

## **Policy Prohibiting Improper Influence in Admissions to the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign**

### **I. Definitions**

- A. “Admissions office” refers to any admissions office of any department or college of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, including graduate programs and professional schools.
- B. “Admissions staff member” refers to any employee of any admissions office.
- C. “Employee with admissions responsibility” refers to any admissions staff member, faculty member of any admissions committee of any department or college, or dean of any college or unit executive officer directly reviewing admissions files and participating in admissions decisions.
- D. “Employee without admissions responsibility” refers to any employees, including faculty member or dean of any college or unit executive officer, that does not directly review files and participate in admissions decisions.
- E. “Office of Undergraduate Admissions/OUA” refers to the admissions office that has primary responsibility for recruiting, admitting, and enrolling students into the undergraduate departments and colleges at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

### **II. Prohibited Activities**

In accordance with the detailed provisions below, the following activities are prohibited:

- A. With regard to undergraduate admissions, no third party, including Trustees, government officials, or university employees without admissions responsibilities, shall attempt to communicate with Office of Undergraduate Admissions staff members or employees with admissions responsibility regarding any applicant file. Any such communication is not permitted and would be logged for review by the Senate Admissions Committee. Only an applicant, an applicant’s parent or legal guardian, spouse or secondary high school guidance counselor may communicate with the admissions office regarding an individual file.
- B. With regard to graduate and professional school admissions, third-party communications are also prohibited; however, third parties may participate by composing formal letters of recommendation, if such letters are permitted or required,

and if the third party is an expert in a relevant academic or professional field and has personal knowledge of particular candidates. In such instances, the third party may communicate with employees with admissions responsibility regarding particular candidates.

- C. No university employee shall forward inquiries regarding any applicant file from unpermitted third parties to admission staff members or employees with admissions responsibility. Any such communication is not permitted and would be logged for review by the Senate Admissions Committee.

### **III. Unsolicited Expressions of Support**

#### **A. Office of Undergraduate Admissions**

1. The purported sponsorship or unsolicited expression of support of an applicant to any department or college of the University of Illinois by any individual shall not be considered in any admissions decision concerning that applicant made by the Office of Undergraduate Admissions.
2. In order to assure compliance with Section II(A), no record of any purported sponsor or supporter shall be retained in any applicant's file, including the receipt by the applicant of a General Assembly Scholarship. Presently, the Office of Undergraduate Admissions neither requires nor accepts letters of recommendation as part of the admissions process. Any correspondence by or with such sponsor or supporter, whether by letter, email communication, telephone communication, or any other oral, electronic, or written communication, shall be logged by the admissions officer receiving such communication and the substance of such communication will be kept in files separate from applicant files. This log containing the purported sponsors' names shall be subject to disclosure under the Illinois Freedom of Information Act.

#### **B. Graduate and Professional Schools**

1. Notwithstanding the prohibitions in Section III.A, if any graduate or professional school requires or permits applicants to forward formal letters of recommendation as part of the admissions process, third-party recommenders may participate in that formal recommendation process.
2. In addition, any graduate or professional school may engage in customary solicited or unsolicited conversations with experts in the relevant academic or

professional field and with personal knowledge of particular candidates to that graduate or professional school to determine the likelihood of success of those candidates to a particular course of study.

3. However, under no circumstance may a university employee with no personal knowledge of a candidate in the relevant academic or professional environment attempt to sponsor an applicant by communicating directly with any admissions staff member either informally or through the formal process of sending a letter of recommendation.

#### **IV. Permitted Inquiries**

- A. Admissions staff members will respond to inquiries regarding the status of any individual applicant's application *only* if the inquiry is made by the applicant or an applicant's parent or legal guardian or spouse.
- B. In addition, Office of Undergraduate Admissions staff members may communicate with guidance counselors at secondary schools from which students have applied for admission and convey information that the Office of Undergraduate Admissions determines is relevant.
- C. Permitted inquiries to the Office of Undergraduate Admissions shall be logged in the recruitment management system ("Slate"<sup>1</sup>) used by that office.
- D. Other admissions offices may determine whether and how best to record permitted inquiries to their offices.

