

# ALABAMA FIRE COLLEGE

## AND PERSONNEL STANDARDS & EDUCATION COMMISSION



### Investigator Financial Conflict of Interest Policy

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Approved by:

**David M. Russell, Executive Director**

## 1. KEY DEFINITIONS

1. A **clinical trial** is a prospective or behavioral research study of human subjects that involves one or more Investigators who directly observe a person or people, and/or who collect data to answer a scientific or medical question about the safety or potential benefit of an intervention such as medication, device, teaching concept, training method or behavioral change.
2. **Conflict of Commitment** refers to situations in which an Investigator is dedicating time to Outside Activities and Interests in excess of the time permitted by institutional policy, or to Outside Activities and Interests that may interfere with or detract from the Investigator's primary responsibility to AFC. The issue regarding Conflicts of Commitment is not necessarily financial or potential bias in judgment, but rather whether an Investigator's commitment of time and effort are inconsistent with his/her obligations and commitment to Alabama Fire College (**AFC**) and its interests.
3. **Disclosure** refers to the Investigator's disclosure of Significant Financial Interests and Outside Activities and Interests to AFC.
4. **Federally funded research or PHS-funded research** means any research funded by the Public Health Service (PHS) of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and any components of the PHS to which the authority involved may be delegated, including the National Institutes of Health (NIH).
5. **Financial Conflict of Interest (FCOI)** will be deemed to exist when AFC's Conflict of Interest Committee reasonably determines that a Significant Financial Interest disclosed by an Investigator could directly and significantly affect the design, conduct or reporting of the Investigator's research, including but not limited to PHS-funded research.
6. **Foreign component** refers to the performance of any significant scientific element or segment of a research project outside of the U.S., either by the recipient or by a researcher employed by a foreign entity, whether or not grant funds are expended.
7. **Foreign entity** refers to an organization located in a country other than the U.S. and its territories that is subject to the laws of that country, regardless of the citizenship of an Investigator at such organization.
8. Research is considered to involve **human subjects** when an Investigator conducting research obtains data through intervention or interaction with a living individual, or identifiable private information about a living individual.
9. **Investigator** refers to the Principal Investigator (PI) or Project Director (PD) and any other person regardless of title or position who is responsible for the design of training programs and research, collaborative and visiting researchers and subrecipient Investigators who are receiving federal funding awarded through AFC may also be deemed Investigators and be required to comply with this AFC Investigator Conflict of Interest Policy.
10. **Institutional responsibilities** mean an Investigator's professional activities on behalf of AFC including, but not limited to, research, research consultation, teaching, professional practice, institutional committee memberships and service on panels such as Institutional Review Boards or Data or service to the Centers for Disaster Preparedness.
11. **Manage** means taking action to address, reduce or eliminate a Financial Conflict of Interest or Conflict of Commitment so AFC can ensure, to the extent possible, that those responsible for the design, conduct and reporting of research will be free from bias.
12. **Outside Activities and Interests** means an Investigator's outside activities and relationships, even

if not compensated and/or not providing personal financial benefit. Outside Activities and Interests incorporate non-financial interests/relationships and include, for example, the non-compensated provision of services for an outside entity (e.g., consulting, speaking, education, Advisory Board service, and Scientific Advisory Board service), and an Investigator's intellectual property rights and interests relating to any patents or copyrights (other than those owned by AFC) regardless of whether income has been received when the technology underlying the patent or copyright is related to the Investigator's research at AFC.

13. **Regulation or FCOI regulation** refers to 42 CFR Part 50 Subpart F, Promoting Objectivity in Research (grants) and 45 CFR Part 94 (contracts). Refer to **Section 19, Additional Resources**, for links to these federal regulations.
14. **Report** refers to AFC's report of identified Financial Conflicts of Interest to the applicable funding agency affected by the FCOI. In the case of NIH funding, a report about the identified FCOI will be entered into the eRA Commons FCOI Module. Other funding agencies may have separate reporting requirements, and these will be met as required.
15. **Research** means a systematic investigation, study or experiment designed to develop or contribute to generalizable knowledge relating broadly to public health or agriculture, and encompasses basic, translational, and applied research. Research includes any activity for which research funding is available regardless of the source, including an institutional training grant, program project award or research resources award.
16. **Senior/key personnel** means the Principal Investigator or Project Director and any other person identified as senior/key personnel by AFC in the sponsored research application, progress report or any other report submitted to the funding agency.
17. **Significant Financial Interest** means a financial interest of the Investigator, the Investigator's spouse or domestic partner and dependent children, alone or in combination, that reasonably appears to be related to the Investigator's institutional responsibilities for AFC. Types of financial interests include remuneration, equity interests in a publicly and non-publicly traded entity, intellectual property rights and interests, and reimbursed or sponsored travel. Refer to **Section 5, What Should be Disclosed** for a more comprehensive description.
18. **Sponsored/Reimbursed Travel** is any travel expense related to an Investigator's institutional responsibilities that are either paid directly by a third party on behalf of Investigator so that the exact monetary value may not be readily available or for which the Investigator is reimbursed by a third party.
19. A **subrecipient** is defined as all non- AFC Investigators who are receiving funding awarded to AFC, including but not limited to collaborators, consortium members, consultants, contractors, subcontractors, and subawardees.

