

Conflict of Interest

(adopted 9/17/96)

Supports Article IV, Section 1 of Bylaws

Service on The State News Board of Directors is a privilege that may be encumbered by other activities or interests in which an individual member may be engaged; indeed given the composition of the Board, these encumbrances may well be more a rule than an exception. Such potential conflicts of interest include the following:

Students and Faculty

Individuals representing organizations that are the frequent subject of State News articles (e.g., ASMSU, COGS, East Lansing City Council) or who may be themselves the subject of such coverage (for example, a student athlete, and administrator) may find themselves in a position to further their own or their organization's interests as a member of The State News board. In the case of persons occupying the highest and/or most public position in such organizations, the potential for conflict may be so great as to require a choice between serving that organization and The State News. Students and faculty who work for other media (e.g., Impact Radio) may also be placed in situations in which actions taken by The State News board may appear to have a direct influence on the competing interest. Again, persons in positions of authority with those other media may wish to consider the risks involved before attempting to negotiate both agendas. Finally, personal relationships with State News staffers may on occasion present a conflict of interest, particularly when brought to bear on board hiring decisions.

Professional

The editorial direction of The State News may be perceived as creating a conflict for professional board members on occasion, individual State News assignments or story ideas may present an opportunity for a board member to further the interests of his/her own publication. Similarly, competition for advertising dollars may place an individual professional serving on behalf of The State News in direct conflict with the interest of his/her own publication. Contractual matters (e.g., printing, equipment) and, on occasion, hiring matters may also place individual professionals with interests in those areas into conflict with the interests of The State News, as again may personal relationships with State News staffers, particularly in hiring situations.

Any matter in which an individual – student, faculty, or professional – may profit financially as a result of his/her involvement with The State News and the workings of its Board of Directors to keep those occurrences as minimal in quantity and quality as possible. Accordingly, the following policy is recommended:

1. All applicants for board positions must note as part of their applications all personal, organizational and professional affiliations and situations that might constitute a conflict of interest. Elected board members should apprise the board of changes in any such affiliations or situations that might result in such a conflict. The board also retains the right to determine whether a conflict of interest, direct or indirect, may prohibit an individual from serving.
2. Any board member must absent him or herself from voting on any issue in which a direct or indirect conflict of interest is present.
3. Any effort of an individual board member to further his or her own personal, organizational or professional interests through and at the expense of The State News board of directors, or any effort to misrepresent or falsify a potential conflict of interest may result in dismissal from the board, following the provisions outlined in Article IV, Section 15 or The State News corporate bylaws.