

# University Policy 3306: Romantic Relationships and Employment of Relatives and Household Members

**Category:** Human Resources

**Subcategory:** Employment **Covered**

**Individuals:** All Employees

**Responsible Executive:** Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer

**Policy Custodian:** Office of Human Resources, Senior Associate Vice President of Human Resources

**Last Revised:** 2024/11/11

**Previous USU Policy Number:** 3306: Employment of Relatives

---

## 3306.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

Professional and supportive relationships at Utah State University (USU) are a valuable part of the community and help in the success of achieving USU's mission and goals. There are also familial and romantic relationships that exist, or that may develop among members of the university community. When these relationships exist, issues that may constitute real or perceived conflicts of interest, abuses of authority, or biased treatment can adversely impact the learning or work environment. This is particularly true when romantic relationships exist between individuals who hold positions of unequal institutional authority, meaning that one party supervises, mentors, teaches, evaluates, advises, or coaches the other.

This policy addresses these issues and is intended to prevent improper and perceived conflicts of interest or favoritism among employees arising out of romantic, familial, or household relationships.

For romantic relationships, the fact that a relationship was initially consensual does not insulate either party from a claim of sexual misconduct or sexual harassment (governed by USU Interim Policies [2102](#) and [2103](#)), nor does it guarantee that the relationship will remain consensual between the parties. This policy does not limit any individual's ability to report possible violations of the sexual misconduct policies with the appropriate university offices or with law enforcement, nor does it limit the ability of individuals to be part of romantic relationships where there is no evaluative or supervisory context.

## 3306.2 POLICY

### 2.1 Supervision of Romantic Partners, Relatives, or Household Members

Supervisors may not directly or indirectly manage, exercise decision-making authority, or exert influence over the conditions of employment of a romantic partner, relative, or household member. This includes:

- Serving on a hiring panel.
- Hiring, promoting, or transferring.
- Assigning or reassigning work.
- Preparing, conducting, or contributing information to a performance appraisal.
- Approving work hours.
- Approving vacation, sick, or other leave time.
- Granting or denying permission to attend a conference or other work-related event.
- Approving reimbursement for work-related expenses.
- Initiating or overseeing an administrative investigation or disciplinary process.

---

This policy does not prohibit a supervisor from making employment decisions that impact an entire unit or group of employees, including a romantic partner, relative, or household member.

## 2.2 Committee Participation

Employees may not participate on a hiring or promotion and tenure committee if there is a candidate with whom they have a romantic, familial, or household relationship. Employees are expected to voluntarily remove themselves from participation in these situations.

## 2.3 Changes within Existing Relationships

When changes to existing relationships result in a romantic, familial, or household relationship in an employment or educational setting, supervisors must disclose this change to their immediate supervisor. Supervisors receiving these reports must consult with the Office of Human Resources (HR) to ensure they address potential issues related to supervisory responsibilities.

Similarly, when existing romantic, familial, or household relationships dissolve, the applicable parties should recognize potential biases and refrain from behaviors that may create a real or perceived conflict of interest.

Employees are encouraged to report their concerns to a member of their management chain or HR if they feel that their or others' personal relationships are having an adverse impact on their own employment and/or work environment.

## 2.4 Exceptions

Restrictions on employment supervision and decision-making are applicable except in any of the following situations: (See Utah Code Annotated §52-3-1).

- The individual is employed because they are the only person available, qualified, or eligible for the position.
- The individual is a volunteer as defined by USU [Policy 3017: Volunteer Services](#).
- The individual will be employed for 12 weeks or less, and all other Utah State University hiring policies and procedures are followed.
- The president has determined that the supervisor is the only person available or qualified to supervise the individual.

Exception requests and their justification must be submitted in writing to the requesting party's immediate supervisor, who will then consult with HR. USU will consider exceptions on a case-by-case basis.

Exceptions will be granted only when the university determines that the relationship will not cause, or threaten to cause, the issues outlined in this policy. Any approved exception will require developing a conflict management plan under this policy.

Supervisors who have been granted an exception to this policy may not evaluate the job performance or recommend salary increases for any individual with whom they have a romantic, familial, or household relationship.

Additionally, supervisors who have been granted an exception to this policy may not treat individuals who are subject to the exception differently than other employees—including preferential treatment or other advantages.

## 2.5 Prohibited Retaliation

Any person who reasonably believes there is a violation of this policy is encouraged to report the concern to their immediate supervisor, HR, or the Office of Equity.

Retaliation is strictly prohibited against anyone who reports a potential violation, assists someone with a report of a violation, or participates in any manner in an investigation or in the resolution of a report made under this policy. Retaliation includes, but is not limited to, threats, intimidation, reprisals, or adverse action related to an individual's employment or education. An individual who retaliates will be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment. (See USU [Policy 3011: Improper Conduct and Retaliation](#))

## 2.6 Violations

Individuals should contact their supervisors, HR, or the Office of Equity to report violations of this policy. Violations of this policy or Utah Code Annotated §52-3-1 may result in actions in accordance with USU [Policy 3001: Setting Expectations and Managing Performance](#) or USU [Policy 4006: Academic Due Process: Sanctions and Hearing Procedures](#).

## 3306.3 RESPONSIBILITIES

### 3.1 Supervisors

Ensure employment practices comply with this policy. Consult with the Office of Human Resources regarding situations where concerns about working relationships involving romantic, familial, or household relationships are identified or reported.

### 3.2 Office of Human Resources

Administer this policy in accordance with this policy and Utah Law. Investigate any situations where concerns about working relationships defined in this policy are identified or reported.

### 3.3 Employees

Disclose previously mentioned relationships in writing to the Office of Human Resources and to a department management member who is outside the personal relationship. Employees are expected to voluntarily remove themselves from participation in hiring decisions in which a romantic partner, relative, or household member is involved.

## 3306.4 REFERENCES

- Utah Code Annotated §52-3-1

## 3306.5 RELATED USU POLICIES

- [USU Policy 3001: Setting Expectations and Managing Performance](#)
- [USU Policy 3011: Reporting Improper Conduct and Retaliation](#)
- [USU Interim Policy 2102: Title IX Sexual Misconduct in an Employment or Education Program or Activity](#)
- [USU Interim Policy 2103: Non-Title IX Sexual Misconduct](#)
- [USU Policy 4006: Academic Due Process: Sanctions and Hearing Procedures](#)
- [USU Policy 3017: Volunteer Services](#)

## 3306.6 DEFINITIONS

- **Relative.** A parent, spouse or domestic partner, child, sibling, uncle, aunt, nephew, niece, grandparent,

- grandchild, first cousin, parent-in-law, sibling-in-law, or child-in-law.
  - **Romantic Relationship.** Relationships of a romantic nature. This definition will be applied based on the nature, not the duration, of the relationship. Any interactions of an intimate, sexual, amorous, dating, or romantic nature would be considered a romantic relationship under this policy.
- 

Information below is not included as part of the contents of the official policy. It is provided only as a convenience for readers/users and may be changed at any time by persons authorized by the president.

## RESOURCES

### Contacts

- [Sr. Associate Vice President of Human Resources](#)

## POLICY HISTORY

Original issue date: 1997/0/24

Last review date: 2024/11/11

Next scheduled review date: 2027/11/01

Previous revision dates: 1999/07/01