## 2. PURPOSE OF THE INVESTIGATOR CONFLICT OF INTEREST POLICY

Effective interactions between research institutions, government, the private sector, and industry are essential to bring about the rapid application of scientific training to address the needs of the nation and to maintain the efficient translation of research findings. However, the resulting relationships, now encouraged in many forms, are increasingly complex, and may involve financial interests that give rise to a Financial Conflict of Interest (FCOI) through its potential to directly and significantly impact the design, conduct or reporting of an Investigator's research or training in return for a financial benefit to the Investigator or his/her immediate family.

In addition, a Conflict of Commitment can arise if an Investigator's efforts for AFC are diminished by commitments to outside endeavors. AFC's investigators owe their primary professional allegiance to AFC, and their primary commitment of time and intellectual energies should be to AFC's research and education programs.

Consistent with the foregoing, many U.S. federal agencies, including the National Institutes of Health (NIH), require that their supported Investigators adequately disclose and report all of their outside professional activities, affiliations and appointments, whether or not compensated, and identify all resources made available in support of their research endeavors.

A Financial Conflict of Interest or a Conflict of Commitment may arise even though no improper conduct or unethical behavior has occurred. AFC and its Investigators are responsible for identifying and then managing these Financial Conflict of Interests and Conflicts of Commitment to strengthen accountability and transparency, promote research objectivity, and maintain the integrity of research findings and prudent stewardship of public funds.

AFC's Investigator Conflict of Interest Policy was developed to comply with the specific 2011 federal requirements defined in the United States Department of Health and Human Services' Objectivity in Research Regulations 42 CFR Part 50 Subpart F (grants) and 45 CFR Part 94 (contracts). **Section 20, Additional Resources**, includes links to the federal regulations. The U.S. Public Health Service (PHS) oversees and monitors AFC's compliance with these regulations. PHS may inquire at any time before, during, or after a sponsored research award about an Investigator's Significant Financial Interest or Outside Activities and Interests, and AFC's review and response to such disclosure, regardless of whether the disclosure resulted in AFC finding a FCOI.

All AFC Investigators are responsible for familiarizing themselves with the aforementioned regulations so AFC can effectively work with them to comply with these federal disclosure requirements. In turn, all Investigators will be notified about AFC's conflict of interest requirements, as well as their disclosure responsibilities under this Investigator Conflict of Interest Policy.

AFC's Conflict of Interest Committee and Conflict of Interest Coordinator administer this Policy and emphasize compliance with its requirements, including the review of Annual Disclosure Forms, the training and management of Investigators with regard to Financial Conflict of Interest and Conflict of Commitment requirements, and the timely identification, reporting and management of FCOIs. In those instances where a funding agency or sponsor has more stringent requirements and regulations relating to conflict of interest or conflict of commitment than those in AFC's Investigator Conflict of Interest Policy, the requirements and regulations of that funding agency or sponsor will take precedence.

### **3. WHO MUST COMPLY WITH THE INVESTIGATOR CONFLICT OF INTEREST POLICY?**

AFC implemented specific procedures for annual disclosure and review of all Significant Financial Interests and Outside Activities and Interests so that as an institution the highest standards of integrity and objectivity can be applied to the design, conduct and reporting of research carried out for AFC. Accordingly, this Policy applies to all AFC Investigators regardless of title or position who are responsible for the design and management of research and includes, by way of example, all PhDs, MDs, and non-faculty staff deemed appropriate by AFC's Conflict of Interest Committee. Collaborative and subrecipient Investigators who are receiving federally funded research through AFC may also be required to comply with AFC's Investigator Conflict of Interest Policy.

