*KNOW THE CODE*

Code of Ethics
University of Southern California
Do you have questions about laws, regulations or university policies? Are you looking for a comprehensive resource to address your concerns and meet your needs?

Or perhaps someone has asked you to do something you know or think is illegal or simply wrong. Do you worry that inaction is compromising your integrity?

Call the Help & Hotline today. We’re here to answer your questions and address your concerns about laws, regulations and university policies. And we’ll do it confidentially, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

Help & Hotline  
213.740.2500
DEAR COLLEAGUES,

When it comes to extraordinary achievement, our university is a place unlike any other. We distinguish ourselves as pioneers across disciplines with an unwavering commitment to advancing knowledge and enriching societies across the globe. Given our emphasis on excellence in every endeavor, it is no wonder that the breadth of USC’s influence and renown continues to grow.

Of course, a great university demands rigorous adherence to the highest ethical standards, and in this, too, USC delivers. Ethics are the cornerstone of our work and relationships; they govern our efforts, inform our interactions and elevate our accomplishments. And, from its earliest days, our university has upheld the belief that living well means upholding a shared set of values including integrity, fairness, respect and a tireless dedication to serving the broader community. These common principles take shape in the USC Code of Ethics, which I am pleased to share with you here.

I hope you will join me in getting to “know the code.” This code of ethics is a living document, one that inspires us to even greater success. Thank you for your vital contributions to it and for the critical role you play in supporting the Trojan Family today and for generations to come.

C. L. Max Nikias
At the University of Southern California, ethical behavior is predicated on two main pillars: a commitment to discharging our obligations to others in a fair and honest manner, and a commitment to respecting the rights and dignity of all persons. As faculty, staff, students, and trustees, we each bear responsibility not only for the ethics of our own behavior, but also for building USC's stature as an ethical institution.

We recognize that the fundamental relationships upon which our university is based are those between individual students and individual professors; thus, such relationships are especially sacred and deserve special care that they not be prostituted or exploited for base motives or personal gain.

When we make promises as an institution, or as individuals who are authorized to speak on behalf of USC, we keep those promises, including especially the promises expressed and implied in our Role and Mission Statement. We try to do what is right even if no one is watching us or compelling us to do the right thing.

We promptly and openly identify and disclose conflicts of interest on the part of faculty, staff, students, trustees, and the institution as a whole, and we take appropriate steps to either eliminate such conflicts or insure that they do not compromise the integrity of the individuals involved or that of the university.

We nurture an environment of mutual respect and tolerance. As members of the USC community, we treat everyone with respect and dignity, even when the values, beliefs, behavior, or background of a person or group is repugnant to us. This last is one of the
bedrocks of ethical behavior at USC and the basis of civil discourse within our academic community. Because we are responsible not only for ourselves but also for others, we speak out against hatred and bigotry whenever and wherever we find them.

We do not harass, mistreat, belittle, harm, or take unfair advantage of anyone. We do not tolerate plagiarism, lying, deliberate misrepresentation, theft, scientific fraud, cheating, invidious discrimination, or ill use of our fellow human beings — whether such persons be volunteer subjects of scientific research, peers, patients, superiors, subordinates, students, professors, trustees, parents, alumni, donors, or members of the public.

We do not misappropriate the university’s resources, or resources belonging to others which are entrusted to our care, nor do we permit any such misappropriation to go unchallenged.

We are careful to distinguish between legal behavior on the one hand and ethical behavior on the other, knowing that, while the two overlap in many areas, they are at bottom quite distinct from each other. While we follow legal requirements, we must never lose sight of ethical considerations.

Because of the special bonds that bind us together as members of the Trojan Family, we have a familial duty as well as a fiduciary duty to one another. Our faculty and staff are attentive to the well-being of students and others who are entrusted to our care or who are especially vulnerable, including patients, volunteer subjects of research, and the children in our daycare and community outreach programs.

By respecting the rights and dignity of others, and by striving for fairness and honesty in our dealings with others, we create an ethical university of which we can all be proud, and which will serve as a bright beacon for all peoples in our day and in the centuries to come.
Office of Compliance

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