Cornell University Guidance on Consulting and Other External Engagements by Faculty

Applicable to the Ithaca Campus

The University unequivocally supports the efforts of its faculty to foster productive relationships with the world outside Cornell, including acting as consultants and in other external engagements. In undertaking such activities, faculty must be attentive to their obligations to Cornell and take appropriate steps to ensure that such activities do not take precedence over their primary commitment to the University. This document, which draws on existing policies and guidance, reiterates concepts fundamental to Cornell’s mission as an academic research institution, and is intended to provide guidance for faculty entering into consulting or other external engagements. For specific examples of relationships which may present a conflict of interest or commitment and may require prior approval by University authorities, please refer to Appendix A of the Cornell Policy 4.14 on Conflicts of Interest and Commitment.

Since no guidance can address every instance of outside professional activities of faculty, it is the faculty member’s obligation to engage in those professional outside activities that promote and support Cornell’s commitment to pedagogy, research, and service. Whenever uncertainty exists, faculty must obtain guidance and prior consent from the appropriate University office.

Required Permissions

- As noted in the Faculty Handbook, faculty must inform their department Chair of any plans to engage in consulting or other external engagements, in accordance with the policies and procedures of their particular unit or department.
- While individual schools, colleges or divisions may promulgate additional limitations and rules, University policy is that Cornell faculty may consult for up to the equivalent of 1 day per week during the period for which they are paid for service. This time allowance does not accumulate from year to year. Any consulting or other external engagements involving a greater commitment or necessitating an absence from campus longer than 7 consecutive days require approval by the Dean of the faculty member’s school or college.
- In the contract colleges, faculty should consult with their Chair before undertaking consulting or other external engagements with New York State corporations or other organizations that may be entitled to extension help without cost.

Disclosure, Research Integrity and Academic Freedom

1 Consulting privileges are generally limited to the professorial staff. (Cornell University Faculty Handbook). Others within the Cornell community should refer to the following for guidance: (1) graduate students to their Department Chair and the Graduate Student Code of Legislation; (2) postdocs to their supervisor and the Office of Postdoctoral Studies; (3) non-professorial staff and part-time faculty to their supervisor.

2 This document, issued by the Ithaca FCOI Committee, is applicable to the Ithaca Campus. For guidance specific to the Weill campus, please contact the WCMC Office of Research Integrity and Assurance: http://researchintegrity.weill.cornell.edu/conflicts_management_office/

3 Guidance applicable to faculty who hold an equity stake in an entity may be found at https://oria.cornell.edu/COI/documents/Appropriate%20Involvement%20in%20Start-ups%20by%20Members%20of%20the%20University%20Community.pdf

4 Cornell University Faculty Handbook

5 Cornell University Faculty Handbook

6 For faculty in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, specific time limits for consulting can be found at https://cals.cornell.edu/about/leadership/sad/academic-policies/faculty-effort/consulting

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Faculty should clarify that opinions they express in work prepared in the course of any consulting or other external engagements are their own, and are not official positions of the University. Whenever a faculty member is listed as an author on a publication resulting from, or engages in speaking activities related to consulting or other external engagements, this or a similar disclosure is recommended:

“Dr./Professor [NAME]’s contribution to this publication/speaking event was as a paid consultant/representative of an external entity, and is not related to his/her Cornell University duties or responsibilities.”

Transparency is particularly needed when a faculty member’s University research supports, or could reasonably be concluded by a neutral observer to support, a position or agenda beneficial to or favored by an entity with which that faculty member consults or has another external engagement. Publications and presentations reporting such research should always disclose the arrangement using this or a similar disclosure:

“Dr./Professor NAME is a paid consultant/representative of ENTITY, which has activities or has interests to which this research is directly related or might be reasonably inferred as directly related.”

Cornell’s commitment to academic freedom includes freedom from direction and restraint in scholarship, University research, and creative expression, and in the discussion and publication of the results thereof. Research projects that do not permit the free and open publication, presentation, or discussion of results are not acceptable. The principal and co-principal investigators of all Cornell research must have (and may not relinquish) the final authority on what is to be published or presented.

Contractual Agreements

Individual faculty members are responsible for reviewing the business terms associated with consulting or other external engagements. The Office of University Counsel is available to review the terms of such agreements for the limited purpose of determining whether the terms are consistent with Cornell University Policy.

If faculty intend to use information - including data or material- gathered in the course of consulting or other external engagements for Cornell research, the Cornell Office of Sponsored Programs (OSP) must review terms or conditions for accepting such information for use in Cornell research, even if the data are provided free of charge. The terms of any such agreement must not be in conflict with Cornell University policy.

Intellectual property concerns

Faculty must not sign consulting, employment, facility access, non-disclosure, or confidentiality agreements containing terms that conflict with the faculty’s obligation to confer rights to Cornell for certain inventions, specifically all those that result from activity conducted in the course of an appointment with the University and all those produced using University resources.

Separation of external engagements and Cornell activities

Faculty may not enter into any external agreements imposing obligations or liability upon Cornell.

In any consulting or other external engagement, faculty may not involve those Cornell staff or students for whom they have direct supervisory or academic responsibilities, as it may create a conflict of interest between the faculty member’s academic or supervisory responsibilities towards their student or staff, and their personal interest.

Cornell letterhead, name, or other identification must not be used to imply University support for a personal viewpoint.

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7 Cornell University Policy 4.10, Use of Cornell’s Name, Logos, Trademarks, and Insignias, pages 6, 10
8 Cornell University Faculty Handbook. Research, for the purpose of these principles, includes all sponsored projects, including research and extension, and all non-sponsored University research. (Cornell University Policy 1.7, Financial Conflict of Interest Related to Research, pages 7 & 15)
9 https://www.osp.cornell.edu/
10 Cornell University Policy 1.5, Inventions and Related Property Rights, pages 9-10
11 Cornell University Policy 4.10, Use of Cornell’s Name, Logos, Trademarks, and Insignias, page 8

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• Faculty may not use University resources to conduct or support consulting or other external engagements, with the only exceptions being the use of library resources; the use at the external commercial user rate of those Cornell facilities and services that are openly available to outside commercial entities; or the use of an assigned office, office computer, or software routinely provided to all faculty.¹²

• Faculty may not seek to provide access to University resources to individuals from entities with which they have a consulting or other external engagement, by sponsoring Visiting or Courtesy appointments unless in support of Cornell’s mission as an academic research institution.

¹² Cornell University Faculty Handbook

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