CONFLICT OF INTEREST & CONFLICT OF COMMITMENT
SAMPLE SCENARIOS FOR SUPPORT STAFF—AUGUST 2011

NOTE: THESE SCENARIOS COMPREHEND CONFLICTS THAT A STAFF MEMBER MAY BE OBLIGED TO REPORT IN HIS OR HER DISCLOSURE REPORT.

1. **Conflict Scenario**: You are a Supply Consultant for the University of Alberta. You are putting out a Request for Proposal for provision of catering services for five major university events in the coming year. Your brother is a business partner in a large catering company and his company has been invited to submit a proposal.

   **Likely Outcome**
   You should avoid becoming involved in this bidding process in any way, even if you are not part of the team who will make the final decision. Any involvement in the contract-letting process could be seen after the fact by a reasonable observer as a conflict of interest.

2. **Conflict Scenario**: You are a Supply Consultant for the University of Alberta. You are responsible to manage a large contract with a local supplier on behalf of the University. While managing the contract you have established a personal relationship with one of the business partners.

   **Likely Outcome**
   You should report this as a conflict on your Disclosure Form and advise your Supervisor that you have a personal relationship with one of the business partners and ask to be removed from managing that contract. A reasonable observer would see this as a conflict of interest.

3. **Conflict Scenario**: You are an Administrative Assistant at the University and you volunteer on weekends at a local centre for immigrant women. You have contact through your University employment with an individual who wishes to donate $1 million to support the teaching of ESL, and in fact your unit is just starting to negotiate the details of an endowment with the individual. You know that the centre for immigrant women where you volunteer could use the money to build a new building and to start an ESL program. You want to introduce the donor you know “from work” to the Director of the centre.

   **Likely Outcome**
   Your commitment here is to the University of Alberta: you have knowledge of the individual and his intentions by virtue of your employment with the University. Hence you should not introduce the donor to the Director, lest you jeopardize the endowment to the University.
4. **Conflict Scenario:** You are a majority shareholder in a small, specialized software company that produces software that the University uses. The company wants to sell its software to your department. You believe this software will help the department’s administrative team manage some large projects. You want to promote the software to the Chair of your department.

**Likely Outcome**
You should report this as a conflict on your Disclosure Form. If your Chair believes software of this type would benefit the department, he should have the departmental APO contact Supply Management Services and arrange to do a Request for Proposals to supply this software. You should ensure that you do not take part in any assessment of the bids resulting from the RFP.

5. **Conflict Scenario:** You have been hired as a buyer by your department at the University of Alberta. Your husband, also a buyer, has stayed at home since you moved here two years ago to look after your two pre-school children. You want to recommend that your husband be hired to work in the department.

**Likely Outcome**
In most cases, you can avoid a conflict of interest by advising your spouse to apply through the normal channels, and by ensuring that your Director or Manager is aware of the relationship and takes the lead in hiring and supervising your spouse or family member. Supervision in this instance includes decision-making concerning hiring, wages, promotion and evaluation. As a staff member, you must complete an *Allowed Conflict Memorandum of Agreement (linked to COI/COC Assessment Procedure)*, and submit the MOA with your Disclosure Report. If your husband is successful, you should report this as a conflict on your Disclosure Form.

**Note:** The University of Alberta hires on the basis of merit. It is committed to equal access by all individuals to employment opportunities at the University. Thus, family of staff members and individuals closely associated with staff members (e.g., former business partners) may apply for, and shall be considered in competition for, positions within the University. Additionally, the employment of the aforementioned individuals does not in itself constitute a conflict of interest. Staff members are advised to avoid being involved in the hiring or supervision of any person who could be construed by a reasonable observer to be given an unfair advantage on the basis of his or her relationship with a staff member.

6. **Conflict Scenario:** As well as being an employee at the University, you are an accomplished local artist whose paintings have been highly praised and are appreciating in value. You would like to sell some of your paintings to the University.

