



University System of Georgia
Creating A More Educated Georgia

8.2.20 University System of Georgia Ethics Policy

8.2.20.1 Introduction

The USG is committed to the highest ethical and professional standards of conduct in pursuit of its mission to create a more educated Georgia. Accomplishing this mission demands integrity, good judgment and dedication to public service from all members of the USG community.

While the USG affirms each person's accountability for individual actions, it also recognizes that the shared mission and the shared enterprise of its institutions require a shared set of core values and ethical conduct to which each member of the USG community must be held accountable. Furthermore, the USG acknowledges that an organizational culture grounded in trust is essential to supporting these core values and ethical conduct.

The following Statement of Core Values and Code of Conduct are intended to build, maintain and protect that trust, recognizing that each member of the USG community is responsible for doing his/her part by upholding the highest standards of competence and character.

8.2.20.2 Applicability

The USG Ethics Policy applies to all members of the USG community. The USG community includes:

1. All members of the Board of Regents;
2. All individuals employed by, or acting on behalf of, the USG or one of the USG institutions, including volunteers, vendors, and contractors; and,
3. Members of the governing boards and employees of all cooperative organizations affiliated with the USG or one of its institutions.

Members of the Board of Regents and all individuals employed by the USG or one of its institutions in any capacity shall participate in USG Ethics Policy training, and shall certify compliance with the USG Ethics Policy on a periodic basis as provided in the USG Business Procedures Manual. Cooperative organizations, vendors, and contractors shall certify compliance with the USG Ethics Policy by written agreement as provided in the USG Business Procedures Manual.

The USG Ethics Policy governs only official conduct performed by or on behalf of the USG. Violations of the USG Ethics Policy may result in disciplinary action including dismissal or termination.

8.2.20.3 Statement of Core Values

Every member of the USG community is required to adhere to the USG Statement of Core Values – Integrity, Excellence, Accountability, and Respect – that form and guide the daily work of the organization.

1. **Integrity** – We will be honest, fair, impartial and unbiased in our dealings both with and on behalf of the USG.
2. **Excellence** – We will perform our duties to foster a culture of excellence and high quality in everything we do.
3. **Accountability** – We firmly believe that education in the form of scholarship, research, teaching, service and developing others is a public trust. We will live up to this trust through safeguarding our resources and being good stewards of the human, intellectual, physical and fiscal resources given to our care.
4. **Respect** – We recognize the inherent dignity and rights of every person, and we will do our utmost to fulfill our resulting responsibility to treat each person with fairness, compassion and decency.

8.2.20.4 Purpose of the Code of Conduct

The USG recognizes that each member of the USG community attempts to live by his or her own values, beliefs and ethical decision-making processes. The purpose of the Code of Conduct is to guide members of the USG community in applying the underlying USG Statement of Core Values to the decisions and choices that are made in the course of everyday endeavors. Each USG institution must ensure that its institutional ethics policies are consistent with this USG Ethics policy.

8.2.20.5 Code of Conduct

We will:

- I. **Uphold the highest standards of intellectual honesty and integrity in the conduct of teaching, research, service and grants administration.**
- II. **Act as good stewards of the resources and information entrusted to our care.**
- III. **Perform assigned duties and professional responsibilities in such a manner so as to further the USG mission.**
- IV. **Treat fellow employees, students and the public with dignity and respect.**
- V. **Refrain from discriminating against, harassing or threatening others.**
- VI. **Comply with all applicable laws, rules, regulations and professional standards.**
- VII. **Respect the intellectual property rights of others.**
- VIII. **Avoid improper political activities as defined in law and Board of Regents Policy.**

- IX. Protect human health and safety and the environment in all USG operations and activities.**
- X. Report wrongdoing to the proper authorities; refrain from retaliating against those who do report violations; and cooperate fully with authorized investigations.**
- XI. Disclose and avoid improper conflicts of interest.**
- XII. Refrain from accepting any gift or thing of value in those instances prohibited by law or Board of Regents policy.**
- XIII. Not use our position or authority improperly to advance the interests of a friend or relative.**

8.2.20.6 Interpretation and Sources

The Statement of Core Values and Code of Conduct do not address every conceivable situation or ethical dilemma that may be faced by members of the USG community. Members of the USG community are expected to exercise good judgment absent specific guidance from this policy or other applicable laws, rules and regulations.

Specific questions pertaining to the Statement of Core Values or Code of Conduct should be directed to a supervisor or other competent authority at the University System Office or at the institution's office of Legal Affairs, Internal Audit, Compliance, Human Resources, Academic Affairs, or other appropriate office.

There are also multiple sources of authority that address specific questions or situations. Examples include:

1. [Board of Regents Policy Manual](#)
2. [Board of Regents Business Procedures Manual](#)
3. [Board of Regents Human Resources Administrative Practice Manual](#)
4. Institutional policies, handbooks and procedures
5. State Laws and Regulations
6. Federal Laws and Regulations

Further specific explanatory notes and references may be found on the USG's website at <http://www.usg.edu/audit/compliance/ethics/> or its successor reference (BoR Minutes, November 2008).