

Graduate Division Newsletter  
Conflict of Interest (COI)  
October 2018

**Conflict of Interest (COI) Considerations When Graduate Students Work with the Private Sector**

The University provides numerous opportunities for students to work in the private sector as part of their education. The involvement of graduate students with the private sector should enhance their educational experience and not unduly influence or restrict their academic and research choices. Specifically, a graduate student must retain the ability to move freely from advisor to advisor and to change topic areas or research direction free from influence or pressures outside the realm of scientific appropriateness and personal choice. A graduate student's field of research should not be significantly narrowed or limited as a result of involvement with the private sector, nor should such involvement result in significant limitation of post-graduate employment. All University research, including research sponsored by industry, is governed by the tradition of the free exchange of ideas and timely dissemination of research results. The University is committed to an open teaching and research environment in which ideas can be exchanged freely among faculty and graduate students in the classroom, laboratory, informal meetings, and elsewhere.

When considering the appropriateness of participation in particular research projects with the private sector, the following principles apply for graduate students:

1. Freedom to publish and disseminate results are major criteria for assessing the appropriateness of any research project, particularly those involving students and postdoctoral scholars. Consistent with the mission of the University, the integrity of a student's academic experience shall be preserved, including the ability to complete and publish a thesis or dissertation and to freely publish, present, or otherwise disclose the results of research both within the academic community and to the public at large. The University precludes assigning to extramural sources the right to keep or make final decisions about what may or may not be published with respect to a research project. Within this general understanding, the University also realizes that circumstances may arise where certain restrictions or limitations may be appropriate. Short, reasonable delays may be appropriate, for example, to allow the research sponsor to review publications for inadvertent disclosures of proprietary data or potentially patentable inventions. In all cases, however, these limitations or restrictions may not be more restrictive than those borne by faculty conducting similar research under University auspices.
2. Graduate students may not be involved in a company in which their dissertation adviser or faculty mentor has a significant financial interest. "Involvement" means they may not be employed in the company, undertake training in the company, or do their dissertation research in the company.

When graduate students enter into any private arrangements, they should take into account obligations they may have to the University (such as employment) and ensure that conflicts do not arise which could violate those University obligations.

- a. Graduate Students may undertake educationally-related research activities at companies as long as the faculty adviser does not have a significant financial interest in the company.
- b. The company places no confidentiality or non-disclosure restrictions on the graduate student and permits the student to freely discuss and publish the results of his work without delays.
- c. Any company patent agreement the graduate student is required to sign be reviewed and approved by the University.

For additional information, please contact the Conflict of Interest Office at [info@coi-ucsd.edu](mailto:info@coi-ucsd.edu) or (858) 534-6465.