set forth in the following paragraph for new offers. It is also recognized that emergencies will occur. In such an emergency the faculty member may ask the appropriate officials of the institution to waive this requirement; but the faculty member should conform to their decision.

3. To permit a faculty member to give due consideration and timely notice to his or her institution in the circumstances defined in paragraph one of these standards, an offer of appointment for the following fall at another institution should not be made after May 1. The offer should be a “firm” one, not subject to contingencies.

4. Institutions deprived of the services of faculty members too late in the academic year to permit their replacement by securing the members of other faculties in conformity to these standards, and institutions otherwise prevented from taking timely action to recruit from other faculties, should accept the necessity of making temporary arrangements or obtaining personnel from other sources, including new entrants to the academic profession and faculty personnel who have retired.

5. Except by agreement with their institution, faculty members should not leave or be solicited to leave their positions during an academic year for which they hold an appointment.
The Ethics of Recruitment and Faculty Appointments

In 1990, the Council of Colleges of Arts and Sciences (CCAS) established a Commission on Recruitment Ethics to consider the continuing experiences of colleges and universities in recruiting faculty members to their campuses. The commission prepared a draft statement for discussion at the CCAS’s national meeting in 1991. Subsequently, the commission asked the American Association of University Professors to review the draft statement and to consider working with it in promulgating a joint statement. In February 1992, a joint committee representing the commission and the Association met in Washington. The commission’s original draft statement was revised in the light of comments by the members of the joint committee.

The statement that follows was adopted by the Council of Colleges of Arts and Sciences in November 1992. The statement was approved for publication by the Association’s Committee on Professional Ethics in December 1992 and adopted by the Association’s Council in June 1993.

The standards set forth below are intended to apply to the recruitment and appointment of faculty members in colleges and universities. They are directed to administrators and faculty members in the belief that they will promote the identification and selection of qualified candidates through a process that promotes candor and effective communication among those who are engaged in recruitment. The standards are offered not as rules to serve every situation, but with the expectation that they will provide a foundation for appropriate practices. The spirit of openness and shared responsibility that these standards are intended to convey is also applicable to considerations of affirmative action in the recruitment of faculty.

The Announcement of a Faculty Position

1. Prior to announcing a faculty vacancy, there should be agreement among all responsible parties on each major element of the position (e.g., rank, salary, and eligibility for tenure), how the position relates to the department’s (or the equivalent unit’s) likely needs for the future, the expectations concerning the professional work of the faculty member(s) being recruited, and the resources that will be provided to help the faculty member(s) meet those expectations.

2. An institution that announces a search should be genuinely engaged in an open process of recruitment for that position. Descriptions of vacant positions should be published and distributed as widely as possible to reach all potential candidates. The procedure established for reviewing applicants and for selecting final candidates should be consistent with the institution’s announced criteria and commitment to a fair and open search.

3. All announcements for faculty positions should be clear concerning rank, the length of the appointment, whether the position is with tenure or carries eligibility for tenure, whether the availability of the position is contingent upon funding or other conditions, teaching and research expectations, and requisite experience and credentials. Criteria and procedures for reappointment, promotion, and tenure at the institution, as well as other relevant information, should be made available to all interested candidates upon request.

4. Interested candidates should have at least thirty days from the first appearance of the announcement to submit their applications.

Confidentiality, Interviews, and the Final Decision

1. Institutions should respect the confidentiality of candidates for faculty positions. The institution may contact references, including persons who are not identified by the candidate, but it should exercise discretion when doing so. An institution should not make
public the names of candidates without having given the candidates the opportunity to withdraw from the search.

2. Those who participate in the interview should avoid any discriminatory treatment of candidates. All communications with the candidates concerning the position should be consistent with the information stated in the announcement for the position.

3. Candidates for faculty positions should disclose in a timely fashion conditions that might materially bear upon the institution’s decision to offer the appointment (for example, requirements for research funds, unusual moving costs, a delayed starting date, or the intention to retain an affiliation at the institution with which the candidate is currently associated).

4. If candidates request information about the progress of the search and the status of their candidacy, they should be given the information.

5. The institution’s decision about which candidate will be offered the position should be consistent with the criteria for the position and its duties as stated in the announcement of the vacancy. If the selection of the final candidates will be based on significant changes in the criteria for the position or its duties as stated in the original announcement, the institution should start a new search.

