

SOUTHWEST TENNESSEE COMMUNITY COLLEGE**SUBJECT: Code of Conduct****EFFECTIVE DATE: January 1, 2006; Revised Feb. 17, 2012; Revised October 15, 2021;****Revised January 22, 2024 (removing diversity and updating job title); Revised July 1, 2026****(citing new Faculty Disciplinary Action policy and removing gender/sexual orientation)**

Employees of Southwest Tennessee Community College (“Southwest” or “the College”) are integral participants in the fulfillment of the College's mission. Southwest employees are expected to exhibit a high degree of professionalism and personal integrity consistent with the pursuit of excellence in the conduct of their responsibilities.

The College has shared values by which our actions are to be measured and governed. The Code of Conduct identifies some commonly held values and associated behaviors. Violations of the Code of Conduct may be cause for disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment as outlined in the Conduct and Behavior Policy.

Faculty Disciplinary Action

On July 1, 2026, the Tennessee Board of Regents (TBR) published a Faculty Disciplinary Action policy, 5.01.00.03. Southwest also created and published a policy by the same name that mirrors the TBR policy. The Southwest policy number is 5:00:00:00/56. As a result, while Southwest faculty members are expected to abide by this Code of Conduct policy, their discipline will be governed primarily by the Faculty Disciplinary Action policy.

Principles Applicable to All Employees**Respect for Persons**

Southwest places a high value on human relations and human rights. Consistent with these values, the College strives to maintain a work environment that is characterized by mutual respect for all individuals. Such an environment has no place for harassment or discrimination based on race, gender, religion, national origin, age, veteran status, or disability; such behavior will not be tolerated. College faculty and staff are expected to treat one another, students, and the general public in a cordial and respectful manner. The following behaviors are specifically prohibited:

- Sexual harassment of employees, students, donors, customers, visitors, vendors or any other person on College property or during College activities.

- Disorderly conduct, to include but not limited to, displaying blatant or public disrespect, using discriminatory, abusive, or threatening language, fighting, provoking a fight, or attempting bodily harm or injury to another employee or to any other individual, or threatening physical action or injury on College property or during College activities; or other conduct which threatens or endangers the health, safety, or well-being of any person.
- Openly making or publishing false, vicious, or malicious statements concerning the College, any employee, student or customer.

The College recognizes that conduct unrelated to race, color, national origin, gender, religion, age, veteran status and disability can also create an undesirable work environment. In an effort to preserve a comfortable space for all employees, the following conduct is prohibited: abuse, discrimination, prejudice, intimidation, harassment, favoritism, lapse of integrity, breach of confidentiality and breach of trust.

Respect for Property

Members of the College community must be responsible caretakers of the College's resources. Consistent with this value, employees are expected to exercise reasonable care in the use of College property and to report any damage to College property to their supervisors and/or other appropriate College officials. The following activities are specifically prohibited:

- Willful or negligent damage to College property.
- Theft or dishonesty.
- Tampering with or wantonly destroying College data, records, or other information, gaining unauthorized access to such information, disclosing confidential information, or otherwise misusing College data or information.
- Unauthorized use of College vehicles, mail services, identification and credit cards, telephones, computers, computer equipment, or other College equipment or materials. Computers and computer accounts are provided to employees to assist them in the performance of their jobs. Employees do not have a right to privacy in anything they create, send or receive on the computer. The College has the right to monitor, for business reasons, any and all aspects of any College computer system, including employee email.
- Soliciting, collecting money, or circulating petitions on College property at any time without permission of the chief business officer or designee.