### **4. MANDATED CONFLICT OF INTEREST TRAINING FOR ALL INVESTIGATORS**

All Investigators who are subject to the Investigator Conflict of Interest Policy are mandated to complete the Investigator Conflict of Interest Policy review and State Ethics training prior to engaging in research for or on behalf of AFC, and at least every four years thereafter or immediately if (1) an Investigator is new to AFC; (2) AFC's Investigator Conflict of Interest Policy changes in a manner affecting Investigator requirements; or (3) AFC finds that an Investigator is non-compliant with AFC's Investigator Conflict of Interest Policy or an applicable management plan.

Subrecipient Investigators who are subject to AFC's Investigator Conflict of Interest Policy and participate

in PHS-funded research are also required to complete the Investigator Conflict of Interest Policy review which will be provided to them as a hardcopy or electronically via the AFC website.

Investigator training completion dates will be monitored by AFC's Conflict of Interest Coordinator.

## 5. WHAT SHOULD BE DISCLOSED?

Each of the following Significant Financial Interests and Outside Activities and Interests should be disclosed on the Annual Disclosure Form and described on an Appendix Form to the extent they reasonably appear to be related to the Investigator's Institutional Responsibilities. In the interest of full transparency, Investigators should err on the side of disclosure.

1. With regard to any **publicly traded entity**, domestic or foreign, the value of any remuneration received from the entity in the 12 months preceding the disclosure plus the value of any equity interest held in the entity as of the date of disclosure that, when aggregated, exceeds \$5,000.
  - Remuneration includes salary and any payment for services not otherwise identified as salary, such as consulting fees, honoraria, and paid authorship.
  - Equity interests include stocks, stock options, or other ownership interests, as determined through reference to public prices or other reasonable measures of fair market value.

**Note:** Disclosure is not required for income from investment vehicles, such as mutual funds, ETFs, and retirement accounts as long as the Investigator does not directly control the investment decisions made in these vehicles.

2. With regard to any **non-publicly traded entity**, domestic or foreign, (a) the value of any remuneration received from the entity in the 12 months preceding the disclosure that when aggregated exceeds \$5,000, and (b) any equity interests in the entity (regardless of value) that are held by the Investigator or his/her spouse or domestic partner or dependent children.
  - Equity interests include stocks, stock options, or other ownership interests.
  - If at the time of disclosure there is no reasonable basis for assessing the fair market value or percentage interest in the non-publicly traded entity, the Investigator must fully describe the nature of the equity interest, including the number of shares owned, voting rights, etc.

3. Financial interests received in connection with **patents, copyrights, know-how or other intellectual property rights** (e.g., royalties, license fees, equity, or other consideration) that when aggregated over the prior 12 months exceeds \$5,000, including consideration received pursuant to an agreement to share royalties related to such intellectual property rights.

**Note:** Disclosure is not required for royalties, fees or other consideration paid to the Investigator by AFC for intellectual property owned by AFC (i.e., not personally owned by the investigator).

4. Any **advisory relationship, consulting, outside teaching, or scientific/academic appointment** including adjunct, visiting or honorary, with any domestic entity (other than AFC), both paid and volunteer, as well as any unpaid appointment that provides the Investigator with access to, or in-kind support for, research materials, supplies, equipment, staff participation or living expenses.

**Note:** Disclosure is not required for the following:

- Salary or other remuneration received from AFC if the Investigator is currently employed or appointed by AFC.
- Income from seminars, lectures, or teaching engagements sponsored by a U.S. federal, state or local government agency, a U.S. institution of higher education, a U.S. academic teaching hospital, a U.S. medical center or a U.S. research institute that is affiliated with a U.S. institution of higher education as defined in 20 U.S.C. 1001(a).

