

Washington State Ethics Board Information

The Executive Ethics Board (the Board) was created in 1994 by legislation at the request of the governor and attorney general. The law, RCW 42.52, went into effect January 1, 1995.

The Board has statutory responsibility to:

- Develop training materials.
- Adopt rules (WAC 292.100-130).
- Issue advisory opinions: <http://ethics.wa.gov>.
- Investigate and hear complaints.
- Impose penalties for violations.
- Recommend suspension or other disciplinary action. If the Board determines that a state employee violated the ethics law, it can order the following:
 - Penalties up to \$5,000 per violation.
 - Damages sustained by the state.
 - Investigative costs.

Washington State Executive Ethics Board

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<http://ethics.wa.gov>

Links to complaint forms, Board advisory opinions, online ethics quiz and FAQs.

CCS General Ethics for Employees and Officers

<https://ccs.spokane.edu/about-us/leadership/Board-of-Trustees/Policies-Procedures/Chapter 2>

Have a Question?

The Chief Financial Officer is CCS's appointed "ethics adviser" per RCW 42.52. In addition to training, the adviser is responsible for helping employees understand their obligations under the Ethics in Public Service Act. Contact the CFO at 509-434-5275.

A Message to CCS Employees

Community Colleges of Spokane (CCS) adheres to the values of integrity and mutual respect to promote a positive working and educational environment. An important part of these values is a commitment to standards of performance that complies with Washington state laws and guidelines for ethical conduct.

The information in this brochure is intended as a general introduction to Washington state and CCS' ethics rules and regulations (See Administrative Procedure 2.10.06—A General Ethics for Employees and Officers). As public servants, CCS employees are accountable to CCS students, the communities we serve, and taxpayers to ensure compliance with all state and CCS ethics rules. All employees are expected to observe the highest standards of ethical conduct and to avoid even the impression of impropriety or conflict of interest.

This brochure describes the basic principles of ethical behavior for CCS employees. If there is any doubt about whether an action or decision is appropriate, or if you have a specific question about using state resources, you should discuss it with your supervisor and/or the Human Resources Office. Also, the Executive Ethics Board Office is available to answer specific questions about Washington state's ethics law. General questions can be accessed on its web site:

<http://ethics.wa.gov/>

Thank you for your continued support of these values and adherence to our ethics rules and policies.


Christine Johnson, Ph.D.
Chancellor

State Ethics Law & You

A Guide for Use of
State/Community Colleges of Spokane
Resources



Community Colleges of Spokane
Spokane Community College
Spokane Falls Community College

Community Colleges of Spokane is committed to standards of performance which comply with Washington State's laws and establish a minimum guideline for ethical conduct. CCS Administrative Procedure 2.10.06-A General Ethics for Employees and Officers is intended to provide information about some of the more relevant ethics topics at CCS and does not include all possible ethics topics. The Ethics in Public Service law RCW 42.52 and related regulations apply to all state employees and state officers.

Basic Ethical Principle

Public office, whether elected or appointed, may not be used for personal gain or private advantage.

General Ethical Principles

State employees may not:

1. Have a financial interest or engage in any activity that is in conflict with the proper discharge of the employee's official duties.
2. Use his/her official position to secure special privileges for himself/herself, family members or any other person.
3. Use state resources for personal benefit for themselves, their family members, or any other person.
4. Receive compensation from any person, except the State of Washington, for performing his or her official duties.

Use of State Resources

A state employee may not use state resources for personal benefit or to benefit another person (e.g., conducting personal business at work or with state resources). "State resources" include any state property (e.g., computers, office space, photocopier/fax, phones), vehicles, money, work time, other state personnel during work, etc.

Financial Interests In Transactions Involving CCS

A state employee may not have a beneficial interest in a contract or purchase of goods/services that is made by, through, or is under their supervision. Employees also are prohibited from using their official position to obtain benefits not available to the general public.

This includes not accepting discounted goods or services provided through a state contract with an outside vendor or representing yourself as a state employee while conducting personal business of any kind. Employees also are prohibited from using confidential information for personal gain.