Standards of Safety

The College is committed to maintaining the safety and security of all persons on College property and during College activities and to maintain a safe and healthful working environment. Specific prohibited activities include:

- Carrying firearms, unless the individual is a full-time employee who possesses a valid handgun carry permit. Such an employee may be authorized to carry a handgun on property owned or operated by Southwest, however, the employee must read Tennessee Board of Regents (“TBR”) Policy 7.01.00.00 and comply with it, as well as Tennessee law. An employee who elects to carry a handgun on the College’s property must first register with Police Services. Police Services will verify employment status and permit validity. The name and other identifying information of an employee who elects to carry a handgun is confidential. Police Services will not disclose such information other than as prescribed by Tennessee law.
- Possession of explosives and other lethal material, aside from the firearms discussed above, on College property or during College activities, unless the employee falls within categories of employees who must use explosives and other lethal material in the course of employment. If the employee falls within such a category, the explosives and other lethal material may only be used for the intended purpose for which authority was granted.
- Possessing, drinking, or being under the influence of intoxicants on the job; unlawful possession, use or distribution of alcohol on College property or during College activities; illegally using, manufacturing, possessing, distributing, dispensing, or being under the influence of controlled substances on College property or during College activities.
- Refusal to obey security officials, Civil Defense personnel, or other proper authorities in emergencies.
- Failure to comply with safety rules, regulations or common safety practices.
- Failure to report an accident involving on-the-job injury or damage to College property.
- Smoking in non-designated areas.

Compliance with Laws and College Policy

College staff members are expected to follow acceptable business and professional principles in matters of business and personal conduct and to exhibit personal and professional integrity and objectivity at all times. Faculty and staff of the College are expected to take precautions to ensure that outside financial interests do not place them in conflict with carrying out their duties and responsibilities as employees of the College. Specifically prohibited activities include:

- Falsification of College records.
- Behavior or conduct unacceptable to the College or the community at large.
- Violating federal government security regulations as outlined in contracts.
- Any violation of state or federal law affecting ability to perform assigned work.
- Gambling on College property or during College activities.
- Flagrant violation or failure to observe traffic or parking regulations.
- Employees are encouraged to report to the supervisor, or other College authority, evidence of activity by a state agency, contractor or employee constituting a violation of state or federal law or regulations, illegal harassment or discrimination, sexual harassment, fraud in the operations of government programs, misappropriation of state or federal resources, acts which endanger the health or safety of the public or employees, and mismanagement of programs,

funds, or abuses of authority. Retaliation against an employee reporting evidence of or refusing to carry out a directive to engage in such activity is strictly prohibited.

- Conflicts of Interest as defined by the Conflict of Interest Policy.

Work Performance

The College expects faculty and staff to make a commitment to quality job performance. Issues of poor performance or misconduct compromise both the employee and the organization. For this reason, the College expects work performance to meet high standards at all times. Prohibited behaviors include:

- Insubordination or refusal of an employee to follow instructions or to perform designated work or to comply with directives of authorized College officials.
- Failure to wear proper uniform or identification in the prescribed manner as may be required by the College.
- Sleeping on the job.
- Failure or refusal to maintain or obtain required licensure, certification or registration.
- Instigating or participating in deliberate low productivity and/or interfering with another employee's work.

Standards of Attendance

The College depends upon its employees to carry out the work of the institution; therefore, reliable, consistent attendance is an important requirement of all positions. The following behaviors are prohibited:

- **Repeated Tardiness.** Tardiness is defined as arriving at work past the appointed starting time without supervisory approval.
- **Reporting to work.** Failure of employee to report to their work place at the beginning of the work period. Leaving work prior to the end of the work period or for extended periods of time without informing the supervisor.
- **Absences without prior approval.** Employees who are absent without prior approval may be subject to disciplinary action up to and including termination. An absence for three (3) consecutive days without notification or satisfactory reason is considered a voluntary resignation. Absences without leave not covered by FMLA must be approved in advance by the President.

Screening Committee Members and Others

Southwest seeks to recruit a diverse group of qualified individuals to serve the College. To assist in this regard, screening committees, formerly referenced as search committees, will review applications, interview applicants and confer so they can present a list of potential candidates for consideration. Service as a screening committee member is greatly appreciated. It is a task that

should only be entrusted to employees who will conduct themselves in a professional manner in interactions with other committee members, applicants, open forum participants and anyone who inquiries about the screening process.

Employees should not serve on a screening committee if:

- A conflict of interest likely exists;
- They cannot contribute fair and impartial insight; or
- The time requirement cannot be met.