#### **V. Unpermitted Third-Party Inquiries**

- A. Inquiries, whether by oral, electronic, or written communication, to any admissions staff member by a third party other than those permitted in Section IV (an "improper third party") is prohibited. "Improper third party" includes, without limitation, university employees, including faculty and deans, without admissions responsibilities, Trustees, and state and federal government officials or employees.
- B. Under no circumstance shall any admissions staff member grant access to applicant information or share such information with any individuals other than an applicant or an applicant's parent or legal guardian, spouse or secondary high school guidance

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<sup>1</sup> Original policy included Talisma as the recruitment management system for the Office of Undergraduate Admissions. That system was replaced with Slate in 2016.

- counselor, admissions staff members, and university faculty and deans with admissions responsibilities. Without limiting the foregoing, the following persons shall not have access to applicant information and shall not have such information shared with them: university employees, including faculty and deans, without admissions responsibilities, Trustees, and state and federal government officials or employees.
- C. Nothing in this section should be construed to limit admissions staff members from otherwise communicating generally available information to persons contacting any admissions office, including application deadlines, admissions criteria, and required application information.

## **VI. Procedures for Processing Improper Third-Party Inquiries**

- A. Improper third-party inquiries made directly to the Office of Undergraduate Admissions shall be forwarded to an admissions counselor. Improper third-party inquiries made to other admissions offices within colleges or units shall be forwarded to the administrative head of admissions in those colleges and departments.
- B. The admissions counselor shall communicate to the third party making the inquiry the policy contained in Section III. If the inquiry is made to an admissions office of a graduate or professional school, then the administrative head of admissions of that office shall communicate to the third party making the inquiry the policy contained in Section III.
- C. The admissions counselor will log the communication with the inquiring third party and retain the substance of the communication in a separate, web-based system for logging improper third-party inquiries (the "Third-Party Inquiry Log"). The administrative head of admissions for the other admissions office will also log improper third-party inquiries into the Third-Party Inquiry Log. This Third-Party Inquiry Log will allow admissions staff members to input information, but will not allow such individuals to view or extract information that has been logged. This Third-Party Inquiry Log containing the inquiring third-party names will be subject to disclosure under the Illinois Freedom of Information Act.
- D. Improper third-party inquiries made directly to other persons with admissions responsibilities shall be directed either to the admissions counselor or to the administrative head of the appropriate admissions office, as applicable. In addition, the person receiving the inquiry shall communicate the substance of the inquiry to

that admissions counselor, who shall log that communication into the Third-Party Inquiry Log pursuant to Section VI(c).

- E. Improper third-party inquiries made to any university employee without admissions responsibilities are not required to be logged. The university employee shall communicate to the third-party the policy contained in Section III. However, if that university employee communicates the inquiry to any admissions staff member or person with admissions responsibilities, then that admissions staff member or person with admissions responsibilities shall forward that information to an admissions counselor or administrative head of the appropriate admissions office, to be logged into the Third-Party Inquiry Log in accordance with this Section VI.
- F. The data contained in the Third-Party Inquiry Log shall be made available to the Senate Admissions Committee on an annual basis. The Senate Admissions Committee shall review the data and present a report of its findings to the Senate. In addition, all such data shall be subject to the Illinois Freedom of Information Act.
- G. In addition, any admissions staff member who believes that an abuse of this Policy Prohibiting Improper Influence in Admissions is occurring or has occurred shall log this concern into the Third-Party Inquiry Log and shall have the ability to do so anonymously, if desired.

## **VII. Sanctions**

- A. Any university employee who violates any part of this Policy Prohibiting Improper Influence in Admissions shall be subject to discipline up to and including termination.
- B. Any member of the Board of Trustees who violates any part of this Policy Prohibiting Improper Influence in Admissions shall be considered to have committed malfeasance and be subject to removal from the Board of Trustees by the Governor of the State of Illinois.