UC Merced
Library and Scholarly Communication (LASC)
Conflict of Interest Policy

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Reviewed by CRE on October 9, 2024
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In the university, the term "conflict of interest" refers to personal considerations that may compromise a faculty member's professional judgment in administration, management, instruction, research, or other professional activities. Committee members should always keep this potential in mind and take appropriate action when a conflict of interest arises. Conflicts of interest have the potential to bias, directly or indirectly, important aspects of the Library and Scholarly Communication (LASC) endeavor. LASC members must always keep this potential in mind and recuse themselves where a conflict of interest arises.

Conflicts may arise because the Committee member is in the same unit (program, graduate group, institute, or School) or may have had personal and/or professional relationships with one or more parties or units concerned in the Committee's deliberations. Bearing in mind that the most informed Committee discussions are the most useful, possible actions include simply informing the Chair or the Chair and Committee members, absenting oneself from parts of a discussion and/or from voting, and full recusal.

There may be circumstances in which abstention from voting, or absence from part of a meeting or deliberation, or even total recusal may be necessary. The need for recusal, or actions short of recusal, may arise from the nature of the Committee's areas of jurisdiction, or from the circumstances of a particular individual, case, or problem dealt with in the course of the Committee's work. A Committee member should consult with the Chair about the proper course of action if in doubt. The decision to recuse oneself, however, need not be accompanied by any explanation.

It should be kept in mind that an individual with a conflict or apparent conflict may have knowledge about the issue under consideration, and that it is important not to deprive the Committee or other body of that expertise. Accordingly, the minimum level of recusal consistent with avoiding conflicts or apparent conflicts is preferred. Even in cases of the most severe conflicts, it may still be appropriate for an individual to present to the Committee their knowledge and opinions about the subject under consideration before withdrawing from further participation. It should also be noted that representing and/or belonging to a body (e.g., a Department) is not usually a conflict per se.

Committee members should consider recusal or other action in the following circumstances:

1) The Committee member has, or has had, a family relationship with an individual concerned in its deliberations, such as that of a current or former significant other, partner, or spouse, or child, sibling, or parent.
2) The Committee member has, or has had, a sexual/romantic relationship with the individual(s) concerned.
3) The Committee member has a personal interest, financial or otherwise, in the matter under deliberation.

4) The Committee member is aware of any prejudice, pro or contra, which would impair their judgment in the matter under discussion. [Note: open and honest intellectual disagreement is not cause for recusal.]
5) The Committee member believes that their recusal is necessary to preserve the integrity of the Committee's deliberations.
6) The Committee member serving as representative of the Senate on a non-Senate committee judge that their presence or actions may be at odds with their responsibilities as a Senate member.
7) The Committee member has voted on the issue under consideration in a capacity other than as a member of a Senate Committee (E.g., A Committee member voted to approve a program as a member of the faculty proposing the program).

Once a committee member has recused, they cannot reverse the recusal during the course of a deliberation.