

VALUES & ETHICAL RESPONSIBILITIES

RESPONSIBLE OFFICIAL: PRESIDENT OF THE UNIVERSITY

EFFECTIVE DATE: 7/29/1981

NEXT REVIEW DATE: PREVIOUS REVIEW PLUS FOUR (4) YEARS – 06/10/2029

BOARD OF REGENTS REPORTING: PRESIDENTIAL RECOMMENDATION

I. POLICY STATEMENT

Northern Kentucky University (NKU) is entrusted with resources by students, parents, taxpayers, sponsors, alumni, donors, and other constituencies with the responsibility to fulfill its educational mission. This trust and responsibility require a commitment to ethical standards to assure others that our activities are executed to serve the mission of the university. This policy documents value and ethical standards at NKU.

II. ENTITIES AFFECTED

This policy applies to faculty; staff and administration; members of the Board of Regents; any individual employed by the university, using university resources or facilities, receiving funds administered by the university; and other representatives when speaking or acting on behalf of NKU. These individuals are referred to as “NKU community members” within this policy.

III. ANNUAL ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Understanding one’s responsibilities as a member of the NKU community is important in maintaining ethical standards across campus and ensuring compliance with federal and state laws.

Annually, all faculty members, staff members, administrators, and members of the Board of Regents will acknowledge their awareness and understanding of this policy. A refresher course will be provided by Human Resources each year to facilitate this acknowledgement.

IV. CORE VALUES

The NKU community is committed to these core values:

- Excellence
- Integrity
- Belonging
- Innovation
- Collegiality

As a reflection of these core values, NKU community members strive to behave ethically, and with integrity and common sense, at all times. NKU community members seek to fulfill obligations towards students, co-workers and other members of the university community with honesty and transparency, and to behave according to the highest ethical and professional standards of conduct.

NKU is committed to fostering a community of belonging where individuals are valued, supported, and empowered to thrive. All members of the NKU community strive to treat others with professional

courtesy and civility, regardless of position or status, and to work cooperatively with others. NKU community members seek to promote equality and collaboration among faculty, staff, and administrators. NKU provides equal access to programs, facilities, and employment and seeks to foster positive campus change through excellence and accountability.

V. ETHICAL RESPONSIBILITIES

In addition to following these guidelines, the faculty, staff, administrators, student workers, members of the Board of Regents, and other affiliated individuals in conducting the affairs of NKU will comply with all federal, state, and local laws and regulations as well as university policies, procedures, and codes in the performance of job-related duties. The values, principles, and standards of conduct in this policy are supported through university policies, procedures, and guidelines that provide guidance for making decisions consistent with NKU's commitment to responsible and ethical behavior.

All NKU faculty, staff, administrators, and members of the Board of Regents who are members of occupations or professions that have established standards or codes of ethics shall, in addition to the responsibilities referenced in this document, be bound by the standards of conduct and/or codes of ethics that apply to such occupations or professions.

NKU community members have the ethical responsibilities described in the following subsections.

Manage Responsibly

NKU community members who supervise, instruct and/or advise faculty, staff, and student workers are entrusted with significant responsibility and are expected to:

- Foster an environment of transparency and integrity;
- Ensure compliance with applicable laws, policies, regulations, and workplace rules;
- Evaluate performance impartially and conscientiously to ensure that the evaluation of each individual's performance reflects the true merit of that work;
- Ensure access to and delivery of proper training on applicable workplace and educational rules, laws, policies, and procedures (including these principles);
- Foster opportunities for intellectual growth and professional development both on and off campus;
- Promote a productive, innovative, and professional atmosphere that encourages dialogue and is responsive to concerns; and
- Avoid making unreasonable job demands.

Protect and Preserve University Resources

NKU community members are responsible for integrity in the stewardship of resources entrusted to them and are expected to:

- Exercise responsible and ethical behavior regarding stewardship of university resources;
- Protect university property, equipment, data and other assets of the university;
- Prevent waste, abuse, and misuse of university resources;
- Follow guidelines, procedures, and/or manuals regarding the use of financial assets, including university procurement cards;
- Comply with government grants and contract terms and conditions;

- Follow sound financial practices, including accurate financial reporting, controls and processes to protect assets, and responsible fiscal management; and
- Engage in appropriate accounting and monitoring.