- Income from service on advisory committees or review panels for a U.S. federal, state or local government agency, a U.S. institution of higher education, a U.S. academic teaching hospital, a U.S. medical center or a U.S. research institute that is affiliated with a U.S. institution of higher education as defined in 20 U.S.C. 1001(a).
5. **Any relationship with a foreign entity or government** including, but not limited to, any involvement with a government talent recruitment program or similar-type program (e.g., Thousand Talents Program), both paid and volunteer, and any position or scientific appointment stemming from a foreign government, which includes local, provincial or equivalent governments, government agencies, institutions of higher education, academic teaching hospitals, medical centers, or research institutes that are affiliated with an institution of higher education.
  6. All **reimbursed expenses, gifts, gratuities, favors, lodging, or entertainment offers** that when aggregated over the prior 12 months exceeds \$1,000. As a reminder, Investigators may not solicit or accept reimbursed expenses, gifts, gratuities, favors, lodging, or excessive entertainment for themselves, his/her spouse or domestic partner or dependent children, alone or in combination, or for any person or organization that does business or has the potential of doing business with AFC. Exempt from this prohibition are non-cash gifts of nominal value involving normal and ordinary social amenities or sales promotions.
  7. **Sponsored/Reimbursed Travel** that meets the following criteria:
    - Travel **within the United States** received from a U.S. entity that when aggregated exceeds \$5,000.

**Note:** Disclosure is not required for Sponsored/Reimbursed Travel stemming from a U.S. federal, state, or local government agency, a U.S. institution of higher education as defined in 20 U.S.C. 1001(a), a U.S. academic teaching hospital, a U.S. medical center, or a U.S. research institute that is affiliated with a U.S. institution of higher education.

- Travel **outside the United States** received from a U.S. or foreign entity\* regardless of dollar amount.

\*Foreign entities include, but are not limited to, those stemming from a foreign company or government, including local, provincial or equivalent governments, government agencies, institutions of higher education, academic teaching hospitals, medical centers, or research institutes that are affiliated with an institution of higher education.

**Information needed for the disclosure of Sponsored/Reimbursed Travel:**

- Identity of the sponsor/organizer.
- Month and year of the travel.
- Financial value by range of the travel.
- Value of any associated honorarium.
- Purpose of the travel.
- Destination of the travel.
- Time duration of the travel.

Most scientific journals have implemented policies requiring authors to declare competing financial interests in relation to work published in those journals. Such requirements, including how financial interests are defined under those policies, are distinct from federal requirements relating to federally funded research and should not be used as a guide to what information an Investigator needs to disclose under AFC's Investigator Conflict of Interest Policy.

## 6. WHO MUST SUBMIT AN ANNUAL DISCLOSURE FORM?

At time of appointment/employment, all Investigators are required to enter an initial Annual Disclosure Form and associated Appendix Forms that describe all Significant Financial Interests and Outside Activities and Interests related to their Institutional Responsibilities and then submit a new Annual Disclosure Form each subsequent year thereafter. Refer to **Section 7, *Updating the Annual Disclosure Form*** for additional information. Submitted Annual Disclosure Forms are retained by the Financial Conflict Coordinator. Collaborative and visiting researchers and subrecipient Investigators who are subject to AFC's Investigator Conflict of Interest Policy and participating in PHS-funded research are also required to submit an Annual Disclosure Form, which will be provided as an electronic copy.

## **7. UPDATING THE ANNUAL DISCLOSURE FORM**

All Investigators are required to simultaneously submit a current, accurate Annual Disclosure Form and associated Appendix Forms that identify and describe both existing and new Significant Financial Interests and Outside Activities and Interests related to their Institutional Responsibilities into the FCOI portal by the yearly November 15<sup>th</sup> deadline. Subrecipient Investigators will complete an electronic Annual Disclosure Form based on their particular funding cycle. Updated disclosures should also include any FCOIs identified on a project that was transferred from another institution.

Investigators are required to promptly disclose Significant Financial Interests and Outside Activities and Interests to accurately reflect their external activities as follows:

1. Disclose Significant Financial Interests and Outside Activities and Interests no later than at the time of application for PHS-funded research.
2. Within 30 days of acquiring and/or discovering a new Significant Financial Interest or Outside Activity or Interest, including through purchase, marriage, or inheritance.
3. Within 30 days of a material change to a previously disclosed Significant Financial Interest or Outside Activity or Interest.
4. At least annually in accordance with the April 30<sup>th</sup> deadline, which coincides with the filing deadline of the State of Alabama Statement of Economic Interest.

## **8. ANNUAL DISCLOSURE FORM REVIEWED BY THE CONFLICT OF INTEREST COMMITTEE**

AFC's Conflict of Interest Coordinator will review the Annual Disclosure Form and any new or modified Significant Financial Interests or Outside Activities or Interests disclosed throughout the year, and as such, may request further information or clarification from the Investigator. AFC's Conflict of Interest Coordinator will review each of the Investigator's disclosures and determine whether a Significant Financial Interest or Outside Activity or Interest is related to PHS funded research.