**The Offer and Acceptance**

1. The institution may wish to provide informal notification to the successful candidate of its intention to offer an appointment, but the formal offer itself should be an unequivocal letter of appointment signed by the responsible institutional officer. “Oral offers” and “oral acceptances” should not be considered binding, but communications between the successful candidate and those representing the institution should be frank and accurate, for significant decisions are likely to be based on these exchanges. The written offer of appointment should be given to the candidate within ten days of the institution’s having conveyed an intention to make the offer; a candidate should be informed promptly if the offer is not to be forthcoming within ten days.

2. The terms of an offer to an individual should be consistent with the announcement of the position. Each of the following should be stated clearly in the letter offering an appointment: (a) the initial rank; (b) the length of the appointment; (c) conditions of renewal; (d) the salary and benefits; (e) the duties of the position; (f) as applicable, whether the appointment is with tenure, the amount of credit toward tenure for prior service, and the maximum length of the probationary period; (g) as applicable, the institution’s “start-up” commitments for the appointment (for example, equipment and laboratory space); (h) the date when the appointment begins and the date when the candidate is expected to report; (i) the date by which the candidate’s response to the offer is expected, which should not be less than two weeks from receipt of the offer; and (j) details of institutional policies and regulations that bear upon the appointment. Specific information on other relevant matters also should be conveyed in writing to the prospective appointee.

3. An offer of appointment to a faculty member serving at another institution should be made no later than May 1, consistent with the faculty member’s obligation to resign, in order to accept other employment, no later than May 15. It is recognized that, in special cases, it might be appropriate to make an offer after May 1, but in such cases there should be an agreement by all concerned parties.

4. The acceptance of a position is a written, affirmative, and unconditional response sent by the candidate to the institution no later than the date stated in the offer of appointment. If the candidate wishes to accept the offer contingent upon conditions, those conditions should be specified and communicated promptly in writing to the institution which is offering the position.

5. If the candidate wishes to retain an affiliation with his or her current institution, that circumstance should be brought promptly to the attention of the current institution and the recruiting institution.
6. Individuals who accept an appointment should arrive at the institution in sufficient time to prepare for their duties and to participate in orientation programs.

Notes
1. For specific considerations of affirmative action in the recruitment of faculty, see the AAUP’s “Affirmative-Action Plans: Recommended Procedures for Increasing the Number of Minority Persons and Women on College and University Faculties,” AAUP, Policy Documents and Reports, 10th ed. (Washington, D.C., 2006), 237–43.
2. See the “Statement on Recruitment and Resignation of Faculty Members,” issued jointly by the AAUP and the Association of American Colleges (now the Association of American Colleges and Universities), Policy Documents and Reports, 177–78.
On Preventing Conflicts of Interest in Government-Sponsored Research at Universities

The many complex problems that have developed in connection with the extensive sponsored research programs of the federal government have been of concern to the government, the academic community, and private industry. The American Association of University Professors, through its Council, and the American Council on Education, working in cooperation with the president’s science advisor and the Federal Council of Science and Technology, in 1965 developed a statement of principles formulating basic standards and guidelines in this problematic area.

An underlying premise of the statement is that responsibility for determining standards affecting the academic community rests with that community, and that conflict-of-interest problems are best handled by administration and faculty in cooperative effort. In addition to providing guidelines, the statement seeks to identify and alert administration and faculty to the types of situations that have proved troublesome. Throughout, it seeks to protect the integrity of the objectives and needs of the cooperating institutions and their faculties, as well as of sponsoring agencies.

In April 1990, the Council of the American Association of University Professors adopted several changes in language in order to remove gender-specific references from the original text.

The increasingly necessary and complex relationships among universities, government, and industry call for more intensive attention to standards of procedure and conduct in government-sponsored research. The clarification and application of such standards must be designed to serve the purposes and needs of the projects and the public interest involved in them and to protect the integrity of the cooperating institutions as agencies of higher education.

The government and institutions of higher education, as the contracting parties, have an obligation to see that adequate standards and procedures are developed and applied; to inform one another of their respective requirements; and to ensure that all parties to the relationship are informed of and apply the standards and procedures that are so developed.