Confidentiality is of the utmost importance during the screening process and thereafter. A breach of confidentiality can result in considerable damage to the reputations of applicants, committee members, Southwest, TBR and the State. Members must permanently protect the identity of individuals who show interest in a position unless expressly directed to do otherwise by the chair of the committee. Applicants' qualifications and merits should not be shared unless expressly requested by the committee chair.

Members must make great effort to secure and protect committee information. The duty of confidentiality also extends to their colleagues and others who have access to committee information through them.

Members shall refrain from speaking on behalf of the screening committee. The committee chair or the chair's designee is the only member authorized to speak in this capacity. Members will not contact applicants without approval of the chair. If contacted by someone who wishes to discuss a confidential aspect of the screening, a member will refer the person to the chair.

Applicant screening forms will be provided to committee members. All screening forms will be submitted to Human Resources. Committee members must be mindful of what they write on screening forms. Southwest is an equal opportunity employer. The screen committee may not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, creed, ethnic or national origin, sex, disability, age, status as a protected veteran or any other class protected by Federal or State law.

The work performed by committee members will serve as a great aid in the screening process. It should be noted, however, that neither individual committee members nor committees as a whole make hiring decisions. To reiterate, screening committees make recommendations, they do not hire applicants.

To assist committee members with understanding their important roles, mandatory training will be provided prior to the first committee meeting. Screening committee members should be retrained annually. Information regarding screening committee training is provided in Southwest Policy 5:01:00:00/20, Hiring Procedures.

Screening committee members who violate the letter or spirit of this policy, or other regulations regarding the hiring process, will be permanently removed from the screening committee and will no longer be eligible to serve on a Southwest committee for applicant screening, promotion, or

tenure related matters. Depending upon the severity of the violation, disciplinary action can be imposed after review and approval by the President.

**Promotion and Tenure Committee Members,
Promotion and Tenure Appeals Committee Members and Others**

Tenure and promotions are awarded to faculty members who have exhibited professional excellence and outstanding abilities sufficient to demonstrate that their future service and performance justifies such an award.

Employees selected for Promotion and Tenure Committees and the Promotion and Tenure Appeals Committees must abide by all of the requirements of confidentiality and fairness stated in the Screening Committee Members and Others section of this policy. Likewise, their colleagues who have access to their committee information shall not breach the confidentiality requirement.

Committee members must be fair and impartial. Their tasks affect other faculty members' livelihood, reputations and overall well-being. Their appointment to a committee should not be taken lightly and shall not be used as a bargaining tool or power wielded over others.

Similar to screening committees, the work performed by members of these committees is of great assistance, however, their work is not tantamount to an official selection. Committee members do not, individually or jointly, determine who will be promoted or awarded tenure.

Promotion and Tenure Committee members and Promotion and Tenure Appeals Committee members who violate the letter or spirit of this policy, or other regulations regarding the promotion or tenure process, will be permanently removed from the committee and will no longer be eligible to serve on a Southwest committee for applicant screening, promotion, or tenure related matters. Depending upon the severity of the violation, disciplinary action can be imposed after review and approval by the President.

Principles Applicable to Leaders

Leadership means influencing people by providing purpose, direction, and motivation to accomplish the mission of the college. Therefore, Southwest leaders are expected to have high standards of leadership.

Leadership by Example

We expect leadership by example. Leaders at Southwest are expected to act with integrity, respect, and trust. Their contributions must be sustained, significant, and reliable for the period that they lead. The College does not encourage or support autocratic styles of management. Leaders are expected to employ leadership styles that stem from shared recognition and respect from their subordinates.

Respecting Southwest Processes and Principles

Leaders are expected to not only adhere to this Code of Conduct but also to support and ensure adherence to the Code of Conduct by subordinate employees throughout the organization. Leaders are expected to reflect the values that the College embraces and the behaviors that Southwest holds as paramount. Additionally, they identify short- and long-term goals and strategies that translate into departmental or organizational objectives. They also take care to act in accordance with Southwest governance principles and structures and create plans to achieve objectives working within the College system to change the culture.

