



Conflict of Interest Committee and Office

Partners in Promoting Objectivity in Research, Teaching & Administrative Activities

Have you been asked by a pharmaceutical company from which you received \$50,000 in consulting fees to conduct research at the University of Pittsburgh to assess the safety and efficacy of a promising drug in its pipeline?

Do you conduct federally-funded research at Pitt to evaluate the effectiveness of a new device you invented that is owned by a company in which you have a significant equity stake?

Would you like to use University funds to purchase \$35,000 in specialized scientific equipment from a firm in which your spouse serves as its President & CEO?

The above scenarios are examples of situations that create at least the perception of potential conflicts of interest (COI) between the individuals' personal financial interests and their University responsibilities. The existence of such conflicts is not intrinsically unacceptable; however, they need to be managed to ensure that they do not adversely affect the objectivity of the University's research and administrative functions. If left unmanaged, COIs could jeopardize the safety of human research subjects, threaten the integrity of the research, damage the public's trust in the University and its reported research findings, result in the acquisition of products or services that are inferior to (or more costly than) those available from competitors, and generate negative media attention for Pitt and its employees and students.

To ensure that its reputation and research programs are not compromised by even an appearance of inattention to this matter, the University has established policies consistent with federal regulations that require the reporting and management of potential conflicts between its employees' and students' personal financial interests and their University responsibilities.

The COI Committee (COIC) is responsible for the oversight and management of the potential conflicts of the University's employees, students, and the institution itself. It also reviews potential conflicts involving start-up companies that license or option University technology. Additionally, the COIC reviews potential conflicts involving human subject and animal research, as well as conflicts surrounding consulting and purchasing activities.

The mission of the COI Office aligns with that of the COIC, and its work supports the Committee's functions and activities. The Office also helps Schools of the Health Sciences' faculty, staff, and students comply with the Industry Relationship Policy and develops plans to manage potential conflicts arising from employees' and students' consulting, speaking, and other outside engagements with companies.

The COI Committee and Office are here to help individuals who answer yes to any of the above questions or who have other potential conflicts so that their research can proceed without any unnecessary delays or roadblocks. For example, they are able to assist investigators in determining what roles they can have in research with which they have conflicts and can assess whether consulting contracts faculty members have been asked to sign by companies comply with Pitt's policies. For further information, please contact:

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COI website: www.coi.pitt.edu

Pitt employees and students should use the Superform system (<https://coi.hs.pitt.edu>) to disclose personal financial interests that may give rise to potential conflicts of interest with their University responsibilities. Those who are also employed by UPMC/UPP should use the MyHub system (<https://myhub.upmc.com>) instead to make these disclosures.