**Likely Outcome**
As a private citizen, you are free to contact the unit that purchases art for the University or any other potential purchasers at the University, provided they are not purchasing art with resources controlled by you. You should not use University time to make these contacts/sales, and you should report that you have sold paintings to the University on your Disclosure Report. If you are in the position to purchase art, you should excuse yourself from making purchases in which your art would be considered.
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7. **Conflict Scenario:** You have recently changed jobs at the University. Your new Department/Faculty has contracted your brother’s firm to lead a major undergraduate program review. You participate in the financial accounting for expenses for such consulting contracts.

**Likely Outcome**
You should report this as a conflict on your Disclosure Form and make arrangements for someone other than yourself – your APO, Dean, Associate Dean, or Assistant Dean – to make all decisions regarding finances and dispersal of funds.

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8. **Conflict Scenario:** You are a buyer for your Department/Faculty at the University. You are in charge of issuing an RFP for audio-visual equipment for the University. Your brother owns an audio-visual supply company.

**Likely Outcome**
You should report this as a conflict on your Disclosure Form and describe the steps you have taken, i.e. you should discuss the issue with your Department APO, Director or Manager and they will work with you to manage the conflict. They will most likely assign the work to another buyer. You should excuse yourself from any involvement with the tendering or purchasing.

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9. **Conflict Scenario:** You work as a Research Technician at the University and you also work as a casual employee with a new technology start-up company that is interested in the latest discoveries in your department at the University. You have recently invested your own money in stock in the company.

**Likely Outcome: Assessed**
You should report this as a conflict on your Disclosure Form. You should decline to provide any information to the private company, referring the company’s officers to the designated departmental contact.

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10. **Conflict Scenario:** You have a purchasing position at the University; however, you also like to volunteer at sporting events in the city and you are on the planning team for the “Bring the Olympics to Edmonton in 2018” Committee. You receive a small monthly stipend from the Committee to cover out-of-pocket expenses and you also receive free air tickets for fact finding trips. The sense of satisfaction you receive from this volunteer work is immense, but you have noticed that you are often obliged to take phone calls at work and to be away for Committee meetings or fact-finding missions.

**Likely Outcome**
You are obliged to report this conflict of commitment on your Disclosure Form. Your Reporting Officer will need to consider to what extent, if any, your activities benefit the University. The assessment will be affected by the position you hold at the University; your activities may be deemed not only permissible, but also quite valuable to the University.
11. **Conflict Scenario:** You have hired a graduate student from your department to tutor your son in high school chemistry.

**Likely Outcome**
You should inform your Reporting Officer and determine whether or not this represents a conflict. If the employee has direct influence over the graduate student’s success, this will be a conflict of interest, i.e. your son fails the Chemistry 30 examination and blames the tutor, and you are obliged to report this as a conflict on your Disclosure Form.

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12. **Conflict situation:** You are an administrative support employee at the University and are responsible for making arrangements for various community outreach events. Your daughter has a catering company that specializes in providing refreshments for such events. You have a university credit card to cover the costs of such events.

**Likely Outcome**
You should report the conflict situation and discuss it with your Reporting Officer. The likely outcome is that arrangements for catering services will be assigned to another employee. In the event that you work independently, another employee may be designated to oversee the selection of the catering service to ensure that the university is getting the best value.

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13. **Conflict Scenario:** You work as a technician in a testing laboratory that uses animals. You have a University credit card and are responsible for purchasing food and other supplies for the animals. Your neighbour has a pet food and supply store and has offered to give the University a good deal.

**Likely Outcome**
You should report this as a conflict on your Disclosure Form and make arrangements for someone other than yourself – another technician or staff person – to make all decisions regarding the source of food and supplies for the laboratory animals.

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14. **Conflict Scenario:** You are a NASA steward and occasionally take phone calls related to your NASA work at your office or occasionally have a small amount of copying to perform in relation to your NASA work.

**Likely Outcome**
Within reason, official work undertaken on behalf of NASA is not considered a conflict.