



ETHICS ORIENTATION FOR SOUTH SUBURBAN COLLEGE EMPLOYEES

South Suburban College is guided by the State Officials and Employees Ethics Act (Public Act 93-615, effective November 19, 2003, as amended by Public Act 93-617, effective December 9, 2003)

The South Suburban College Board of Trustees formally adopted the Act on May 13, 2004. The Act is a comprehensive revision of State Statutes regulating ethical conduct, political activities and the solicitation and acceptance of gifts by state officials and employees.

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As a College employee, you are expected to work on behalf of the College in a manner that always complies with laws, rules, regulations and policies. By doing so and by always acting with honesty and integrity, you are allowing established values to guide your actions and decisions. That is what it means to follow the principles of *ethics*.

As a College employee, your actions are also essential to maintaining the public's trust in the College. Therefore, in addition to acting with honesty and integrity, you must always use College provided resources in the most productive and efficient way possible and only in support of the work of the College. You must avoid placing your personal or financial interests in conflict with those of the College. Furthermore, it is your duty to report any violation of laws, rules, regulations and policies of which you become aware.

Conflicts of Interest

It is unethical for an employee to place his or her interests or those of a friend, relative or business associate above those of the College. That is what is meant by a conflict of interest. *For example, it is not appropriate for a College employee to provide "extra" or preferential College services to a family member, based on their relationship. It is also, for example, not appropriate for a College employee to hold a second job that interferes with his or her work for the College. Furthermore, it is a conflict of interest and unethical for a College employee to use confidential information obtained in the course of working for the College for personal benefit or to benefit another employer.*

Potential or real conflicts of interest that arise or become known during the course of a College worker's employment should be disclosed. Disclosure must take place at the earliest opportunity in order to determine the most appropriate course of action.

Prohibited Political Activities

A College employee cannot participate in any of the following activities during work time. If a College employee elects to take part in any of these activities during normal work hours, then he or she must use vacation, personal or compensatory time off. An employee may never engage in any of these activities using work facilities:

- Prepare for, organize or participate in any political meeting, political rally, political demonstration, or other political event. *For example, a College employee cannot send an email to fellow workers during work hours and/or using a College email account, encouraging them to attend a rally for a candidate for public office.*
- Solicit contributions, including, but not limited to, purchasing, selling, distributing, or receiving payment for tickets for any political fundraiser, political meeting, or other political event. *For example, it is unlawful for a College employee to ask coworkers, during the workday, for donations in support of someone running for political office.*

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- Solicit, plan the solicitation of, or prepare any document or report regarding anything of value intended as a campaign contribution.
- Plan, conduct, or participate in a public opinion poll in connection with a campaign for elective office, on behalf of a political organization for political purposes, or for or against a referendum.
- Survey or gather information from potential or actual voters in an election to determine probable vote outcome in connection with a campaign for elective office, on behalf of a political organization, or for or against a referendum. *For example, it is unlawful for a College employee, during his or her workday, to call potential voters on behalf of a candidate to find out whom they might vote for in an upcoming election*
- Assist at the polls on Election Day on behalf of any political organization, political candidate, or referendum question.
- Solicit votes on behalf of a candidate, political organization, for or against a referendum, or help in an effort to get voters to the polls or participate in a vote recount on behalf of a candidate or political organization.
- Initiate, prepare, circulate, review or file a petition on behalf of a candidate for elective office or for or against any referendum question.
- Make a contribution on behalf of any candidate for elective office. *For example, it is unlawful for a College employee to donate money, during work hours, to a coworker who is running for elective office.*
- Prepare or review responses to candidates' questionnaires.
- Distribute or prepare campaign literature, campaign signs, or other campaign material on behalf of any candidate for elective office or for or against any referendum question.
- Campaign for an elective office or for or against a referendum.
- Manage or work on a campaign for elective office or for or against a referendum.
- Perform work related to serving as a delegate, alternate, or proxy to a political party convention.

Ban on Gifts from Prohibited Sources

In many instances, it is unlawful for a College employee to accept gifts that are offered in connection with his or her College job. Gifts may include, but are not limited to such things as free tickets to sporting events, cash, special discounted merchandise or services, food, drink and travel expenses.

Employees cannot generally accept a gift from:

- A person or entity (a business, for example) seeking official action from the College
- A person or entity that does business or seeks to do business with the College
- A person or entity that conducts activities that are regulated by the College.
- A person or entity that has interests that may be substantially affected by the performance or non-performance of the College.
- A person or entity that is a registered lobbyist

Any gift that is intended to improperly influence an employee's official conduct must not be accepted. Questions that a College employee (or College contract worker) may have related to gifts should be referred to the Vice President of Administration.

Prohibited Offer or Promise

A College employee cannot promise anything of value related to the College in exchange for a contribution to a political committee, political party or a candidate for political office.

For example, it is unlawful for a College employee to offer someone a state job or an appointment to a state board or the award of a contract in exchange for a political campaign donation. It is also unlawful, for example, for a College employee to offer a salary increase or promotion to another College or state employee in exchange for such a donation.

Ethical Obligations

The following are examples of actions or situations that must be avoided. Each represents unethical conduct:

1. An administrative assistant is instructed by his supervisor to run a personal errand for her during his workday.

It is wrong to engage in personal business that is contrary to state or College policies during scheduled work times.

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2. A College employee, responsible for administration of student financial aid, accepts a gift from the parent of a prospective student. The gift was given after the employee helped the student complete an application for financial aid.

The employee's acceptance of this gift may violate College policy and/or the law. It is wise for College employees to refuse gifts given to them as a consequence of their work.

3. During a College board meeting, a board member votes in favor of a proposal to grant a College contract to a company owned by one of her close personal friends.

It is wrong for any state employee or appointee to take any official action that could be seen as being a favor for a family member, friend or business associate.

4. A temporary College worker is directed by his supervisor to distribute political campaign literature to his coworkers during his workday.

This is prohibited during the employee's paid workday and/or using College facilities.

5. A College employee uses her position to influence a College vendor to subcontract some work for the College to a business owned by a relative as a condition for approving the vendor's contract proposal.

It is unethical for College employees to exchange favors for an official action. Such conduct could result in discipline up to and including termination of employment.

6. The teenage son of a College employee receives a pair of professional basketball tickets from an employee of a consulting firm that recently submitted a contract for his father's approval as a member of the College's administration.

Acceptance of such a gift has the potential to represent either a real or perceived unethical act and, therefore, should be avoided or corrected, preferably by returning the gift.

7. A College faculty member, who is responsible for negotiating licensing agreements related to the College's official logo, accepts travel and lodging expenses for an out-of-town golf outing from a corporation that is in the process of developing a proposed licensing agreement with the College.

Acceptance of the trip may be perceived as unethical and, therefore, should be avoided.