Promote a Culture of Compliance

NKU is committed to meeting legal requirements as well as fostering a culture of ethics and compliance. University community members are expected to:

- Be aware of, understand, and comply with laws, regulations, contracts, and university policies and procedures applicable to their duties;
- Seek to prevent, detect and report suspected compliance violations to the appropriate university official; supervisors will ensure that reports of violations within their area of responsibility are properly resolved, including disclosure to any authority as appropriate; and
- Participate in mandatory education opportunities required of faculty, staff, administrators, and student workers.

No NKU community member is permitted to engage in retaliation, retribution, adverse employment consequences or any form of harassment against an individual for a good faith report of misconduct or other ethics or compliance-related concern, or participation in an investigation of a good faith report of misconduct, ethics or compliance-related concern or retaliation.

Preserve Academic Freedom and Meet Academic Responsibilities

Academic freedom is essential to NKU's mission. NKU community members are expected to:

- Encourage students in the free pursuit of learning;
- Demonstrate respect for the student as an individual, make every effort to foster honest academic conduct, and assure that the evaluation of student work reflects that work's true merit;
- Respect the confidential nature of the relationship between professor and student;
- Avoid exploitation of students for private advantage and acknowledge significant assistance from them;
- Promote academic freedom, including the freedom to discuss relevant matters in the classroom, with fellow NKU community members, and with the public; academic freedom includes the freedom to explore all avenues of scholarship, research and creative expression, to participate in the shared governance of the University, and to speak and write as a public citizen without institutional restraint;
- Participate in shared governance of the university
- Where appropriate, assist the university in meeting its public engagement mission;
- Exercise their best professional judgment when writing letters of recommendation or otherwise providing input regarding the manner in which individuals carry out responsibilities expected of or entrusted to them.

The freedom of speech of NKU community members includes the freedom to express their views on matters having to do with their institution and its policies. This freedom should be accorded – and rights to it protected – because grounds for thinking an institutional policy desirable or undesirable must be heard and assessed if the community is to have confidence that its policies are appropriate. The faculty protection for Academic Freedom is described in section 16.3 in the NKU Faculty Policies and Procedures Handbook, which is incorporated herein by reference.

Teach and Conduct Research Ethically

NKU community members have an obligation to the university and the larger global community as they seek knowledge and understanding. NKU community members are expected to:

- Propose, conduct, and report research honestly and with integrity;
- Adhere to the practical and ethical professional standards appropriate to a discipline in order to protect people and appropriately care for animals in the context of teaching;
- Protect the welfare and dignity of human participants and properly care for animals in compliance with current federal regulations and NKU Institutional Review Board (IRB), Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC), and/or Institutional Biosafety Committee (IBC) policies in the context of research. Individuals uncertain about whether a teaching or research activity is governed by federal guidelines and NKU IRB, IACUC, and/or IBC policies can contact the NKU Office of Research Compliance for guidance;
- Refrain from engaging in copyright infringement or plagiarism;
- Ensure originality of work, provide credit for the ideas of others upon which their work is built; and
- Be responsible for the accuracy of published information; and
- Truthfully report authorship.

Teachers are entitled to full freedom in research and in the publication of the results, subject to the adequate performance of their other academic duties; but research for pecuniary return should be based upon an understanding with the authorities of the institution.

Teachers are entitled to freedom in the classroom in discussing their subject.

Avoid Conflict of Commitment and Interest

NKU community members have a responsibility to maintain objectivity and impartiality when making decisions on behalf of NKU. To ensure objectivity, NKU community members are expected to:

- Base decisions on judgment free from conflicting interest;
- Refrain from using their official position to inappropriately further professional or private interests or the interests of any members of their family;
- When conducting or participating in any transaction, disclose any real or perceived conflict with personal interests and remove himself or herself from further participation; and
- Ensure personal relationships do not interfere with objective judgment in decisions affecting university employment and/or the academic progress of a community member. Recuse themselves (i.e., not participate) in cases where a real or apparent conflict of interest exists.

