



POLICY REGARDING ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN FACULTY AND STUDENTS

A Supplement to the Sexual Harassment Policy
For All Persons with Instructional Contracts with the Seminary

Westminster Theological Seminary provides an environment for theological research and learning that includes frequent personal contact between faculty and students. Such contact, both inside and outside the classroom, is encouraged and highly valued, since the openness and cordiality of such meetings help make possible the intellectual, spiritual, and social growth which are among the goals of the Seminary. Faculty have the responsibility to relate to students in a manner consonant with the gospel, in ways that provide positive role models of Christian leadership, and in a manner that embodies the highest standards of professional ethics.

No Seminary regulation regarding faculty-student relationships should be understood as discouraging the development of the professional relationships and friendships that are an essential and desirable part of our life together.

However, a romantic relationship between a faculty member and a student inescapably poses questions of fairness, proper use of power, and possible conflicts of interest, and it places the faculty member and the Seminary in a potentially hazardous legal situation.

If the association between a member of the faculty and a student does develop into a romantic relationship, then the relationship becomes a matter of special concern not only for the two parties directly involved but also for the Seminary itself. Therefore:

1. As a matter of professional ethics, the faculty member involved must immediately notify the Dean of Academic Affairs and request to be removed from any and all official supervisory and evaluative responsibilities regarding the student in question, including grading, academic advising, serving on thesis committees, supervising the student as a teaching fellow or research assistant, and the like.
2. Both the faculty member and the student should inform themselves about the Seminary policy regarding sexual harassment and must bear the responsibility for insuring that their relationship is in compliance with those policies, including provision of written assurance of this to the Seminary, if requested.
3. The faculty member should recognize that romantic relationships, by their very nature and, often, by virtue of their visibility, bear a special burden to embody ethical commitments appropriate to the Christian faith. Sexual relations between a faculty member and a student not married to each other constitute unprofessional conduct.

Westminster Theological Seminary will respect the privacy of its faculty and students and insures the freedom of persons in the Seminary community to form responsible and ethical relationships. If, however, a faculty member forms a romantic relationship in violation of any provision of this policy, the Seminary may institute disciplinary action, following the procedures outlined in the Faculty Manual of Westminster Theological Seminary.

This policy shall apply, *mutatis mutandis*, to all instructional personnel of the Seminary, including teaching fellows and teaching assistants.

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