

ETHICS GUIDELINES FOR FACULTY

(Adopted by the Faculty Senate, April 11, 1994)

We believe in the spirit of inquiry and in the importance of teaching and service to our community. The following statements set forth ethical standards to serve as a reminder of the responsibilities assumed by all members of the academic community. These ethical standards represent the principles of professional behavior that govern faculty at Middle Tennessee State University. They are based on our judgment of our obligations to the community, to the state of Tennessee, and to ourselves as professionals. This statement of ethics contains our own beliefs of appropriate behaviors for faculty and the accepted values of faculty as stated by the AAUP and other professional organizations.

Acceptance of a position as a faculty member at MTSU commits an individual to follow the ideals stated in these guidelines. Further, faculty work to raise their colleagues' consciousness concerning ethical responsibilities and to encourage acceptance of the following statements on principles of scholarly behavior and on plagiarism and research ethics. We recognize that as professionals, we must continue to learn and to be open to changes in expectations and values.

I. STATEMENT ON PRINCIPLES OF SCHOLARLY BEHAVIOR

A. As research scholars, faculty members are "guided by a deep conviction of the worth and dignity of the advancement of knowledge and recognize the special responsibilities placed upon them." (2) Their primary responsibility to their disciplines is to seek and to state the truth. To this end, faculty members "devote their energies to developing and improving their scholarly competence. They accept the obligation to exercise critical self-discipline and judgment in using, extending, and transmitting knowledge. They practice intellectual honesty" (2) in all their dealings. Although faculty members may privately pursue subsidiary interests, including consulting, "these interests must never seriously hamper or compromise their freedom of inquiry." (2)

Ideas or concepts derived from others, whether published or not, should be acknowledged, as should advice and assistance received. Authorship and credit should be shared in correct proportion to the various parties' contributions.

Submissions of manuscripts for publication should be made to one outlet at a time when journals so stipulate. More than one report of essentially the same research results should not be published unless the reports are explicitly written for different audiences, through different types of outlets, and modified accordingly.

Scholars preserve and protect the privacy, dignity, well-being, and informed consent of all participants.

B. As teachers and mentors, faculty members "encourage the free pursuit of learning in their students." (2) Faculty should diligently prepare for their classes, ensuring that their course materials are accurate, current, and relevant. The method for student assessment is included on the course syllabus that is provided by the faculty member at the beginning of the semester. Faculty make "every reasonable effort to foster honest academic conduct" (2) and "respect the confidential nature of the relationship between professor and student. They avoid any exploitation, harassment, or discriminatory treatment of students. They acknowledge significant academic or scholarly assistance" (2) from students, and protect their academic freedom.

C. As colleagues, faculty members "have obligations that derive from common membership in the community of scholars. Professors do not discriminate against or harass colleagues. They respect and defend the free inquiry of associates. In the exchange of criticism and ideas, professors show due respect for the opinions of others. They acknowledge academic debt and strive to be objective in their professional judgment of colleagues." (2)

If a faculty member knows of an ethical violation that is minor in scope (due to lack of knowledge, sensitivity, or experience), he/she should informally attempt to resolve the issue by talking with the faculty member. However, if the violation is of a serious nature, the faculty member is obligated to bring the issue to the attention of the appropriate MTSU department chair or dean.

Senior members of the faculty also recognize their special responsibilities to their junior colleagues. While acting as mentors, they show proper respect for the ideas and scholarly contributions of all members of the faculty, regardless of their age, rank, or tenure status.

D. As members of the MTSU community, faculty members “seek above all to be effective teachers and scholars.” (2) Faculty recognize that their primary responsibility is to spend their time pursuing the interests of the university and not private, personal interests. In addition, faculty who agree to serve on university committees should follow through on that commitment and be active, contributing committee members.