If there are Significant Financial Interests or Outside Activities or Interests related to the Investigator's funded research, these relationships must be examined and dealt with according to AFC and funding agency policies on conflict of interest. A personal financial interest with an entity would be reasonably considered related to an Investigator's research in circumstances such as the following:

1. Entity sponsors research at AFC in which the Investigator is directly involved.
2. Entity has financial interests that could reasonably be considered to have a potential influence on the design, conduct or reporting of the Investigator's research.
3. Entity has a reasonable possibility of being financially affected by Investigator's research.

4. Entity makes monetary or in-kind gifts or loans to AFC that benefit the Investigator's research including a gift or loan of equipment.
5. Entity licenses intellectual property from AFC in which the Investigator has a financial interest.

AFC's Conflict of Interest Committee, which is comprised of AFC administrators, reviews all Significant Financial Interests and Outside Activities and Interests to identify and address any issues.

A FCOI will be deemed to exist when AFC, acting through its Conflict of Interest Committee and following the procedures described in this Investigator Conflict of Interest Policy, reasonably determines that a Significant Financial Interest could directly and significantly affect the design, conduct or reporting of the Investigator's research. AFC's Conflict of Interest Committee reviews and analyzes the specific circumstances of a Significant Financial Interest by taking into account such factors as the nature of the Investigator's relationship to an outside entity, the dollar value of that relationship, and the overlap between that relationship and the Investigator's research. AFC's Conflict of Interest Committee may, if warranted, involve the Investigator in determining whether a Significant Financial Interest is related to the research in question.

A Conflict of Commitment will be deemed to exist when AFC, acting through its Conflict of Interest Committee and following the procedures described in the Investigator Conflict of Interest Policy, reasonably determines that an Investigator's Outside Activities and Interests are inconsistent with his/her obligations and commitments to AFC and its interests. Conflicts of Commitment are handled in consultation with the Investigator and, if necessary, his/her supervisor, and generally result in reduction or elimination of one or more Outside Activities and Interests.

## **6. MANAGING A FINANCIAL CONFLICT OF INTEREST**

If a Significant Financial Interest is identified as a FCOI, AFC's Conflict of Interest Committee will take action to manage the FCOI by robustly reducing or eliminating the conflict by designing a management plan or mechanism appropriate for the specific situation. During the design process, AFC's Conflict of Interest Committee may query any other AFC Committees, departments or individuals as necessary to solicit additional information and alternate ideas. AFC's Conflict of Interest Committee will, as necessary, accept, modify or reject the proposed management plan. After the management plan is approved by AFC's Conflict of Interest Committee, the Conflict of Interest Coordinator will forward a detailed letter to the Investigator describing the management plan and its implementation.

This written plan will require that the Investigator take certain steps according to guidelines approved by AFC's Conflict of Interest Committee. Conditions or restrictions that might be imposed to manage a FCOI include the following:

- Disclosure of the FCOI to collaborators.
- Disclosure of the FCOI directly to training participants
- Disclosure of the FCOI in publications, journals, and posters, etc.
- Disclosure of the FCOI to audiences at conferences and seminars.
- Monitoring of research, proposals and data by independent peer reviewers.
- Modification of the research plan.
- Removal of an affected Investigator from participation in all or the portion of the research funded by the entity affected by a Significant Financial Interest.
- Divestiture of a Significant Financial Interest by the affected Investigator.
- Limiting the dollar value of fees received and/or stock ownership.
- Severance of the relationship creating the conflict.

The Investigator will be asked to review and sign the letter to acknowledge agreement with the management plan, or the Investigator may, at this point, appeal the findings of AFC's Conflict of Interest



Committee to The Personnel and Education Standards Committee by forwarding a written request for reconsideration of these findings to AFC's Director and AFC's General Counsel within thirty days. The Personnel and Education Standards Committee determine whether the FCOI exists and the appropriate plan for managing the FCOI. The Personnel and Education Standards Committee has the final review and authority regarding the management of all FCOIs.

## 7. REPORTING A FINANCIAL CONFLICT OF INTEREST TO THE FUNDING AGENCY

AFC will promptly notify the appropriate funding agency about any corrective action taken or to be taken in a situation of noncompliance.