Carefully Manage Public, Private, and Confidential Information

NKU community members are the creators, custodians, and stewards of many types of information, much of which is confidential. Access to this information and the individual's right to privacy are governed by both laws and university policies. In order to meet our responsibilities, NKU community members are expected to:

- Learn and follow laws, regulations, and university policies regarding access, use, protection, disclosure, retention, and disposal of public, private, and confidential information;
- Follow document retention and disposal guidelines;
- Maintain information security using electronic and physical safeguards;

- Protect information quality and integrity;
- Ensure that information provided to the university community and other entities is accurate and consistent; and
- Provide information as needed for other community members to adequately perform job duties.

Promote Health and Safety in the Workplace

All NKU community members have a shared responsibility to ensure a safe, secure, and healthy campus for all faculty, staff, students, volunteers, and visitors. NKU community members are expected to:

- Follow federal and state safety laws and university policies and practices, including participating in appropriate education; using appropriate personal safety equipment; and reporting accidents, injuries, and unsafe situations promptly;
- Maintain security, including securing university assets and facilities;
- Report suspicious activities and suspected abuse; and
- Protect the environment, including carefully handling hazardous waste and other potentially harmful agents, materials, or conditions.

VI. VIOLATIONS OF THIS POLICY

Any individual found to have violated the expectations set forth in section V above may be subject to discipline up to and including termination of employment and criminal prosecution. Any adverse employment action shall be taken only pursuant to applicable institutional handbooks, policies, and procedures.

VII. NON-DISCRIMINATION STATEMENT

NKU does not discriminate based on national origin, race, color, age, gender, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, religion, physical or mental disability, genetic information, pregnancy, and Uniform Service or veteran status in its education programs, activities, employment, daily operations, or admissions policies, in accordance with all applicable federal, state, and local laws. NKU will not tolerate retaliation against any individual who makes a good faith report of a violation.

VIII. REPORTING SUSPECTED VIOLATIONS OF THIS VALUES & ETHICAL RESPONSIBILITIES POLICY

All faculty, staff, and administrators have an obligation to report conduct that violates the ethical standards described in this policy. Examples of violations that should be reported include but are not limited to:

- Fraud, waste, abuse, or misuse of university resources
- Financial misconduct/wrongdoing
- Violation of federal law, state law, university policy, or procedure
- Ethics and/or compliance violations
- Research misconduct
- Harassment

Violations can be reported to:

- The immediate-supervisor of the individual making the report
- [Financial and Operational Auditing](#)
- [Compliance and Institutional Ethics](#)

- [Ethics and Compliance Helpline](#)

The NKU Ethics and Compliance Helpline is administered by a third-party and is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. Reports can be made anonymously via the Ethicspoint website (www.nku.ethicspoint.com) or by phone (toll-free) at 855-597-4539.

NOTE: The helpline is **NOT** a 911 or emergency service. Those needing emergency assistance should contact 911 or University Police at 859-572-7777.

IX. WHISTLEBLOWER (ANTI-RETALIATION) PROTECTION

Any NKU community member who acts in good faith to report an alleged violation of this policy is referred to as a whistleblower.

A whistleblower is NOT responsible for investigating the allegation or for determining fault or corrective measures. Appropriate management officials are charged with these responsibilities as discussed in section X below.

The confidentiality of anyone who is alleged to be in violation of this policy will be maintained to the extent possible under applicable state and federal laws. However, identity may have to be disclosed to conduct a thorough investigation, to comply with the law, and to provide accused individuals their legal rights of defense. NKU community members are cautioned, via this provision, that their identity may become known for reasons outside of the control of university administrators and investigators.

NKU will protect against retaliatory behavior towards any whistleblower who, in good faith, reports any action or suspected action taken by or within the university that is illegal, fraudulent, or in violation of any adopted policy of the university. Retaliatory behavior includes, but is not limited to, intimidation, harassment, discrimination, or other acts of retaliation that could result in adverse employment consequences. Adverse employment consequences include, but are not limited to, actions such as termination, compensation decreases, poor work assignments, unsubstantiated poor performance evaluations, or threats of physical harm. Any whistleblower who believes they are being retaliated against must contact Human Resources or their immediate supervisor or division vice president as soon as possible.