"De Minimis" Use

In very limited circumstances, state resources may be used if: **1.** there is little or no cost to the state; **2.** use is brief, infrequent; **3.** the use does not interfere with the employee's official duties; **4.**

the use does not disrupt other state employees; **5.** the use does not compromise the security of state property, information, or software. Examples of acceptable de minimis use would be a brief local call to make an appointment or an e-mail recognizing someone's birthday. However, there is no de minimis exception to the use of state resources for activities related to a personal business or if the use violates other CCS policies such as anti-harassment/discrimination rules.

Basic Rules for Gifts

State employees are strictly prohibited from soliciting or actively seeking a gift for personal benefit from any other employee, student, or any vendor, community member, or company doing business with CCS.

Under limited circumstances some state employees may accept a gift with a value up to \$50 unless: **1.** the gift could reasonably be expected to influence the performance or nonperformance of the employee's official duties; or **2.** the aggregate total from any one source during a calendar year exceeds \$50. In short, no gifts that might appear to have "strings attached" can be accepted.

Employees who regulate a contract or who control the decision on vendor selection for the purchase of goods or services are more limited in what gifts they may receive. These limits are established to eliminate any potential influence or appearance of influence by a vendor contracting with the state. These so called "Section 4" employees (referring to RCW 42.52.150 Subsection 4) need to be careful about what they accept from vendors beyond unsolicited items of nominal value (e.g., company logo pens and note pads) or in conjunction with their official duties.

For example, while it is okay to consume food/beverages provided by a vendor at a hosted reception where the state employee is on official business, it is not okay to accept the same food/beverage at an event solely sponsored by a vendor.

Honoraria and Textbooks

An honorarium is any money or thing of value offered for a speech, appearance, article or similar items in connection with the employee's official role at CCS. An honorarium can only be accepted if specifically approved by CCS and is not on the prohibited list in CCS Administrative Procedures. Employees may, however, accept an honorarium for any activity that is not conducted during work hours and is not connected to his/her official CCS role. Rules for faculty authored textbooks and selling/dropping of textbooks provided to faculty can be found in Administrative Procedures 2.10.06-A.14.0

Use of Information Technology Resources

CCS provides information technology resources (IT resources) to support the instructional, student support and administrative activities of the district. IT resources will be used according to state laws and the policies and procedures of the district and its institutions. This

includes prohibiting use of IT resources for any personal business purpose, transmission of any harassing or discriminating material, use for union organizing or internal union business, or personal use in excess of the de minimis standard.

IT resources include, but are not limited to: host computer systems, web sites, desktop/laptop computers and workstations, communications networks, electronic software and/or hardware, library automation systems, multi-media equipment, electronic data, computer files, video networks, phones, voice mail, e-mail, and internet resources.

Refer to BOT Policy 7.30.05 –Acceptable Use of Information Technology Resources

Use of State Resources for Political Campaigns

CCS employees have the right of free speech, but must be careful how they exercise that right while at work. Employees cannot use their positions at CCS to influence votes for or against any candidate or ballot issue.

A state employee may not use state facilities/resources for political campaigns or for the promotion/opposition to a ballot proposition. Facilities or resources could include: use of stationery, postage, computers, internet and e-mail, machines and equipment, use of employee's time during working hours, vehicles, office space, publications of the agency, and clientele lists of persons served by the agency. For additional information, please refer to CCS's Election Regulations brochure.

Confidential Information

CCS employees may not accept employment or engage in any business or professional activity that the employee might reasonably expect would require or induce them to make an unauthorized disclosure of confidential information acquired through the employee's official position.

No employee may disclose confidential information to any person not entitled or authorized to receive the information.

Reporting Suspected Violations

CCS requires all supervisors/managers to report any suspected ethics violation to their administrator or directly to the chief financial officer per Administrative Procedure 2.10.06-B Complaint of Improper Governmental Action and Non-Retaliation. All other employees are strongly encouraged to use this same reporting process.