Consulting relationships between university staff members and industry serve the interests of research and education in the university. Likewise, the transfer of technical knowledge and skill from the university to industry contributes to technological advance. Such relationships are desirable, but certain potential hazards should be recognized.

Conflict Situations

1. Favoring of Outside Interests. When a university staff member (administrator, faculty member, professional staff member, or employee) undertaking or engaging in government-sponsored work has a significant financial interest in, or a consulting arrangement with, a private business concern, it is important to avoid actual or apparent conflicts of interest between government-sponsored university research obligations and outside interests and other obligations. Situations in or from which conflicts of interest may arise are:

   a. the undertaking or orientation of the staff member’s university research to serve the research or other needs of the private firm without disclosure of such undertaking or orientation to the university and to the sponsoring agency;

   b. the purchase of major equipment, instruments, materials, or other items for university research from the private firm in which the staff member has the interest without disclosure of such interest;
c. the transmission to the private firm or other use for personal gain of government-sponsored work products, results, materials, records, or information that are not made generally available (this would not necessarily preclude appropriate licensing arrangements for inventions, or consulting on the basis of government-sponsored research results where there is significant additional work by the staff member independent of the government-sponsored research);

d. the use for personal gain or other unauthorized use of privileged information acquired in connection with the staff member’s government-sponsored activities (the term “privileged information” includes, but is not limited to, medical, personnel, or security records of individuals; anticipated material requirements or price actions; possible new sites for government operations; and knowledge of forthcoming programs or of selection of contractors or subcontractors in advance of official announcements);

e. the negotiation or influence upon the negotiation of contracts relating to the staff member’s government-sponsored research between the university and private organizations with which the staff member has consulting or other significant relationships; and

f. the acceptance of gratuities or special favors from private organizations with which the university does, or may conduct, business in connection with a government-sponsored research project, or extension of gratuities or special favors to employees of the sponsoring government agency, under circumstances that might reasonably be interpreted as an attempt to influence the recipients in the conduct of their duties.

2. Distribution of Effort. There are competing demands on the energies of faculty members (for example, research, teaching, committee work, outside consulting). The way in which a faculty member divides his or her effort among these various functions does not raise ethical questions unless the government agency supporting the research is misled in its understanding of the amount of intellectual effort the faculty member is actually devoting to the research in question. A system of precise time accounting is incompatible with the inherent character of the work of faculty members, since the various functions they perform are closely interrelated and do not conform to any meaningful division of a standard work week. On the other hand, if the research agreement contemplates that a faculty member will devote a certain fraction of effort to the government-sponsored research, or the faculty member agrees to assume responsibility in relation to such research, a demonstrable relationship between the indicated effort or responsibility and the actual extent of the faculty member’s involvement is to be expected. Each university, therefore, should—through joint consultation of administration and faculty—develop procedures to ensure that proposals are responsibly made and complied with.

3. Consulting for Government Agencies or Their Contractors. When the staff member engaged in government-sponsored research also serves as a consultant to a federal agency, such conduct is subject to the conflict-of-interest provisions in the Federal Criminal Code (18 U.S.C. Sec. 202 et seq.) and the conflict-of-interest regulations adopted by the National Institutes of Health, the Public Health Service, and the National Science Foundation. When the staff member consults for one or more government contractors, or prospective contractors, in the same technical field as the staff member’s research project, care must be taken to avoid giving advice that may be of questionable objectivity because of its possible bearing on the individual’s other interests. In undertaking and performing consulting services, the staff member should make full disclosure of such interests to the university and to the contractor insofar as they may appear to relate to the work at the university or for the contractor. Conflict-of-interest problems could arise, for example, in the participation of a staff member of the university in an evaluation for the government agency or its contractor of some technical aspect of the work of another organization with which the staff member has a consulting or employment relationship or a significant financial interest, or in an evaluation of a competitor to such other organization.
University Responsibility
Each university participating in government-sponsored research should make known to the sponsoring government agencies:

1. the steps it is taking to ensure an understanding on the part of the university administration and staff members of the possible conflicts of interest or other problems that may develop in the foregoing types of situations; and

2. the organizational and administrative actions it has taken or is taking to avoid such problems, including:
   a. accounting procedures to be used to ensure that government funds are expended for the purposes for which they have been provided, and that all services which are required in return for these funds are supplied;
   b. procedures that enable it to be aware of the outside professional work of staff members participating in government-sponsored research, if such outside work relates in any way to the government-sponsored research;
   c. the formulation of standards to guide the individual university staff members in governing their conduct in relation to outside interests that might raise questions of conflicts of interest; and
   d. the provision within the university of an informed source of advice and guidance to its staff members for advance consultation on questions they wish to raise concerning the problems that may or do develop as a result of their outside financial or consulting interests, as they relate to their participation in government-sponsored university research. The university may wish to discuss such problems with the contracting officer or other appropriate government official in those cases that appear to raise questions regarding conflicts of interest.

