

What to Look For When Identifying Research Conflicts of Interest

Guidance for unit heads and reviewers of COI declarations

This document is a tool to help those reviewing Conflict of Interest (COI) declaration forms in identifying relationships that may create a research conflict of interest.

What is a Research Conflict of Interest

A research conflict of interest exists, as defined by OSU policy, when a investigator's significant financial interest outside of the University affects or appears to affect the design, conduct or reporting of the investigator's research at the University.

In other words, the investigator has a significant financial interest outside of the University that somehow relates to his or her research within the University. And that outside interest may, intentionally or unintentionally, influence how a project is designed, the research conducted, and/or the results reported. Regardless of whether the research is actually influenced, conflicting interests exist and must be reported and reviewed.

COI Review Process

The role of the COI Officer and COI Committee is to identify when the outside activity and the University research overlap (creating a conflict of interest). In those situations, management techniques are identified to ensure that the design, conduct and reporting are not influenced by the financial interest.

Elements of Relationships Causing Conflicting Interests

A research conflict of interest is three-parted: (1) a relationship with an external entity, (2) a significant financial interest, and (3) some connection between the external entity and the research conducted by the investigator. When a situation contains all three elements, a potential conflict of interest exists. Although not an exhaustive list, below are examples of each element.

The investigator has a relationship with an external entity:

- Ownership/equity in an entity
- Consulting for an entity
- Employment outside of OSU
- Serving in a scientific, technical or other advisory capacity for an entity, including as a member of a board of directors, trustees, etc.

The investigator and members of his or her family, in aggregate, have a significant financial interest in that relationship:

- Remuneration in an entity that is valued at \$5,000 or more within a 12-month period
- Equity interest in a publicly-traded entity that is valued at \$5,000 or more
- Any equity interest in a non-publicly traded entity

And there is some overlap between the entity and the investigator's research. Such as, the entity:

- sponsors the investigator's research
- receives funding from an OSU proposal, grant or contract (a sub-recipient)
- licenses technology from or to the University
- owns technology, products or programs that will be evaluated by the investigator's research
- conducts activities in the same field as the investigator's research