1. With regard to a **new NIH - sponsored research award**, AFC will report the identified FCOI to the NIH through the electronic Research Administration (eRA) Commons FCOI Module. AFC will submit the FCOI report before dispensing or spending any funds. If the FCOI is eliminated prior to dispensing or spending any funds, then no FCOI report is required. In addition, AFC is required to submit a FCOI report for FCOIs identified for subrecipient Investigators, if applicable. Refer to **Section 18, Subrecipient Conflict of Interest Compliance**, for more information regarding subrecipients.
2. With regard to an **ongoing NIH - sponsored research award**, AFC will report to the NIH through the eRA Commons FCOI Module information about the identified FCOI within 60 days of the FCOI's identification. For any Significant Financial Interest that is identified as a FCOI subsequent to AFC's initial FCOI report during an ongoing NIH funded research project, AFC shall within 60 days, review the Significant Financial Interest disclosure, determine whether it is related to the research, and, if so, implement on at least an interim basis, a management plan that shall specify the actions that have been and will be, taken to manage the FCOI.
3. Annual FCOI follow-up reports will be provided to the NIH for any FCOI previously reported by AFC. The annual FCOI report will specify whether the FCOI is still being managed, describe any changes to the management plan or explain why the FCOI no longer exists. AFC will provide annual FCOI reports for the duration of the project period, including extensions with or without funds, as prompted by the ERA Commons generated email that requests that the follow-up report be submitted.
4. AFC will meet the reporting requirements pertaining to FCOIs for other federally funded agencies, including, DOD, DOE, NSF and USDA as instructed by the particular agency.
5. With regard to a **new, non-federally funded award**, AFC may, if warranted, disclose through written notification, information about the identified FCOI to any corporation, educational institution, non-profit entity, private foundation, trust and individual donor before dispensing or spending any funds.
6. With regard to an **ongoing, non-federally funded award**, AFC may, if warranted, disclose through written notification, information about the identified FCOI to any corporation, educational institution, non-profit entity, private foundation, trust and individual donor during the award's duration.

## 8. WHAT INFORMATION IS SUBMITTED TO THE NIH ABOUT A FINANCIAL CONFLICT OF INTEREST?

Information submitted to the NIH about an identified FCOI includes the following:

- Project number/contract number.
- Name of the Principal Investigator or Project Director, or the contact PI/PD if a multiple PI/PD model is used.
- Name of the Investigator with the FCOI.

- Name of the entity with which the Investigator has the FCOI.
- Statement about how the FCOI was managed.
  - The nature of the FCOI (e.g., equity interest, consulting fees, intellectual property rights and interests, travel reimbursement, and honoraria).
  - The value of the financial interest; \$0-\$4,999, \$5,000-\$9,999, \$10,000-\$19,999;
  - amounts between \$20,000-\$100,000 by increments of \$20,000; amounts above
  - \$100,000 by increments of \$50,000; or a statement that a value cannot be readily
  - determined through reference to public prices or reasonable measures of fair market value.
  - A description about how the FCOI relates to the research and the basis for AFC's determination that a Significant Financial Interest conflicts with such research.
- The value of the financial interest; \$0-\$4,999, \$5,000-\$9,999, \$10,000-\$19,999; amounts between \$20,000-\$100,000 by increments of \$20,000; amounts above \$100,000 by increments of \$50,000; or a statement that a value cannot be readily determined through reference to public prices or reasonable measures of fair market value.
- A description about how the FCOI relates to the research and the basis for AFC's determination that a Significant Financial Interest conflicts with such research.

A description of the key elements of AFC's management plan must also be submitted to the NIH including the following information:

- Role and principal duties of the conflicted Investigator in the research project.
- Conditions of the management plan.
- How the management plan is designed to safeguard objectivity in the research project.
- Confirmation of the Investigator's agreement to the management plan.
- How the management plan will be monitored to facilitate Investigator compliance.
- Other information as needed.

Other funding agencies outside the NIH may require that different information to be submitted, and AFC will meet their requirements as instructed.

