

**Policy Type:** General Administrative  
**Policy Title:** Ethics  
**Policy Number:** GA-23

---

**Purpose:**

This policy is intended to ensure an environment where employees understand that they hold a public trust. This trust obligates them to a) conduct the business of the institution in accordance with the highest ethical standards, b) not use their public office for personal gain or private advantage, and c) avoid activities that conflict with the proper discharge of their duties.

Employees are required to:

- A. Serve the public with respect, concern, courtesy and responsiveness, recognizing that service to the public is the primary mission of state government.
- B. Promote an environment of public trust free from fraud, abuse of authority and misuse of public property.
- C. Strengthen public confidence in the integrity of state government by demonstrating the highest standards of personal integrity, fairness, honesty and compliance with law, rules, regulations and GRCC policies.
- D. Interact with co-workers with respect, concern, courtesy, and responsiveness.
- E. Create a work environment that is free from all forms of discrimination and harassment.

**Scope:**

This policy shall apply to all employees and officers of the college.

**Definitions:**

**Employee:** Individuals who are employed by Green River Community College, including student employees and volunteers.

**Officer of the college:** Members of the Board of Trustees.

**De minimis:** Minimal in duration and frequency with no actual cost to the state or the cost is so small as to be insignificant or negligible.

**Gifts:** Anything of economic value for which no consideration is given in return, with specified exceptions. These exceptions include certain items received from family members or friends, certain items related to an outside business, items exchanged among co-workers, etc.

**Honoraria:** An honorarium refers to money or a thing of value that is offered to an employee or officer of the college for a speech, appearance, article, or similar item of activity in connection with the employee's official role with the institution.

**Policy or Procedure:**

1. ETHICS CATEGORIES

**Use of State Resources for Personal Benefit**

Employees and officers of the college are obligated to conserve and protect state resources for the benefit of the public interest, rather than their private interests. No state employee or officer of the college may employ or use any person, money or property under the employee's official control or direction, or in his or her official custody, for the private benefit or gain of the employee, officer of the college or another.

The restrictions set forth by RCW 42.52.160 are designed to prohibit the use of state resources for private purposes.

An employee or officer of the college can make occasional but limited use of state resources for private use provided that:

- There is no cost to the state and,
- There is no interference with the performance of official duties and,
- The use is brief in duration and does not disrupt state business due to volume or frequency and,
- The use does not compromise the security or integrity of state information or software.

De minimis use is permitted for the telephone, computer, fax, email and Internet provided that the use is not for personal gain, such as conducting an outside business; for political or campaign activities; or illegal. Personal use of the state SCAN long-distance telephone system is not permitted.

Certain uses of state resources are prohibited regardless of whether the use is de minimis and does not interfere with the performance of official duties. State law prohibits the use of state resources for conducting an outside business; supporting, promoting, or soliciting funds for an outside group or organization without authorization; political or campaign use; commercial purposes; or illegal activity.

The personal use of state resources that are removed from campus, such as, but not limited to, tools, computers, video recorders, vehicles, and cameras is not permitted. Employees may not reimburse the state so that there is no actual cost to the state, although in limited situations a system of reimbursement may be established by the college in advance and approved by the Executive Ethics Board.

**Gifts**

Employees and officers of the college are prohibited from accepting a gift, gratuity or item of value if it could be reasonably expected to influence an action, judgment or vote. In addition, no employee or officer of the college may accept gifts with a collective value in excess of fifty (\$50) dollars from a single source in a calendar year or a single gift from multiple sources with a value in excess of fifty (\$50) dollars. The values of gifts given to family members are ordinarily attributed to the employee for the purpose of determining whether the limit has been exceeded.

For employees or state officers other than those who participate in the acquisition of goods or services, there are general exceptions to the gift limit. These permit employees to accept, among other things, unsolicited tokens of appreciation such as plaques and desk items, flowers and plants, gifts from dignitaries in another state or country intended to be personal in nature.

### **Post State Employment**

Post-state employment restrictions are designed to ensure that a former employee or officers of the college does not accrue advantage as a result of decisions or actions made while in public service.

Post-state employment restrictions fall into three categories.

1. Contract restrictions prohibit former employees from accepting employment or compensation if (A) during the two years preceding termination of state employment, they were involved in negotiation or administration of a contract with that employer and in a position to make outcome-affecting discretionary decisions, (B) the contract (s) is/are worth over \$10,000, and (C) the employment or compensation relate to the fulfilling or implementation of that contract.
2. Beneficial interest restrictions prohibit a former employee, during the two years following termination of state employment, from having a “beneficial” (financial) interest in a grant or contract that was authorized or funded by an action in which s/he participated while in state employment.
3. Continuing restrictions, which have no statutorily-defined time limit, prohibit former state employees from, among other things, accepting employment or compensation that they have reason to believe, or that a reasonable person would believe, was intended to influence or compensate their performance or non-performance of official duties.

