

Date: March 24, 2016
To: Academic Affairs Leadership Team
From: Pamela C. Stacks, Associate Vice President, Research
Sandeep Muju, Executive Director, SJSU Research Foundation
Re: Financial Conflict of Interest and Conflict of Commitment



In this fiscal year FY2015-16, the SJSU Research Foundation (SJSURF) has focused on cost containment and improving business services. We have already seen significant one-time cost reductions as well as improved customer service feedback from key stakeholders and the faculty at large. We are also optimistic about a revenue turnaround in the coming year and intend to further foster innovation and entrepreneurship, which includes technology transfer and commercialization. However, we have recently encountered two unique situations where faculty have inadvertently acquired conflicts of interest and conflicts of commitment.

SJSU/SJSURF and federal policies require that faculty report external activities, including those activities that potentially pose either, or both, a conflict of interest or a conflict of commitment. Faculty are responsible for seeking advice from their Deans, Directors and Chairs prior to engaging in any activities that could conflict with their research, teaching and service responsibilities to the university.

Academic and professional activities can be classified into two broad categories: those that are internal to the University and those that are external to the University. Internal professional activities include teaching, scholarship, and service as well as those activities covered by sponsored projects (i.e. grants and contracts) conducted as a University/Research Foundation employee. Outside (i.e. external) activities are those not meeting the above criteria and would include, for example, serving as a consultant for remuneration or possessing an ownership interest in a private business. Conflicts of interest occur when a faculty member's obligations to the University could be compromised by their external activities. Conflicts of commitment occur when faculty members' time and attention devoted to external activities interfere with their ability to fulfill their obligations to the University, including teaching, research, administrative duties, and funded sponsored projects.

As administrators of RSCA, we endeavor to strengthen our partnerships with faculty and provide an environment that will serve to enhance and further innovation, entrepreneurship and technology commercialization. To ensure that the professional activities covered by sponsored projects are performed with the highest integrity, and in compliance with regulations issued by our various sponsoring agencies, we are communicating a reminder of key policies in effect: the SJSU Research Foundation's Financial Conflict of Interest (FCOI) and Standards of Conduct found at:

<http://www.sjsu.edu/researchfoundation/osp/researchpolicies/index.html>

and the SJSU policy, S99-11, Conflict of Interest Policy for Principal Investigators found at:

<http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S99-11.pdf>

In the near future, the Office of Research and the SJSU Research Foundation will offer workshops and continued training to enhance understanding of conflict of interest and conflict of commitment. As valued members of the AALT, we seek your support and thank you in advance for helping with adherence and attention to compliance as we continue to move forward with plans regarding technology transfer, commercialization, and entrepreneurship activities.