

GASTON COLLEGE CODE OF ETHICS¹

PREAMBLE

This Gaston College Code of Ethics has been developed with input from representatives of each constituent group at Gaston College. It is meant to be educational and inspirational to show all members of the College community the climate that we foster and to express the ethical principles and guidelines for the conduct of all Gaston College employees. *It also informs the public of the standards of ethical conduct for Gaston College.*

Employees of Gaston College have a responsibility to ensure that they are familiar with this Code of Ethics, understand its application to their conduct, and adhere to its principles. Employees should also be familiar with other sources of information that will assist them in making informed decisions. These include the laws, policies, and agreements that are relevant to their work.

The Gaston College Code of Ethics includes examples of the applications of the ethical principles. While the examples are intended to provide further guidance and assistance, no part of this Code can substitute entirely for the active process of ethical decision-making. In instances of ethical demands or dilemmas where a simple or direct application of this Code is not possible, employees should seek clarification and assistance.

Recommendations for addressing ethical concerns are provided in Appendix A. Application Examples for each Principle are provided in Appendix B. For the purpose of this document, definitions are provided in Appendix C.

¹ This document has been adapted from the Vancouver Community College's Code of Ethics. Vancouver Community College has approved this use by Gaston College: permission on file.

CODE OF ETHICS: PRINCIPLES

To assist employees in interpreting the Gaston College Code of Ethics, the following principles and attached examples have been developed based on the stated values of *integrity, competence, equality and acceptance, honor and trust, and privacy*. Appendix B provides examples that apply to the five categories of "Principles" discussed below. The applications are not inclusive of every situation; rather, they are intended to provide some examples of the way the Code is applied.

1. Principle- Integrity:

- a. Employees should act with integrity in their relationships. They should cooperate and treat others with respect, honesty, and fairness. They should accept the rights of others to hold values and beliefs that differ from their own.
- b. Employees should maintain Gaston College's Code of Ethics when engaged in any college-related activity. Personal standards and conduct are private matters; however, when employees act as representatives of the College, they should conduct themselves according to the Gaston College Code of Ethics.²
- c. Employees should avoid creating the impression of speaking or acting on behalf of the College when they speak or act as private persons.
- d. Employees should not condone or participate in breaches of Gaston College's Code of Ethics.
- e. Employees must fulfill the requirements of their job descriptions.
- f. Employees should foster open communication between and within all levels of decision-making and include where possible input by those who would be affected by a decision in the decision-making process.

2. Principle-Competence:

- a. Employees should provide services within the boundaries of their competence, based on their education, training, professional experience, ongoing professional development, and licensure.
- b. Employees must accurately represent their qualifications, educational backgrounds, experience, and professional credentials.

3. Principles- Equality and Acceptance:

- a. Employees should allow others to hold fundamental beliefs and differing opinions and protect fundamental human rights prescribed by law.
- c. Employees should act to prevent intimidation, harassment, favoritism, and discrimination.

4. Principles- Honor and Trust:

- a. Employees should take into consideration the potential harm of social or non- professional contacts and relationships. Examples of these relationships might include students, other employees, vendors, or public officials.

² Gaston College recognizes that many employees act under other codes of conduct or standards of practice and licensure. The College accepts that these professional standards supersede Gaston College's Code of Ethics.

- b. Employees should not engage in sexual activities with colleagues or students who are currently attending the College if it would lead a reasonable person to conclude that an abuse of power exists or might exist. Employees are sometimes in inherently unequal relationships with students or colleagues, creating the potential for abuse of power.
- c. Employees should not allow their private interests, whether personal, financial, or of any other sort, to conflict or appear to conflict with their professional duties and responsibilities. Employees should avoid any conduct that would lead a reasonable person to conclude that the individual might be biased or motivated by personal gain or private interest in the performance of duties. All known or potential conflicts of interest should be disclosed, in accordance with College policy.
- d. Employees may not take credit for others' ideas or work, even in cases where the work has not been explicitly protected by copyright or patent.

5. Principle-Privacy:

- a. Employees should respect the privacy and confidentiality rights of others with whom they work. Confidential information should be used only for the purposes for which it was originally provided and shared only with authorized parties on a need-to-know basis unless consent is given or required by law.
- b. Other than policy-mandated supervisory use and access, employees should obtain authorization or permission before using or accessing another person's materials, belongings, or written/electronic information.

Appendix A: Guidelines for Addressing Ethical Concerns

If a person has reason to believe that an employee of Gaston College is not acting in accordance with the Gaston College Code of Ethics, the person should take the following steps as necessary:

- 1. Raise the concern directly with the employee.
- 2. Ask a third party to raise the concern directly with the employee.
- 3. Raise the concern with the employee's supervisor(s).

Any concerns about an employee's behavior should be addressed through relevant college policies as found in the *Gaston College Board of Trustees Policies and Procedures Manual* or terms of employment. Relevant college policies to consider include the following:

- 1. Employee Standards of Conduct
- 2. Employment
- 3. Outside Employment
- 4. Sexual Harassment
- 5. Political Activities of Employees
- 6. Non-Professional Relationships

Appendix B: Application Examples Integrity

- Visitors to the College should be treated courteously and provided with helpful and accurate information.
- Colleagues should maintain polite, professional relationships. Shunning, ostracizing, and gossiping constitute unprofessional behavior.
- The Gaston College Code of Ethics applies to representatives of the College in college-sponsored activities (e.g. United Way Campaign).
- Employees participating in a political or partisan demonstration should not promote themselves as representatives of the College.
- When promoting a private business, employees should not use the name of Gaston College to enhance credibility.
- Employees should not use Gaston College letterhead other than as part of their assigned college duty. letterhead should be used only for Gaston College business.

