

## **Ethical Code of Practice**

WHEREAS the admissions process of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign is guided by the university's commitment to serve the people of the State of Illinois and the needs of the State as set forth in our public, land grant mission; and

WHEREAS the admissions process is guided by the highest standards of fairness to applicants, transparency of process, equality of access, privacy, and responsiveness; and

WHEREAS the admissions process must comply with the University of Illinois' nondiscrimination policy specifying that decisions involving potential as well as current students and employees be based on merit and be free from invidious discrimination in all its forms (*University Statutes*); and

WHEREAS employees of the Urbana campus shall not respond to inquiries concerning the status of an application except those that come from an applicant or an applicant's parent or legal guardian, spouse or secondary high school guidance counselor; and

WHEREAS members of the University of Illinois Board of Trustees, donors, alumni, corporate representatives, and elected officials of the State shall not be allowed to influence the outcome of admissions decisions; and

WHEREAS admissions decisions shall not involve an offer or acceptance of any reward or remuneration;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT:

All admissions to the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign shall be based strictly upon admissions criteria, policies, and guidelines as stipulated in the campus Admissions Policy established by the Academic Senate, the Urbana campus administration, and the Board of Trustees. This code of practice is in accordance with the Statement of Principles of Good Practice issued by the National Association for College Admission Counseling (NACAC). Violations of this code by employees of the Urbana campus will be subject to discipline up to and including discharge. Violations of this code by members of the Board of Trustees will be considered malfeasance and will constitute grounds for removal by the Governor of the State of Illinois.

## Policy Prohibiting Improper Influence in Admissions to the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

### I. Definitions

- A. “Admissions office” refers to any admissions office of any department or college of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, including graduate programs and professional schools.
- B. “Admissions staff member” refers to any employee of any admissions office.
- C. “Employee with admissions responsibility” refers to any admissions staff member, faculty member of any admissions committee of any department or college, or dean of any college or unit executive officer directly reviewing admissions files and participating in admissions decisions.
- D. “Employee without admissions responsibility” refers to any employees, including faculty member or dean of any college or unit executive officer, that does not directly review files and participate in admissions decisions.
- E. “Office of Undergraduate Admissions/OUA” refers to the admissions office that has primary responsibility for recruiting, admitting, and enrolling students into the undergraduate departments and colleges at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

### II. Prohibited Activities

In accordance with the detailed provisions below, the following activities are prohibited:

- A. With regard to undergraduate admissions, no third party, including Trustees, government officials, or university employees without admissions responsibilities, shall attempt to communicate with Office of Undergraduate Admissions staff members or employees with admissions responsibility regarding any applicant file. Any such communication is not permitted and would be logged for review by the Senate Admissions Committee. Only an applicant, an applicant’s parent or legal guardian, spouse or secondary high school guidance counselor may communicate with the admissions office regarding an individual file.
- B. With regard to graduate and professional school admissions, third-party communications are also prohibited; however, third parties may participate by composing formal letters of recommendation, if such letters are permitted or required, and if the third party is an expert in a relevant academic or professional field and has personal knowledge of particular candidates. In such instances, the third party may communicate with employees with admissions responsibility regarding particular candidates.**
- C. No university employee shall forward inquiries regarding any applicant file from unpermitted third parties to admission staff members or employees with admissions responsibility. Any such communication is not permitted and would be logged for review by the Senate Admissions Committee.**

### III. Unsolicited Expressions of Support

#### A. Office of Undergraduate Admissions

1. The purported sponsorship or unsolicited expression of support of an applicant to any department or college of the University of Illinois by any individual shall not be considered in any admissions decision concerning that applicant made by the Office of Undergraduate Admissions.
2. In order to assure compliance with Section II(A), no record of any purported sponsor or supporter shall be retained in any applicant's file, including the receipt by the applicant of a General Assembly Scholarship. Presently, the Office of Undergraduate Admissions neither requires nor accepts letters of recommendation as part of the admissions process. Any correspondence by or with such sponsor or supporter, whether by letter, email communication, telephone communication, or any other oral, electronic, or written communication, shall be logged by the admissions officer receiving such communication and the substance of such communication will be kept in files separate from applicant files. This log containing the purported sponsors' names shall be subject to disclosure under the Illinois Freedom of Information Act.

#### B. Graduate and Professional Schools

1. **Notwithstanding the prohibitions in Section III.A, if any graduate or professional school requires or permits applicants to forward formal letters of recommendation as part of the admissions process, third-party recommenders may participate in that formal recommendation process.**
2. **In addition, any graduate or professional school may engage in customary solicited or unsolicited conversations with experts in the relevant academic or professional field and with personal knowledge of particular candidates to that graduate or professional school to determine the likelihood of success of those candidates to a particular course of study.**
3. **However, under no circumstance may a university employee with no personal knowledge of a candidate in the relevant academic or professional environment attempt to sponsor an applicant by communicating directly with any admissions staff member either informally or through the formal process of sending a letter of recommendation.**