However, the right of a whistleblower for protection against retaliation does not include immunity for any personal wrongdoing that is alleged and investigated. A commitment to protecting whistleblowers from retaliation does not preclude the University from addressing performance or unprofessional business behaviors with community members as appropriate. In addition, using this no retaliation provision in bad faith (i.e., deliberately making false allegations) is itself a violation of this policy.

Any community member who retaliates against someone who has reported a concern in good faith will be subject to appropriate disciplinary action as determined by NKU administration, including but not limited to Human Resources, the President, and the Board of Regents.

X. INVESTIGATING ALLEGED VIOLATIONS OF THIS VALUES & ETHICAL RESPONSIBILITIES POLICY

Each area with investigative authority shall carry out investigative activities in accordance with appropriate laws and established procedures within its discipline and regulatory policies and guidelines.

XI. REFERENCES AND RELATED MATERIALS

REFERENCES & FORMS

- [Faculty Policies and Procedures Handbook](#) (see especially section 16.2 “Professional Ethics and Responsibilities,” 16.3 “Academic Freedom,” and Section 14 “Grievances.”)
- [Chase Faculty Handbook](#)
- [Code of Community Standards and Student Rights](#)
- [Chase Student Handbook](#)
- [Graduate Student Honor Code and Appeals](#)
- [Northern Kentucky University Ethics and Compliance Helpline](#)
- [Compliance and Institutional Ethics](#)
- [Frequently Asked Questions re: Reporting Violations](#)

Related Policies and References

- [Ethics Hotline](#)
- [Intellectual Property](#)
- [Sexual Harassment](#)

Revision History

REVISION TYPE	MONTH/YEAR APPROVED
Edits for Kentucky House Bill 4 (KY HB4) Compliance <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Changed “Inclusiveness” to “Belonging” in core values (sec. IV)• Edits to wording in last para. of sec. IV• Updated sec. XI links and added reference to Ethics Hotline policy	June 10, 2025
Revision <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Added sections IX and X re: whistleblowing, retaliation, investigation• Updates, clarifications, formatting, and editing throughout	September 14, 2022
Edits/Corrections <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Corrected policy to reflect 2016 BoR-approved changes• Made minor edits to formatting, spacing, and punctuation• Corrected the reference to the Faculty Policies and Procedures Handbook on p. 3 to reflect the current numbering system (changed from “section III, Items A-D” to “section 16.3”)• Updated URLs	October 2, 2019
Revision	May 18, 2016
Revision	April 29, 2016
Revision & Name Change	March 1, 2014
Revision & Name Change to “Ethical Principles & Code of Conduct”	July 13, 2005
New Policy—Administrative Regulation (AR-I-1.0-1) – “Statement of Administrative Ethics”	July 29, 1981

VALUES & ETHICAL RESPONSIBILITIES

PRESIDENTIAL APPROVAL

President	
Signature <u>Ashish K. Vaidya</u>	Date <u>8/11/22</u>
Ashish K. Vaidya	

BOARD OF REGENTS APPROVAL

BOARD OF REGENTS (IF FORWARDED BY PRESIDENT)	
<input type="checkbox"/> This policy was forwarded to the Board of Regents on the Presidential Report (information only) . Date of Board of Regents meeting at which this policy was reported: ____/____/____.	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> This policy was forwarded to the Board of Regents as a Presidential Recommendation (consent agenda/voting item) .	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> The Board of Regents approved this policy on <u>9 / 14 / 2022</u> . (Attach a copy of Board of Regents meeting minutes showing approval of policy.)	
<input type="checkbox"/> The Board of Regents rejected this policy on ____/____/____. (Attach a copy of Board of Regents meeting minutes showing rejection of policy.)	
SECRETARY TO THE BOARD OF REGENTS	
Signature <u>Tammy Knochelmann</u>	Date <u>9/15/2022</u>
Tammy Knochelmann	