



Policy Title:	Ethics Act
Policy Number:	UNIV-409
Revision Date:	October 2022
Policies Superseded:	1214; HREO-112
Policy Management Area(s):	University Compliance

SUMMARY:

Faculty, staff and student employees of Coastal Carolina University are public employees and are subject to the provisions of the [State Ethics Act](#), codified in Sections 8-13-700 through 8-13-1520 of the S. C. Code of Laws.

POLICY:

I. THE STATE ETHICS, GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY, AND CAMPAIGN REFORM ACT

The State Ethics, Government Accountability, and Campaign Reform Act was enacted in 1991 to restore public trust in governmental institutions and the political governmental process. The Act recognizes that public employment is a public trust and any effort to realize personal gain through official conduct is a violation of that trust. Violations of the rules of ethical conduct are investigated and punished where appropriate. The State Ethics, Government Accountability, and Campaign Reform Act applies to all public officials and public employees of the State and political subdivisions, with exception of members of the judiciary. The law:

- Provides a code of conduct to prohibit public officials and employees from being involved in certain conflicts of interest.
- Provides for the filing of Statements of Economic Interest by certain designated public employees and public officials.
- Provides for advisory opinions to be issued on questions involving the State Ethics, Government Accountability, and Campaign Reform Act.
- Provides for procedures for participation by citizens in the enforcement of the law.
- Provides for the State Ethics Commission to administer the law.

II. RULES OF CONDUCT

- A. Employment at Coastal Carolina University is a public trust and any effort to realize personal gain through official conduct is a violation of that trust. The rules of conduct, S.C. Code Ann. § 8-13-700 through 8-13-795, as amended:
1. Prohibits a public employee from knowingly using their official position or office to obtain an economic interest for the employee or the employee's immediate family, an individual with whom the employee is associated, or a business with which the employee is associated.
 2. Prohibits a public employee from giving or offering, soliciting, or receiving anything of value to influence the action of public officials or public employees.
 3. Prohibits a public employee from receiving money in addition to that received by their employer for advice or assistance given in the course of their regular employment.
 4. Prohibits the disclosure or use of confidential information for personal financial gain.
 5. Prohibits the use of office materials, personnel, property, or equipment for personal gain or private economic benefit.
 6. Prohibits employees from membership on or employment by a regulatory commission or agency that regulates any business with which the employee is associated.
 7. Prohibits a public employee from using government time, equipment, resources, or property to influence the outcome of an election.
 8. Provides for actions to be taken by employees where a decision would affect the employee's personal financial interest.
 9. Prohibits employees from appearing before certain regulatory commissions.
 10. Calls attention to breaches of ethical standards.
 11. Prohibits a public employee acting in their capacity as a CCU employee from receiving anything of value for speaking before a public or private group.
- B. Employees who are offered items, opportunities, or other benefits as a result of or in relation to their employment with the University must contact the Office of University Compliance for a determination of whether such offer is allowed.

III. FINANCIAL DISCLOSURE STATEMENTS

The State Ethics, Government Accountability, and Campaign Reform Act requires the disclosure of Economic Interest through the filing of a Statement of Economic Interests by employees of the university in the following categories:

- A. the chief administrative official
- B. the deputy or assistant administrative official(s)
- D. the chief finance official
- E. the chief purchasing official

University employees required to file a Statement of Economic Interest are notified by University Officials of this duty. The Statement of Economic Interest must be filed prior to assuming the duties of the position required to file and must file by March 30 at noon each subsequent year.

IV. REPORTING POTENTIAL VIOLATIONS

If you suspect a violation of the State Ethics, Government Accountability, and Campaign Reform Act, you should report the incident(s) to University Compliance at compliance@coastl.edu or <https://www.coastal.edu/universitycompliance/reporting/>.

V. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

For additional information about the State Ethics, Government Accountability, and Campaign Reform Act, please contact University Compliance, or visit:

A. S.C. Code of Laws 8-13-700 through 8-13-1520 -

<https://www.scstatehouse.gov/code/t08c013.php>

B. South Carolina State Ethics Commission- <https://ethics.sc.gov/>

C. State Ethics Commission Public Employee Newsletter-

<https://ethics.sc.gov/sites/ethics/files/Documents/Brochures/Employee%20Newsletter%202022.pdf>

III. VENDOR PROVIDED MEALS/GIFTS

A. Meals and/or Coffee Breaks Offered to All

Public employees are not prohibited from accepting a meal or coffee break from vendors at conferences, seminars, or vendor-sponsored shows, so long as the meal and/or break are provided to all program participants.

B. Meals Not Offered to All

Public employees should weigh the impact of accepting a meal offered by a vendor on a case-by-case basis. Considerations include the vendor, the amount of the meal, and whether there are any matters pertaining to the vendor with which the employee is associated.

C. Gifts

Acceptance of gifts from a vendor is not a violation of the Ethics Act unless the gift is given with the intention influence the recipient. Holiday gift baskets and the like may be accepted by offices on campus and shared among colleagues.

D. Questions

Questions relating to the acceptance of meals, coffee breaks, and/or gifts should be directed to University Compliance at compliance@coastal.edu.

IV. REPORTING VIOLATIONS

- A. If you witness, become aware, or suspect a potential violation of the South Carolina Ethics Act, please report the incident.

- B. Methods of Reporting:
 - 1. To the South Carolina State Ethics Commission
<http://ethics.sc.gov/Complaints/Pages/index.aspx>
 - 2. To Coastal Carolina University
<https://www.coastal.edu/universitycompliance/reporting/>
 - a. You may report the violation to other University departments by choosing the appropriate link, or
 - b. You may report anonymously via EthicsPoint by selecting “File a Report”