## **9. PUBLIC ACCESSIBILITY TO AFC'S INVESTIGATOR CONFLICT OF INTEREST POLICY AND IDENTIFIED FINANCIAL CONFLICTS OF INTEREST**

AFC's Investigator Conflict of Interest Policy is publicly accessible on its website (click here <https://www.alabamafirecollege.org/about-us/finance/> ). State of Alabama Statement of Economic Interest Forms are also publicly available for affected employees here <https://seiform.alabama.gov/>

AFC maintains public accessibility to Significant Financial Interests of senior/key personnel that were identified as FCOIs and reported to the NIH. As such, AFC responds to all written requests for information within ten business days and then releases the following information about such Significant Financial Interest.

- The name of the Investigator.
- The title and role of the Investigator with respect to the research project.
- Name of the entity with which the Significant Financial Interest is held.
- The nature of the Significant Financial Interest.
- Approximate value of the Significant Financial Interest as determined by dollar range \$0-\$4,999, \$5,000-\$9,999, \$10,000-\$19,999; amounts between \$20,000-\$100,000 by increments of \$20,000; amounts above \$100,000 by increments of \$50,000; or a statement that a value cannot be readily determined through reference to public prices or reasonable measures of fair market value.

## **10. CONTINUED MONITORING OF A FINANCIAL CONFLICT OF INTEREST AND AFC COMPLIANCE**

AFC continually monitors the FCOI and Investigator compliance with the FCOI management plan throughout the year and until the completion of the research project. As necessary, AFC's Conflict of Interest Committee may require and develop a project specific monitoring process, which may include appointing an AFC designated official to assist with monitoring the FCOI and Investigator compliance.

## **11. WHAT HAPPENS AFTER FCOI IS REPORTED TO THE NIH?**

The NIH evaluates the FCOI information received through the eRA Commons FCOI Module to determine if AFC's actions are sufficient to manage the identified FCOI. The NIH may request and review additional information before implementing, if needed, further corrective actions to ensure research objectivity. If the NIH decides that the particular FCOI will bias the objectivity of the funded research to such an extent that further corrective action is needed or that AFC has not managed the FCOI in accordance with the regulation, it may impose special award conditions, suspend funding or enforce other actions until the matter is sufficiently resolved.

Other funding agencies outside the NIH may have a different process, and AFC will meet their requirements as instructed.

## **12. NON-COMPLIANCE AND ENFORCEMENT**

AFC will establish adequate enforcement mechanisms, provide for employee sanctions and take other administrative action, where appropriate, in the event an Investigator is non-compliant with the Investigator Conflict of Interest Policy or management plan. Violations of this Policy may be grounds for progressive disciplinary action including:

1. Withholding disbursement or distribution of project-specific funding to the Investigator's program.
2. Termination of employment.

An Investigator is non-compliant and in violation of the Policy if an Investigator fails to:

1. Submit an Annual Disclosure Form or provide an update to the Annual Disclosure Form by the deadlines established for such submissions by AFC's Conflict of Interest Committee.
2. Provide AFC's Conflict of Interest Committee with written acknowledgement of a management plan.
3. Provide AFC's Conflict of Interest Committee with requested documentation regarding compliance with a management plan.

If an Investigator fails to comply with AFC's Investigator Conflict of Interest Policy or management plan, within 120 days AFC will:

1. Complete a retrospective review of the key elements (see below) of the Investigator's activities and the NIH funded research project to determine any bias in the design, conduct, or reporting of

research.

2. Document the retrospective review.
3. Document AFC's determination as to whether any NIH funded research, or portion thereof, conducted during the period of time of the Investigator's non-compliance with the Investigator Conflict of Interest Policy or management plan, was biased in the design, conduct, or reporting of such research.

If bias is found, AFC will submit a mitigation report with the key elements (see below) addressing the impact of the bias on the research project, including the extent of the harm done, and any qualitative and quantitative data to support any actual or future harm, analysis of whether the project is salvageable and the actions AFC has taken, or will take, to eliminate or mitigate the effect of the bias. Depending on the nature of the FCOI, AFC may determine that additional interim measures are necessary with regard to the Investigator's participation in the research project between the date the FCOI is identified and the completion of AFC's retrospective review. Thereafter, AFC will submit FCOI reports as prescribed by the regulation.

The following key elements apply to both the retrospective review and mitigation report:

- Project number.
- Project title.
- The PI or contact PI/PD if a multiple PI model is used.
- Name of the Investigator with the FCOI.
- Name of the entity with which the Investigator has a FCOI.
- Reason(s) for the retrospective review.
- Detailed methodology used for the retrospective review including the methodology of the process, composition of the review panel, documents reviewed etc.
- Findings of the review.
- Conclusions of the review.

