



Financial Conflict of Interest in Research

Virginia Wesleyan University (VWU) is committed to maintaining integrity in research activities funded by federal agencies such as the Public Health Service (PHS)/National Institutes of Health (NIH), the National Science Foundation (NSF), and other federal departments and organizations. This commitment ensures that research outcomes remain unbiased by external commitments and financial interests of individuals involved in the design, conduct, reporting, or direct administration of university research.

General Conflict of Interest Guidelines

For the purposes of this policy, the term Principal Investigator (PI) refers to the project director and any other individual—regardless of title or position—who is responsible for the design, conduct, or reporting of research funded by the NIH, NSF, or other federal agencies. This includes collaborators and consultants.

1. Research Integrity

Research at Virginia Wesleyan University is dedicated to advancing knowledge, supporting student education, and fostering innovation. While research activities may occasionally generate financial benefits for investigators and the University, all decisions regarding research direction and objectives must align with VWU's academic values rather than financial gain. Sponsored research projects should reflect mutual academic interests between the University and funding organizations.

2. External Activities of Faculty and Staff

External professional, financial, and entrepreneurial activities undertaken by faculty and staff can contribute positively to the University's mission. However, primary commitment must be given to university responsibilities. External activities should be managed in a way that minimizes conflicts of interest and aligns with institutional priorities.

3. Duty to Disclose Potential Conflicts

Faculty and staff are responsible for monitoring their own activities to identify potential conflicts of interest. If a conflict—or the appearance of a conflict—arises, faculty must disclose relevant information to their divisional dean, while staff must report to their supervisor for guidance and resolution. Full and timely disclosure of financial or external interests related to research is required.

4. Student Participation in Research

Students' involvement in research is a crucial educational opportunity. Faculty and staff must prioritize students' academic growth and professional development when assigning research roles. Research opportunities must not be influenced by faculty members' financial or professional interests. Faculty must avoid using students for personal business or entrepreneurial ventures.

5. Rights to Publication and Research Findings

Virginia Wesleyan University values open communication of research findings. Outside sponsorship or external associations should not limit the publication or sharing of research results. Sponsored research must allow investigators to retain full rights regarding the timing and content of publications, subject only to safeguards that protect privacy and proprietary information.

6. Personal Business and Consulting Activities

Faculty and staff must refrain from using University research or administrative resources for personal business or commercial consulting activities beyond incidental use.

7. Research That Benefits External Interests

Research data and materials owned or managed by the University must be made available in a fair and transparent manner. No transfer of research materials or data should be conducted for personal financial gain.

8. Sponsors' Right to Request Information

Federal funding agencies and sponsors have a legitimate interest in disclosing financial relationships that could influence research outcomes. Investigators are required to comply with requests for disclosure of significant financial interests related to sponsored research. VWU will ensure compliance with reasonable sponsor requests in accordance with applicable regulations.

For further inquiries regarding this policy, please contact the Office of the President at officeofthepresident@vwu.edu