### **Honoraria**

No college employee may receive an honorarium unless specifically authorized by the college. The college may not authorize an honorarium in certain circumstances:

1. The person offering the honorarium is seeking or is reasonably expected to seek a contract or grant from the college, and the employee is in a position to participate in determining the terms or awarding of the contract or grant.
2. The person offering the honorarium is likely to seek or oppose adoption of college rules, actions, or policy changes, and the person receiving the honorarium may participate in that adoption.

Employees may use state time and resources to prepare materials for a speech or presentation for which an honorarium will be awarded if the activity is related to the employee's official role in state employment. If it is not connected to one's official role, any payment received is not an honorarium; rather it is considered outside compensation subject to RCW 42.52.120.

If an honorarium includes payment for travel, lodging or subsistence expenses, the employee cannot also seek or accept college reimbursement of such expenses.

### **Compensation for Outside Activities**

An employee or officer of the college may not receive any thing of economic value under any contract or grant outside of his/her official duties, unless certain conditions are met. This provision prohibits outside employment or other arrangements that might become a conflict or have the appearance of a conflict.

The conditions under which outside compensation may be received are:

1. The contract is bona fide and the work is actually performed.
2. The performance or administration of the contract or grant is not within the employee's official duties at the college or under the employee's official supervision.
3. The work is not prohibited by other statutes, such as the prohibition on assisting others in transactions involving the state.
4. The contract or grant is not performed for or compensated by anyone from whom the employee could not receive a gift under RCW 42.52.110 (applicable to employees who handle acquisitions).
5. The grant or contract is not created or authorized by the employee in his/her official capacity.
6. The work would not require unauthorized disclosure of confidential information obtained through college employment.

If the outside contract or grant is with another state agency, additional requirements must be met. Essentially these mean that there must be either an open bidding process with more than one competitor, or prior approval from the Executive Ethics Board. Such a contract or grant with a state agency generally must be filed with the Executive Ethics Board within thirty days after signing.

### **Financial Interest in Transactions**

Employees or officers of the college may not be beneficially (financially) interested in contracts, sales, leases, purchases, or grants that they make, or that are made under their supervision, as state employees. They also may not accept any compensation, gratuity, or reward from any other person who is beneficially interested in such a contract, etc. While there are exceptions for certain higher education research institutions, allowing certain researchers to have financial interests in their institutional grants and contracts, those exceptions generally do not apply to Green River.

Stated another way, a college employee, acting as such, cannot participate in college transactions with an entity or other person in which the employee holds some position or financial interest. Again, there are some exceptions, for service on foundation boards and in certain other public interest positions.

### **Confidential Information**

Confidential information refers to specific information, rather than generalized knowledge, that is not available to the general public on request, and information that is made confidential by law. College employees may not disclose confidential information to any person who is not entitled or authorized to receive it.

No employee or officer of the college may participate in any business or professional activity that she/he might reasonably expect would require or cause unauthorized disclosure of confidential information that had been obtained through the employee's official position. An employee also may not disclose or otherwise use such confidential information for personal gain or benefit, unless the disclosure has been properly authorized.

Finally, an employee may not intentionally conceal records that (s) he knows are required to be released under the state public records law.

### **Special Privileges**

Except as required to perform employment duties, no employee or officer of the college may use his/her position to secure special privileges or exemptions for that employee, the employee's spouse, children, or parents, or other persons.

### **Use of Public Resources for Political Campaigns**

Employees and officers of the college are prohibited from using college facilities to assist a political candidate's election campaign or to promote or oppose a ballot proposition.

The law broadly defines the term "facilities" to include, but not be limited to, stationery, postage, machines, equipment, office space, vehicles, publications, and the use of state employees during working hours, and clientele lists of persons served by the agency. For example, the use of e-mail to encourage letter-writing campaigns to promote candidates or a ballot measure is prohibited.

An employee may also violate the ethics law if she/he lets someone else use public resources for political campaigns.

An exception to this rule permits activities that are the normal and regular conduct of a state agency, such as renting property under customary rental arrangements or providing a college "neutral forum" for political presentations.

## **2. COMPLAINT PROCESS**

College employees may file complaints of alleged ethics violations directly with the Washington State Executive Ethics Board. Complaints must name a specific state officer or state employee and the alleged conduct that could violate the state's ethics law if true. The Executive Ethics Board is required under law to investigate any complaint that alleges conduct in violation of RCW 42.52.

Complaints also may be filed internally, within the college, following whatever complaint procedure or investigative process applies to the state officer or state employee who is alleged to have violated the ethics law.

## **3. PENALTIES**

Employees violating this policy are subject to disciplinary action as well as penalties imposed by the Executive Ethics Board under WAC 42.52.520.

**Specific Authority:**

RCW 42.52

**Law Implemented:**

---

**History of Policy or Procedure**

Draft:

Adopted: April 9, 2008

Revised:

Reviewed by:

Contact: John Ramsey, Director of Public Information, ext. 3360

President's Staff Sponsor: John Ramsey, Director of Public Information, ext. 3360