### **13. SUBRECIPIENT CONFLICT OF INTEREST COMPLIANCE**

A subrecipient relationship is established when federal funds flow down from or through AFC to another individual or entity and the subrecipient will be conducting a substantive portion of a PHS-funded research project and is accountable to AFC for programmatic outcomes and compliance matters. Subrecipients, who include but are not limited to collaborators, consortium members, consultants, contractors, subcontractors and subawardees, are subject to AFC's terms and conditions, and as such, AFC will take reasonable steps to ensure that any subrecipient Investigator is in compliance with the federal FCOI regulation. AFC will incorporate as part of a written agreement with the subrecipient, terms that establish whether AFC's Investigator Conflict of Interest Policy or that of the subrecipient's institution will apply to the subrecipient Investigator.

If the subrecipient's conflict of interest policy applies to the subrecipient Investigator, the subrecipient institution will certify as part of the agreement with AFC that it is in compliance with the federal FCOI regulation, and that the institution's portion of the project is in compliance with the federal conflict of interest policy. If the subrecipient cannot provide the certification, the agreement shall state that the subrecipient Investigator is

subject to AFC's Investigator Conflict of Interest Policy for disclosing Significant Financial Interests that are directly related to the subrecipient's work for AFC. AFC will, if applicable, submit a FCOI report to the NIH through the eRA Commons FCOI Module for any FCOIs identified for a subrecipient Investigator.

If the subrecipient's conflict of interest policy applies to the subrecipient Investigator, the agreement shall specify the time period for the subrecipient to report all identified FCOIs to AFC. Such time period must be sufficient to enable AFC to provide timely FCOI reports to the NIH as necessary, through the eRA Commons FCOI Module.

If the subrecipient Investigator is subject to AFC's Investigator Conflict of Interest Policy, the agreement shall specify the time period for the subrecipient to submit all Investigator disclosures of Significant Financial Interests to AFC. Such time period shall be sufficient to enable AFC to comply with its review, management, and reporting obligations under the regulation. AFC will submit any NIH FCOI reports for a subrecipient Investigator through the eRA Commons FCOI Module.

Other funding agencies outside the PHS may have a different process as it pertains to subrecipients, and AFC will meet their requirements as instructed.

#### **14. RECORD RETENTION**

Records relating to conflict of interest matters covered under this Investigator Conflict of Interest Policy for PHS-funded research must be maintained for a minimum period of three years after any applicable research project's final financial report is submitted to the funding agency, or until three years after the final action has been taken on any audit, litigation or claim, whichever is longer. Records for conflict of interest matters relating to other funded research will be maintained in accordance with AFC's Record Retention Policy.

#### **15. ADDITIONAL RESOURCES**

Please contact AFC's Conflict of Interest Coordinator with any questions about this policy at [chubbert@alabamafirecollege.org](mailto:chubbert@alabamafirecollege.org)

- See the United States Department of Health and Human Services' Objectivity in Research Regulations 42 CFR Part 50 Subpart F (grants) [https://grants.nih.gov/grants/compliance/42\\_cfr\\_50\\_subpart\\_f.htm](https://grants.nih.gov/grants/compliance/42_cfr_50_subpart_f.htm) and 45 CFR Part 94 (contracts) <https://www.ecfr.gov/cgi-bin/text-idx?rgn=div5&node=45:1.0.1.1.51>
- See the NIH's Office of Extramural Research Financial Conflict of Interest Web page: <https://grants.nih.gov/grants/policy/coi/index.htm>
- See the NIH's training about FCOIs: [https://grants.nih.gov/grants/policy/coi/tutorial2018/story\\_html5.html](https://grants.nih.gov/grants/policy/coi/tutorial2018/story_html5.html)
- See the Reminders of NIH Policies on Other Support and on Policies Related to Financial Conflicts of Interest and Foreign Components to determine if additional disclosures should be made at JIT or in the next progress report: <https://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/notice-files/NOT-OD-19-114.html>
- See NIH Other Support Information Page: <https://grants.nih.gov/grants/forms/othersupport.htm>
- See NSF Current and Pending Support FAQs: [https://www.nsf.gov/bfa/dias/policy/papp/pappg20\\_1/faqs\\_cps20\\_1.pdf](https://www.nsf.gov/bfa/dias/policy/papp/pappg20_1/faqs_cps20_1.pdf)