

**University of Hawai'i John A. Burns School of Medicine**  
**Policy on Gifts and Recognition from Students**

November 17, 2023

1. Purpose:

This policy is to ensure the integrity, professionalism, and impartiality of the faculty-student relationship at the University of Hawai'i John A. Burns School of Medicine. By prohibiting faculty members from accepting gifts from students, the institution aims to uphold academic fairness/equity, prevent potential conflicts of interest, and maintain an environment focused on educational excellence with the highest ethical conduct. This policy conforms to UH and Hawai'i State Ethics policies.

2. Scope:

This policy applies to all faculty members, including full-time, part-time, and non-compensated adjunct/clinical faculty members at the University of Hawai'i John A. Burns School of Medicine.

3. Definitions:

- a. "Gift": Any item, monetary offering, service, food or drink, or favor, given with the intention of showing appreciation or gaining favor, regardless of its value or form. Thank you cards are NOT considered gifts and may be given.
- b. "Student": Any individual officially enrolled in or applying to any program offered by the University of Hawai'i John A. Burns School of Medicine (medical school, graduate programs, and undergraduate programs).

4. Policy Statement:

Faculty members at the University of Hawai'i John A. Burns School of Medicine are strictly prohibited from accepting any gifts from students, whether the offering is given directly or indirectly. This policy applies to both tangible and intangible gifts, as well as any form of compensation, including but not limited to cash, gift cards, food items (handmade or bought), travel expenses, meals, or personal services.

5. Exceptions:

The only exceptions to this policy are nominal gifts or tokens of appreciation, provided they meet the following criteria:

- a. The gift is given on behalf of a group of students, rather than by an individual student (i.e., the entire class or PBL group after the unit is completed).
- b. The gift does not compromise the faculty member's objectivity, fairness, or professional judgment.

**References:** Hawaii State Ethics Commission <http://bit.ly/ethics-gifts> , <http://bit.ly/ethics-holidays> and <http://bit.ly/ethics-sharing-gift>

c. The gift is given to the faculty member(s) after a dissertation or thesis completion for MS and Ph.D. students.

6. Compliance:

Faculty members found to have violated this policy may be subject to disciplinary action, in accordance with the University of Hawai'i established policies and procedures. Disciplinary measures may include verbal or written warnings, retraining, suspension, termination, or any other appropriate action deemed necessary by the institution.

7. Training/Communication:

- a. The Office of Student Affairs shall be responsible for communicating this policy to all medical students and the policy will be placed in all course syllabi/handbooks.
- b. The Office of the Associate Dean for Research shall be responsible for communicating this policy to all graduate students and faculty.
- c. The Office of Faculty Affairs shall be responsible for communicating this policy to all faculty members.
- d. New faculty members will be informed about this policy during their onboarding process.
- e. Because giving food or a small gift is quite customary in many of the cultural groups in Hawai'i, uniform messaging to the student is recommended (e.g., *"Thank you so much for this gift. Due to our school, UH, and the State of Hawai'i policies, I will share this gift with the office or rest of the faculty"*).

8. Review and Amendment:

This policy will be subject to periodic review by the relevant authorities at the University of Hawai'i John A. Burns School of Medicine to ensure its effectiveness and relevance. Any necessary amendments will be made in accordance with the institution-established policy review process.

Accepted by:



Lee Buenconsejo-Lum, MD, FAAFP  
Interim Dean

November 17, 2023  
Date

Approved at JABSOM Executive Committee November 17, 2023

**References:** Hawaii State Ethics Commission <http://bit.ly/ethics-gifts> , <http://bit.ly/ethics-holidays> and <http://bit.ly/ethics-sharing-gift>