Delegation

Leaders are expected to delegate appropriate tasks and responsibilities to their teams. Leaders are expected to balance hard work on their own – leadership by example – with delegation to others and hard work on their own. A leader's foremost goal is ensuring that their team members and team succeed.

Duty to the College

When acting in their capacity as leaders, leaders should not ignore their own beliefs, feelings, and principles but must hold the interests of their team and the College above their own convictions. Leaders make difficult choices but are careful to act in the best interests of the College.

Employee Performance

A well-trained and highly skilled workforce is critical to the College's success. Leaders are responsible for the competence and performance of their employees. Leaders must ensure that their employees have the knowledge and skills necessary to perform their duties. When deficiencies are identified, efforts should always be made to retrain/reassign employees with performance problems. Supervisors are expected to focus on the causes of performance failures and eliminate them, rather than simply administering punitive action to the employee in question. Leaders are to ensure that appropriate remedial and developmental opportunities are made available to their employees. Leaders are expected to actively support their employees' professional growth and development.

Leadership Qualities

A leader with a vision has a clear, vivid picture of where to go, as well as a firm grasp on what constitutes success and how to achieve it. A leader must be able to communicate his/her vision in terms that cause followers to buy into it. The following are the principle leadership qualities upon which this Code of Conduct is founded:

Integrity is the integration of outward actions and inner values. A person of integrity is the same on the outside and on the inside. Such an individual can be trusted because he or she never veers from inner values, even when it might be expeditious to do so. A leader must earn the trust of followers and therefore must display integrity.

Honest dealings, predictable reactions, well-controlled emotions, and an absence of tantrums and harsh outbursts are all signs of integrity. A leader who is centered in integrity will be more approachable by followers.

Dedication means spending whatever time or energy as necessary to accomplish the task at hand. A leader inspires dedication by example, doing whatever it takes to complete the next step toward the vision.

Magnanimity means giving credit where it is due. A magnanimous leader ensures that credit for successes is spread as widely as possible throughout the College. Conversely, a good leader takes personal responsibility for failures.

Openness means being able to listen to new ideas, even if they do not conform to the usual way of thinking. Good leaders are able to suspend judgment while listening to others' ideas, as well as accept new ways of doing things thought of by someone else.

Creativity is the ability to think differently, to get outside of the box that constrains solutions. Creativity gives leaders the ability to see things that others have not seen and thus lead followers in new directions.

Fairness means dealing with others consistently and justly. A leader must check all the facts and hear everyone's views before passing judgment. He or she must avoid leaping to conclusions based on incomplete evidence.

Leadership Failure

Leadership failure is by far the most serious, far-reaching, and impactful of all performance issues. The effects on morale and customer service of poor leadership are so great and of such significance to the College that supervisors' incapable of handling people simply cannot remain in leadership positions.

Leaders who demonstrate deficiency in a leadership competence are expected to take immediate and substantial action to remediate the deficiency. Examples of this type of failure include and are not limited to, "passing the buck," superficial communication efforts, indecision, permissiveness, poor personal habits, or lack of concern, particularly about people. Such important shortcomings should be apparent to higher levels of management and be corrected before the results are severe. In such cases, remedial actions must be taken due to the serious ripple effects of the lack of leadership. Failing to do so may constitute a leadership failure resulting in removal from a leadership position with no guarantee of placement in a non-leadership position.

Leaders who engage in acts that significantly undermine their credibility or the credibility of College leadership will be removed from a leadership position with no assurance of placement in another position at the College. Such acts include but are not limited to intimidation, favoritism, harassment, abuse, breach of trust, lapse of integrity, and prejudice.

Responsible**Source of Policy:** Human Resources**Administrator:** VP of People and Culture**TBR Policy Reference:** 5.01.00.03; 7.01.00.00

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5:00:00:00/15; 5:00:00:00/20

Related Policy: 5:01:02:00/28; 5:01:02:00/29**TBR Guideline Reference:** System Office
Recruitment Procedures**Approved:** 
President**Date:** July 1, 2026