“Although professors observe the stated regulations of the institution, provided the regulations do not contravene academic freedom, they maintain their right to criticize and seek revision.” (2) As scholars “engaged in a profession that depends upon freedom for its health and integrity, professors have a particular obligation to promote conditions of free inquiry and to further public understanding of academic freedom.” (2)

E. As members of professional organizations, faculty are positive representatives of MTSU. Faculty who are involved in professional organizations serve diligently and follow the guidelines and procedures required by the professional organization with regard to paper submissions, reviews of papers, etc. As reviewers and journal editors, faculty members protect the intellectual property rights of contributors. The content of a manuscript is the property of its author(s). It is therefore inappropriate to use ideas from a manuscript, or to show another person a manuscript one has been asked to review, without the explicit permission of its author(s), obtained through the journal editor. Journal editors and reviewers exercise their positions or privilege in a confidential, unbiased, and constructive manner.

F. As grant recipients, faculty members accurately represent themselves and their proposed research and manage that research as promised.

G. As consultants and public service providers, faculty honestly disclose both their qualifications and their limitations to potential clients. At no time will faculty members misrepresent their credentials to a potential client to ensure selection for a project. Throughout the time faculty members work on consulting and/or public service projects, they maintain high quality standards and work diligently to complete the projects. In addition, faculty members treat clients with respect and do not exploit these professional relationships. Faculty recognize that these public service and consulting activities, while important, are secondary to the primary responsibility they have as teachers.

II. STATEMENT ON PLAGIARISM AND RESEARCH ETHICS

A. INTRODUCTION: “Within the academic world, where advancing knowledge remains the highest calling, scholars must give full and fair recognition to the contributors to that enterprise, both for the substance and for the formulation of their findings and interpretations.” (1)

B. DEFINITION: Plagiarism includes “taking over the ideas, methods, or written words of another, without proper acknowledgment” (1), and with the intent that these ideas, methods, or written words “be taken as the work of the deceiver. It is theft of a special kind, for the true author still retains the original ideas and words, yet they are diminished as the author’s property; and a fraud is committed upon the audience that believes those ideas and words originated with the deceiver. Plagiarism is not limited to the academic community, but has perhaps its most pernicious effect in that setting. It is the antithesis of the honest

labor that characterizes true scholarship and without which mutual trust and respect among scholars is impossible.” (1) Therefore, MTSU expects its faculty to adhere to the following principles.

C. PRINCIPLES: Every faculty member should be guided by the following in regard to research ethics:

1. Faculty members must scrupulously strive to acknowledge every significant “intellectual debt--for ideas, methods, and expressions--by means appropriate to the form of communication.” (1)
2. “Scholars must make clear the respective contributions of colleagues on a collaborative project and professors who have the guidance of students as their responsibility, must exercise the greatest care not to appropriate a student’s ideas, research, or presentations to the professor’s benefit. To do so is to abuse power and trust,” (1) unless appropriate credit is given to the student.
3. “Any discovery of suspected plagiarism should be brought at once to the attention of the affected parties” (1) and, when appropriate, to the proper academic authorities. It is unethical to file frivolous complaints that are intended primarily to harm the accused.
4. “The gravity of a charge of plagiarism, by whomever it is made, must not diminish the diligence exercised in determining whether the accusation is valid.” (1) Accusations of plagiarism should be brought forward discreetly to protect the rights of the accused. And, “in all cases, the most scrupulous procedural fairness must be observed, and penalties must be appropriate to the degree of the offenses.” (1)

“In dealing with graduate students, professors must demonstrate by precept and example, the necessity of rigorous honesty in the use of sources and of respect for the work of others. The same expectations apply to the guidance of under graduate students, with a special obligation to acquaint students” (1) new to the world of scholarly research with its standards and the importance of ensuring intellectual honesty.

D. CONCLUSION: “Any intellectual enterprise--by an individual, a group of collaborators, or a profession--is a mosaic, the pieces of which are put in place by many hands.” (1) But the process of this assemblage must not be misrepresented, and “the need vigorously to maintain high standards of professional integrity is compelling.” (1) By following the above principles, MTSU enhances the authority and credibility of all scholarship, and therefore promotes the interests of the broader society we serve. MTSU is committed to maintaining such high standards and, when necessary, enforcing them.

SOURCES

1. AAUP Statement on Plagiarism, 1990.
2. AAUP Statement on Professional Ethics, 1987.
3. Academy of Management Code of Ethics, 1990.
4. National Reading Conference Ethics Statement (Draft), 1993.
5. Ethical Principles of Psychologists, 1989.