#### IV. Permitted Inquiries

- A. **Admissions staff members will respond to inquiries regarding the status of any individual applicant's application *only* if the inquiry is made by the applicant or an applicant's parent or legal guardian or spouse.**
- B. In addition, Office of Undergraduate Admissions staff members may communicate with guidance counselors at secondary schools from which students have applied for admission and convey information that the Office of Undergraduate Admissions determines is relevant.
- C. Permitted inquiries to the Office of Undergraduate Admissions shall be logged in the recruitment management system ("Talisma") used by that office.
- D. **Other admissions offices may determine whether and how best to record permitted inquiries to their offices.**

#### V. Unpermitted Third-Party Inquiries

- A. **Inquiries, whether by oral, electronic, or written communication, to any admissions staff member by a third party other than those permitted in Section IV (an "improper third party") is prohibited. "Improper third party" includes, without limitation, university employees, including faculty and deans, without admissions responsibilities, Trustees, and state and federal government officials or employees.**
- B. Under no circumstance shall any admissions staff member grant access to applicant information or share such information with any individuals other than an applicant or an applicant's parent or legal guardian, spouse or secondary high school guidance counselor, admissions staff members, and university faculty and deans with admissions responsibilities. **Without limiting the foregoing, the following persons shall not have access to applicant information and shall not have such information shared with them: university employees, including faculty and deans, without admissions responsibilities, Trustees, and state and federal government officials or employees.**
- C. **Nothing in this section should be construed to limit admissions staff members from otherwise communicating generally available information to persons contacting any admissions office, including application deadlines, admissions criteria, and required application information.**

## VI. Procedures for Processing Improper Third-Party Inquiries

- A. Improper third-party inquiries made directly to the Office of Undergraduate Admissions shall be forwarded to an admissions counselor. **Improper third-party inquiries made to other admissions offices within colleges or units shall be forwarded to the administrative head of admissions in those colleges and departments.**
- B. The admissions counselor shall communicate to the third party making the inquiry the policy contained in Section III. **If the inquiry is made to an admissions office of a graduate or professional school, then the administrative head of admissions of that office shall communicate to the third party making the inquiry the policy contained in Section III.**
- C. The admissions counselor will log the communication with the inquiring third party and retain the substance of the communication in a separate, web-based system for logging improper third-party inquiries (the "Third-Party Inquiry Log"). **The administrative head of admissions for the other admissions office will also log improper third-party inquiries into the Third-Party Inquiry Log. This Third-Party Inquiry Log will allow admissions staff members to input information, but will not allow such individuals to view or extract information that has been logged. This Third-Party Inquiry Log containing the inquiring third-party names will be subject to disclosure under the Illinois Freedom of Information Act.**
- D. Improper third-party inquiries made directly to other persons with admissions responsibilities shall be directed either to the admissions counselor or to the administrative head of the appropriate admissions office, as applicable. In addition, the person receiving the inquiry shall communicate the substance of the inquiry to that admissions counselor, who shall log that communication into the Third-Party Inquiry Log pursuant to Section VI(c).
- E. **Improper third-party inquiries made to any university employee without admissions responsibilities are not required to be logged. The university employee shall communicate to the third-party the policy contained in Section III. However, if that university employee communicates the inquiry to any admissions staff member or person with admissions responsibilities, then that admissions staff member or person with admissions responsibilities shall forward that information to an admissions counselor or administrative head of the appropriate admissions office, to be logged into the Third-Party Inquiry Log in accordance with this Section VI.**
- F. **The data contained in the Third-Party Inquiry Log shall be made available to the Senate Admissions Committee on an annual basis. The Senate Admissions Committee shall review the data and present a report of its findings to the Senate. In addition, all such data shall be subject to the Illinois Freedom of Information Act.**
- G. **In addition, any admissions staff member who believes that an abuse of this Policy Prohibiting Improper Influence in Admissions is occurring or has occurred shall log this concern into the Third-Party Inquiry Log and shall have the ability to do so anonymously, if desired.**

## **VI. Sanctions**

- A. Any university employee who violates any part of this Policy Prohibiting Improper Influence in Admissions shall be subject to discipline up to and including termination.
- B. Any member of the Board of Trustees who violates any part of this Policy Prohibiting Improper Influence in Admissions shall be considered to have committed malfeasance and be subject to removal from the Board of Trustees by the Governor of the State of Illinois.

## What Does this Mean for Me as a Graduate College Employee?

For Graduate College employees without admissions responsibilities, you should refer the inquiry to a graduate admissions employee. You are allowed to respond to inquiries from and share information with the applicant, the applicant's academic department/college faculty and staff, and with another Graduate College employee. You are allowed to respond to inquiries from the applicant's recommenders. You may accept information from the applicant's recommenders in the form of formal letters, emails, and phone communications; however, you may not discuss the applicant's admission status with them. Please note that these policies also apply to all financial aid (assistantships, fellowship, tuition waivers, scholarships, etc.) inquiries. These policies apply to all forms of inquiries, including phone calls, emails, faxes, etc.