The above process of disclosure and consultation is the obligation assumed by the university when it accepts government funds for research. The process must, of course, be carried out in a manner that does not infringe on the legitimate freedoms and flexibility of action of the university and its staff members that have traditionally characterized a university. It is desirable that standards and procedures of the kind discussed be formulated and administered by members of the university community themselves, through their joint initiative and responsibility, for it is they who are the best judges of the conditions which can most effectively stimulate the search for knowledge and preserve the requirements of academic freedom. Experience indicates that such standards and procedures should be developed and specified by joint administration-faculty action.
Statement on Conflicts of Interest

The statement that follows was approved for publication by the Association’s Committee on Professional Ethics in June 1990.

American universities and colleges have long been engaged with the institutions of the wider society, to their mutual benefit. Universities have trained ministers, teachers, corporate leaders, and public servants, and have taken on wider responsibilities in research and administration for state and federal governments. The years after World War II brought both quantitative and qualitative change in this relationship as a result of the global responsibilities assumed by the United States and of the strikingly new importance attained by science. This change was symbolized and advanced by an immense increase in federal and state funding for higher education and in investment by private foundations. Now, as universities have entered an era of more stringent budgetary limitations, yet another major shift has occurred—to greater reliance on private funding and to a closer symbiosis between universities and industry.

The many opportunities offered to both university researchers and the private sector by sweeping developments in certain areas of science and technology have led to new concerns in both universities and government. One such concern, about freedom to do research and to publish the results, has rightly exercised universities in deliberations about whether or not to undertake such joint efforts and on what terms. More recently, the question of conflict of interest has been raised anew, with regard to the pressures that financial interests of faculty members participating in extra-university enterprises may exert, consciously or not, on the design and the outcome of the research.

The American Association of University Professors has addressed these questions in the past, and we believe it important to reaffirm the 1965 joint statement of the AAUP and the American Council on Education, On Preventing Conflicts of Interest in Government-Sponsored Research at Universities, and to commend the 1983 report of an Association subcommittee on Corporate Funding of Academic Research. The latter report, avowedly tentative and anticipating a fuller statement at a later time, properly assumed that the initiative must lie with university faculties for drawing up such conflict-of-interest guidelines as are appropriate to each campus, with due regard for the proper disclosure of a faculty member’s involvement in off-campus enterprises, in terms of investment, ownership, or consultative status; for the use of university personnel, including students; and for the disposition of potential profits.

Recent developments have suggested the following considerations to be taken into account by faculties involved in developing or revising such guidelines.

Government proposals for policing possible conflicts of interest have been overwhelmingly rejected by the academic community as involving a massive, unneeded enlargement of the government’s role on the campus. Faculties must be careful, however, to ensure that they do not defensively propose a similar bureaucratic burden differing only in the locus of administration. Any requirements for disclosure of potential conflicts of interest should be carefully focused on legitimate areas of concern and not improperly interfere with the privacy rights of faculty members and their families.

Because the central business of the university remains teaching and research unfettered by extra-university dictates, faculties should ensure that any cooperative venture between members of the faculty and outside agencies, whether public or private, respects the primacy of the university’s principal mission, with regard to the choice of subjects of research and the reaching and publication of results.

Faculties should make certain that the pursuit of such joint ventures does not become an end in itself and so introduce distortions into traditional university understandings and arrangements. Private and public agencies have a direct interest in only a few fields of research and in
only certain questions within those fields. Accordingly, external interests should not be allowed to shift the balance of academic priorities in a university without thorough debate about the consequences and without the considered judgment of appropriate faculty bodies. So, too, care must be taken to avoid contravening a commitment to fairness by widening disparities—in teaching loads, student supervision, or budgetary allocation—between departments engaged in such outside activity and those not less central to the nature of a university, which have, or can have, no such engagement.