Competence

- Employees should provide therapeutic counseling to students only when such counseling is within their job descriptions.
- Employees should refer students to appropriate College resources (e.g. Counseling Services, Financial Aid, learning Centers, Security).
- Employees should remain current in their fields through continuing education and professional development opportunities or participation in college-sponsored training opportunities.
- Job applications and resumes must be accurate and not contain misleading information.
- If instructors were guest lecturers at an institution of higher learning on a one-time basis, they should not give the impression that they were employed at that institution.

Equality and Acceptance

- Employees should respect that the opinions and ideas of students and other employees may differ from their own.
- Employees should not ignore discrimination in situations where a reasonable person would believe there is inequity.
- Instructors should make a reasonable effort to include or welcome students in appropriate social activities.
- Employees should not collude against other employees or against students.
- Employees should make a reasonable effort to create an inclusive environment for all colleagues and students.

Honor and Trust

- Employees who have personal relationships with students should inform their supervisors and discuss any potential conflicts of interest that may arise.
- Instructors should not date students who are currently enrolled in their courses. Instructors hold a fiduciary relationship with their students. This means that instructors, by the nature of their profession, are given powers to instruct students and pass professional judgment on student performance. These powers are given to instructors, trusting that they interact with students only within the boundaries of professional duty. It is considered a breach of trust for instructors to interact with students outside the boundaries of professional duty.
- Employees should not date or form intimate relationships with students with whom they have professional contact in the course of their duties.
- Should an intimate relationship develop between employees in a reporting situation, employees should inform their supervisors and discuss any potential conflict of interest.
- Employees should not financially contract or recruit business for services outside the College with individuals who would normally be able to receive the same service free within Gaston College.
- Employees should not rent accommodations or equipment or charge any sort of fee to their current students.
- Employees should not use sick leave to engage in employment elsewhere.
- Employees should consider the impact on the College of selling to Gaston College competitors' curriculum and teaching materials for which the employee holds the copyright.
- When employees use or report innovations or ideas from fellow employees, they should give credit to the originator of the idea.

Privacy

- Instructors should not discuss confidential student information with another student.
- Instructors should share a student's work with the class only when the student has given permission.
- Employees should discuss the health or conduct of a student or colleague only with his/her permission, or on a need-to-know basis.
- Employees should not access another employee's space, desks or materials on other than work-related matters, without asking permission.
- Employees should not access a colleague's personal e-mail or computer files without his/her permission and knowledge and unless the need for access is for a legitimate college purpose.

Appendix C: Definitions for Code of Ethics

Acceptance -Favorable reception (of persons, things or ideas); approval; assent; belief.

Collude -Have a secret agreement. Conspire, plot, connive; act together in secret.

Competence -Power, ability, capacity (to do, for a task, etc.), legal authority, qualification or admissibility.

Condone -Forgive or overlook.

Employee -Any full-time, part-time, permanent or temporary, member of the administration, faculty, or staff.

Equality -The condition of having the same rights, rank, power, etc., as others.

Ethics -A set of moral principles; the moral principles by which any particular person is guided; the rules of conduct recognized in a particular profession or area of human life.

Fairness -Honesty, impartiality, justice.

Honesty -With upright conduct; without fraud, by honest means, sincerely, fairly, openly.

Honor -High respect, reverence, reputation, good name.

Integrity -Soundness of moral principle; the character of uncorrupted virtue; uprightness, honesty, sincerity.

Intimacy -Close personal friendship or acquaintance; close familiarity.

Intimate -United by friendship or other personal relationship; familiar, close.

Law -A rule of conduct imposed by a secular authority.

Licensure -The granting of licenses especially to practice a profession.

Personal -Of, pertaining to, concerning, or affecting a person as an individual (rather than as a member of a group or of the public).

Policy -A course of action or principle adopted or proposed by a government, party, individual, etc.; any course of action adopted as advantageous or expedient.

Prescribe -Lay down as a rule or guide; order; direct order as a remedy or treatment.

Principle -A fundamental truth or proposition on which others depend; a general statement or tenet forming the basis of a system of belief, etc.; chain of reasoning.

Privacy -Freedom from unauthorized intrusion.

Profession -A vocation, a calling, especially one requiring advanced knowledge or training in some branch of learning or science.

Proscribe -Prohibit, as wrong or dangerous; condemn

Professionalism -The body of qualities or features, as competence, skill, etc. characteristic of a profession or professional.

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Reasonable person standard -Whether or not a reasonable person in roughly the same position would come to the same conclusion.

Respect -Deferential esteem felt or shown towards a person, thing, or quality; a feeling of deferential esteem; the state of being esteemed or honored.

Therapeutic -A curative agent; a healing influence.

Trust -Faith or confidence in the loyalty, strength, veracity, etc., of a person or thing; reliance on the truth of a statement, etc., without examination.