Applicants are provided with the following guidelines when choosing recommenders: "Please list the identities of three (3) persons who will be submitting letters of recommendation on your behalf. Recommendations should be provided from employers, supervisors, professors, or others who are able to comment on your professional and educational goals and potential (no friends or relatives please)." With this, recommenders are provided with the following guidelines when writing letters: "Please submit a statement of recommendation addressing the applicant's abilities to pursue graduate studies and research. Please address the following as applicable: the applicant's ability to work with peers, supervisors and subordinates; teaching potential; outstanding abilities or talents or liabilities and weaknesses; and oral and written communication skills." Only recommenders (and their letters) who have followed these guidelines should be reviewed for admission.

Communication with the International Student and Scholars office at Urbana or at other institutions regarding Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) issues for international applicants is also allowed if determined critical to the issuance of a visa eligibility document for the applicant.

Sharing admissions information or discussing an applicant with all others is prohibited.

If you are contacted about an applicant's admission status by a recommender, your responsibilities are:

- Notify the recommender that while you may accept supporting information for the applicant's file, you may not discuss the applicant's admission status without expressed written permission from the applicant.

If you are contacted about an applicant's admission status by a parent or spouse, your responsibilities are:

- Notify the parent or spouse that you may not discuss the applicant's admission status without expressed written permission from the applicant.
- Ensure that no record of the inquiry is included in the applicant's file and that the third-party information/inquiry is not considered in the admissions decision-making process

If you are contacted about an applicant by someone other than the applicant, recommender, parent, or spouse, your responsibilities are:

- Notify the inquirer that no outside information will be considered in the admissions process
- Notify the inquirer that such third-party inquiries are not permitted and will be logged
- Log the inquiry in the Admissions Inquiry Log at <http://go.illinois.edu/admissionslog>
- Ensure that no record of the inquiry is included in the applicant's file and that the third-party information/inquiry is not considered in the admissions decision-making process

When receiving calls from a denied applicant, you should notify the caller of the applicant's right to appeal if s/he has compelling new information relevant to the admissions criteria for consideration. You should refer the applicant to the academic department for more their appeal procedures.

Inappropriate activities or attempts to circumvent these policies should be reported to the Ethics Officer or reported anonymously using the anonymous report feature of the Admissions Inquiry Log.

## What Does this Mean for Me as a Department Admissions Staff Member?

You are allowed to respond to inquiries from the applicant or the applicant's recommenders. You may accept information from the applicant's recommenders in the form of formal letters, emails, and phone communications; however, you may not discuss the applicant's admission status with them.

Applicants are provided with the following guidelines when choosing recommenders: "Please list the identities of three (3) persons who will be submitting letters of recommendation on your behalf. Recommendations should be provided from employers, supervisors, professors, or others who are able to comment on your professional and educational goals and potential (no friends or relatives please)." With this, recommenders are provided with the following guidelines when writing letters: "Please submit a statement of recommendation addressing the applicant's abilities to pursue graduate studies and research. Please address the following as applicable: the applicant's ability to work with peers, supervisors and subordinates; teaching potential; outstanding abilities or talents or liabilities and weaknesses; and oral and written communication skills." Only recommenders (and their letters) who have followed these guidelines should be reviewed for admission.

You are allowed to share and discuss information about an applicant with faculty and other admissions staff within your academic department and academic college, as well as with the Graduate College staff. Please note that these policies also apply to all financial aid (assistantships, fellowship, tuition waivers, scholarships, etc.) inquiries. These policies apply to all forms of inquiries, including phone calls, emails, faxes, etc.

Communication with the International Student and Scholars office at Urbana or at other institutions regarding Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) issues for international applicants is also allowed if determined critical to the issuance of a visa eligibility document for the applicant.

Sharing admissions information or discussing an applicant with all others is prohibited.

If you are contacted about an applicant's admission status by a recommender, your responsibilities are:

- Notify the recommender that while you may accept supporting information for the applicant's file, you may not discuss the applicant's admission status without expressed written permission from the applicant.

If you are contacted about an applicant's admission status by a parent or spouse, your responsibilities are:

- Notify the parent or spouse that you may not discuss the applicant's admission status without expressed written permission from the applicant.
- Ensure that no record of the inquiry is included in the applicant's file and that the third-party information/inquiry is not considered in the admissions decision-making process

If you are contacted about an applicant by someone other than the applicant, recommender, parent, or spouse, your responsibilities are:

- Notify the inquirer that no outside information will be considered in the admissions process
- Notify the inquirer that such third-party inquiries are not permitted and will be logged
- Log the inquiry in the Admissions Inquiry Log at <http://go.illinois.edu/admissionslog>
- Ensure that no record of the inquiry is included in the applicant's file and that the third-party information/inquiry is not considered in the admissions decision-making process

When receiving calls from a denied applicant, you should notify the caller of the applicant's right to appeal if s/he has compelling new information relevant to the admissions criteria for consideration. This appeal should be reviewed by your Department Head or Director of Graduate Study.

Inappropriate activities or attempts to circumvent these policies should be reported to the Ethics Officer or reported anonymously using the anonymous report feature of the Admissions Inquiry Log.