The ability to procure private or government funding may in certain circumstances be an appropriate consideration in making judgments about salaries, tenure, and promotion, but it must be kept in proper proportion and be consistent with criteria established by the faculty. Guidelines concerning intra-university research support should guard against making its availability dependent, solely or predominantly, on the likelihood that the research so supported will result in obtaining outside funding.

Note
Statement on Multiple Authorship

The statement that follows was approved for publication by the Association’s Committee on Professional Ethics in June 1990.

Over the years, different scholarly fields have evolved different patterns of research and publication. In some areas, the solitary researcher remains the model, an ideal that draws some of its strength from association with the Romantic conception of the creative artist. Even in those fields, however, genuine collaboration is possible and even inescapable as different analytical skills are called upon to illuminate increasingly complex subjects of inquiry. Elsewhere in the scholarly world, collaboration is the norm. This appears to be particularly true in those sciences where separated disciplines must be brought to bear on a novel question, or where complex, articulated laboratory organizations are essential, or where (as in some areas of physics and astronomy) the scale is so large and the expense so vast that any original contribution is beyond the capacity of a scholar working alone or of even small teams of scholars.

In this varied and constantly shifting situation, disciplines have arrived at certain conventions that govern the listing of names of collaborators. This may seem at first glance a sufficiently equitable arrangement: scholars within the field know what to expect and how to evaluate their colleagues’ estimate of their respective contributions. But there are times when the wider academic community must become involved in such questions, as will a still-wider world outside the university. Faculty members and administrators making decisions about appointments, promotion and tenure, and salary increases must try to evaluate individual worth and reckon with the significance of authorship. So, too, must granting agencies, public and private, while the government and the press, seeking expertise, must make repeated judgments about the basis of the authority that individual scholars may claim. A vast list of publications, dazzling to the uninitiated, may conceal as much as it reveals, and the conventions of particular disciplines may give rise to the suspicion, if not the actuality, of questionable ethical practices.

It is well known that actors’ agents frequently negotiate hard about the order of credits, placement, and size of type; no such excesses need follow from an expectation that scholars who take part in a collaborative project should explain forthrightly—to disciplinary peers as well as to other academic colleagues and to such members of the public as may have occasion to inquire—the respective contributions of those who put their names to the finished work. This clarification might be accomplished in a preface, an extensive footnote, or an appendix; no one format can serve every scholarly combination. But a candid statement would do much to establish degrees of responsibility and authority, to ensure fair credit to junior or student colleagues, and to avoid unseemly later disputes about priority, real or alleged errors, and plagiarism. Purely formal association with the enterprise (such as the headship of a laboratory where no direct research involvement was present) would be noted for what it is, to the benefit of the participants as much as of those outside the field.

Making plain the actual contribution of each scholar to a collaborative work calls for an equivalent recognition in return. That academic decision makers frequently find themselves in a troubling dilemma when faced with genuine substantive collaboration testifies to the strength of the ideal of individual creativity. While in some scholarly activity carried on in tandem it is possible for contributors to make clear the respective contributions of each (as is often, and should be regularly, done by two or three joint authors of a book), in other cases the collaboration is so intimate as to defy disentangling: the creativity is imbedded in, and consequent upon, constant exchange of ideas and insights. This scholarly and psychological reality must be fully recognized in making academic decisions about the accomplishments and careers of single
members of such combinations: what they have done must not be reduced to a second order of merit or, worse, dismissed out of hand. This recognition is particularly important in the case of younger scholars who may take a leading role in a collaboration that at first sight is one of sub-ordination. To insist on individual demonstration of the abilities of a young scholar working on a topic where collaboration is inescapable, and where (as is often the case) immense amounts of time are required for fruitful results, may disrupt a promising career, force unneeded and diversionary publication, put undue emphasis on the vexing question of priority of discovery, and distort perceptions of the creative process.

These are questions of immense complexity and subtlety, not to be resolved by an unimaginative application of traditional academic myths or by bureaucratic heavy-handedness. Peer judgment alive to these questions, together with a sensible weighing of merely quantitative measures of accomplishment and reputation, will do much to remedy a problem that through parochialism, misplaced egotism, and inadvertence threatens to become steadily worse and to contribute to tarnishing the scholarly enterprise.