

# Statement of Ethical Principles & Code of Conduct for the Office of Financial Aid

The Fort Lewis College (FLC) Financial Aid Office has adopted the Statement of Ethical Principles and Code of Conduct for Financial Aid Professionals as created by the National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators.

The FLC Financial Aid Office is dedicated to providing outstanding customer service to our students and their families with the appropriate level of professionalism and commitment to ethical standards. With the passage of the 2008 Higher Education Opportunity Act (HEOA), postsecondary schools that participate in Title IV loan programs are required to have a code of conduct with which the school's employees shall comply.

A financial aid professional's primary goal is to help students achieve their educational potential by providing appropriate financial resources. FLC financial aid staff is required to exemplify the highest level of ethical behavior in helping students and families find the best ways to pay for college and demonstrate the highest level of professionalism. We take great pride in our essential task of helping our students and families determine the best ways to meet their educational expenses.

The Financial Aid Professional shall:

- Be committed to removing financial barriers for those who wish to pursue postsecondary learning.
- Make every effort to assist students with financial need.
- Be aware of the issues affecting students and advocate their interests at the institutional, state, and federal levels.
- Support efforts to encourage students, as early as the elementary grades, to aspire to and plan for education beyond high school.
- Educate students and families through quality consumer information.
- Respect the dignity and protect the privacy of students, and ensure the confidentiality of student records and personal circumstances.
- Ensure equity by applying all need analysis formulas consistently across the institution's full population of student financial aid applicants.
- Provide services that do not discriminate on the basis of race, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, religion, disability, age, or economic status.
- Recognize the need for professional development and continuing education opportunities.
- Promote the free expression of ideas and opinions, and foster respect for diverse viewpoints within the profession.
- Commit to the highest level of ethical behavior and refrain from conflict of interest or the perception thereof.
- Maintain the highest level of professionalism, reflecting a commitment to the goals of the National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators

## Code of Conduct

A financial aid professional at Fort Lewis College is expected to always maintain exemplary standards of professional conduct in all aspects of carrying out his or her responsibilities, specifically including all dealings with any entities involved in any manner of student financial aid, regardless of whether such entities are involved in a government sponsored, subsidized, or regulated activity. In doing so, a financial aid professional should:

- Refrain from taking any action for his or her personal benefit.
  - This includes the individual, or a member of their family, never accepting cash payments stocks, club memberships, gifts, entertainment, expense-paid trips, or other forms of inappropriate remuneration from any business entity involved in any aspect of student financial aid.
  - It also relates to actions which, while in the balance may be supportive of the financial aid professional's work, are chosen from among alternatives because they also benefit the financial aid professional.
- Refrain from taking any action he or she believes is contrary to law, regulation, or the best interests of the students and parents he or she serves. Ensure that the information he or she provides is accurate, unbiased, and does not reflect any preference arising from actual or potential personal gain.
  - Any doubts as to whether a course of conduct is legally proper should be resolved by referring the matter to the institution's legal advisors for guidance.
  - The individual should understand and adhere to all institutional policies as well as other local, state or federal requirements that are applicable to his or her conduct or job performance.
- Be objective in making decisions and advising his or her institution regarding relationships with an entity involved in any aspect of student financial aid.
- Ensure that the information he or she provides is accurate, unbiased, and does not reflect any preference arising from actual or potential personal gain.
  - Students and parents should be able to fully understand their rights, obligations, and their alternatives. FLC participates in the Direct Loan Program. We will not engage in any contractual relationship with a private loan lender nor steer a family to one lender over another. FLC does not have a preferred lender list of private loan lenders and will certify loans from any lender the family chooses.
- Refrain from soliciting or accepting anything of other than nominal value from any entity (other than an institution of higher education or a governmental entity such as the U.S. Department of Education) involved in the making, holding, consolidating or processing of any student loans, including anything of value (including reimbursement of expenses) for serving on an advisory board or as part of a training activity of, or sponsored by, any such entity.
  - This element is intended to avoid the appearance of conflict of interest that arises when a financial aid professional accepts benefits from a lending institution or

similar entity. The fact that the financial aid professional may have no intention to provide an advantage to the lender as a result of the benefit he or she receives is not the point because of the appearance it can create.

- Receiving any remuneration, even if only in the form of reimbursement for expenses when performing services for lender sponsored training or advisory board activities, is prohibited.
- Disclose to appropriate FLC authority, in such manner as prescribed by the established guidelines of Fort Lewis College, any involvement with or interest in any entity involved in any aspect of student financial aid.
  - It is the obligation of the financial aid professional to strictly abide by the requirements of his or her institution's conflict of interest policy (Board of Trustees Policy and Procedures Manual Section 3.2) , particularly with regard to any activities, involvement, investment, or interest in any financial aid related entity.
  - No financial aid employee may manually alter, change, modify, verify, audit or manipulate their own financial aid data record(s) or the financial aid, a family member's record(s), or any record where there is a conflict of interest.
    - Family members include spouses, children, parents, grandparents, grandchildren, brothers or sisters.
    - All staff members who identify a conflict of interest shall inform the Director or Associate Director at the time they are identified of the name, relationship, and ID number of the person with whom the conflict of interest exists.