

## NSEA Principles of Professional Practice

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### Prologue

Student Employment Offices in institutions of higher education share the primary goal of administering student employment programs, as well as funding and hiring students. Student employment professionals assist students with the selection and attainment of part-time employment so that they may earn funds while attending college. This process requires of student employment professionals a specific commitment to principles for professional practice.

The National Student Employment Association (NSEA), a comprehensive national professional association that works to facilitate the employment of college students, is also concerned with this process. This concern has led NSEA to adopt the *NSEA Principles of Professional Practice* in 2010, which is dedicated to the establishment, development and preservation of high professional standards and ethics for student employment professionals. This document presents the core principles of NSEA members and student employment professionals. These principles provide a foundation for a code of ethics, and set an industry standard for the professional practice of student employment.

The purpose of drafting these core principles is to simultaneously support the efforts of student employment professionals and maintain ethical standards. The principles presented herein, though not all-inclusive, have been established to provide a framework within which processes should function, and as such are intended to serve as a foundation on which professionalism may be promoted.

NSEA is committed to providing leadership in ethics, and dedicated to facilitating an ongoing dialogue on ethics-related issues. The *NSEA Principles for Professional Practice* shall provide a cursory overview of the application of principles, and function as an informational guide for professional ethics relating to the field of student employment in institutions of higher education. NSEA strongly encourages student employment professionals to review, support and practice the information herein.

### Principles for Student Employment Professionals

The fundamental principles that NSEA supports as pillars of professional practice for student employment professionals are **Professional Knowledge** and **Professional Behaviors**. **Professional Knowledge** shall consist of the content areas of professional development; current issues; and regulatory information. **Professional Behaviors** shall consist of the content areas of advocacy; honesty; and fairness. These principles are the fundamental beliefs that guide the behaviors and administrative processes of student employment professionals. We believe these professional principles are vital to the integrity of the profession of student employment.

#### Professional Knowledge

**Professional Knowledge** as espoused herein is dynamic; moreover, it is vigorous knowledge-in-action. For the purposes of the *NSEA Principles for Professional Practice*, **Professional Knowledge** may be broadly defined as the historical, economic, sociological and philosophical understanding of student employment programs in institutions of higher education. It also includes knowledge about diversity, learning, technology, professional ethics, and legal and policy issues.

- **Professional Knowledge** in the *NSEA Principles for Professional Practice* shall focus on field mastery and professional development, awareness of and familiarity with current issues, and institutional, regional and national regulatory information.
  - **Field Mastery and Professional Development** requires that those engaged in administering, evaluating and interpreting student employment programs in institutions of higher education shall be trained and qualified to do so. **Field Mastery and Professional Development** requires that student employment professionals:
    - acknowledge that there is an obligation to actively enhance the profession;
    - have a deep understanding of the history, structure and real-world applications of student employment;
    - have mastery over a range of professional practices and responsibilities;
    - recognize the need for personally engaged professional development and continuing education opportunities;
    - actively pursue professional development, and constantly work to improve, adapt and expand professional practices;
    - work persistently to strengthen the trust, respect and credibility of the public.
  - **Awareness of and Familiarity with Current Issues** requires that student employment professionals are familiar with theories and strategies related to the profession, and stay abreast of current issues in higher education and student employment. **Awareness and Familiarity with Current Issues** requires that student employment professionals:
    - critically examine practices on a regular basis to deepen knowledge, expand skills and incorporate new findings into practice.
  - **Regional and National Regulatory Information** requires that student employment professionals evaluate program progress and development, as well as the allocation of resources, in order to meet state and federal objectives. **Regional and National Regulatory Information** requires that student employment professionals:
    - are aware of the issues affecting students and advocate their interests at the institutional, state and federal levels;
    - work with other professionals on policy, program development and staff development;
    - act as leaders, and actively know how to seek and build partnerships with community groups and businesses.

## Professional Behaviors

**Professional Behaviors**, simply stated, are ethical behaviors. For the purposes of the *NSEA Principles for Professional Practice*, **Professional Behaviors** may be broadly defined as the process in which an individual engages while making ethical decisions regarding dilemmas that occur as part of the field of student employment. The principles herein have been crafted with the intent of espousing acceptable implied professional conduct that takes place in determining the correct course of action when incongruent philosophical underpinnings are apparent in the field of student employment.

- **Professional Behaviors** in the *NSEA Principles for Professional Practice* shall focus on student employment advocacy, professional honesty and fairness.

- **Advocacy** requires that student employment professionals serve the public interest by acting as responsible advocates for those we represent. **Advocacy** requires that student employment professionals:
  - provide a voice in the marketplace of ideas, facts and viewpoints to aid informed and open debate;
  - maintain awareness of the issues affecting students, and advocate student interests at the institutional, state and federal levels.
  
- **Honesty** requires that student employment professionals adhere to the highest standards of accuracy and truth in advancing the interests of those we represent. **Honesty** requires that student employment professionals:
  - maintain transparency in all communications;
  - remain accurate, honest and unbiased in all communications, and act promptly to correct erroneous communications;
  - reject any action for actual or potential personal gain;
  - refrain from taking any action believed to be contrary to law, regulation or the best interest of the institution or students;
  - disclose any involvement with or interest in any entity involved with any aspect of student employment;
  - avoid deceptive practices, and report ethical violations to the appropriate authorities.
  
- **Fairness** requires that student employment professionals promote the free expression of ideas and opinions, and foster respect for diversity within the profession. **Fairness** requires that student employment professionals:
  - commit to the highest level of ethical behavior and refrain from conflict of interest or the perception thereof;
  - remain objective in making decisions, and advising the institution regarding relationships with any entity involved in any aspect of student employment;
  - deal equitably with students, employers, colleagues, competitors, peers, vendors, media and the general public;
  - foster respect for diverse viewpoints within the profession;
  - provide equal opportunity access to student funding without regard to race, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, religion, veteran status or disability, age or economic status;
  - adhere to equal employment opportunity policy and U.S. labor law policies;
  - provide services that do not discriminate on the basis of race, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, religion, veteran status or disability, age or economic status;
  - maintain equal employment opportunity compliance and follow affirmative action principles in student employment activities in a manner that includes the following:
    - Recruiting, interviewing and hiring student employees without regard to race, color, national origin, religion, age, gender, sexual orientation, veteran status or disability, and providing reasonable accommodations upon request;
    - Notifying any employing organization of any selection procedures that appear to have an adverse impact based upon race, color, national origin, religion, age, gender, sexual orientation, veteran status or disability;
    - Developing awareness of, and sensitivity to, cultural differences and the diversity of student employees, and providing responsive services;
    - Investigating and responding to complaints of equal employment opportunity noncompliance, and seeking timely resolution of such complaints.

## Epilogue

NSEA fully supports that all tenets of the *NSEA Principles of Professional Practice* should apply throughout the administration of the programs for which student employment professions are responsible. NSEA additionally encourages all student employment professionals to engage institutional colleagues so that there is a common understanding regarding the conduct of their respective obligations.

NSEA does not prioritize knowledge above behaviors; rather, professional knowledge and professional behaviors are simultaneous obligations for all student employment professionals. As an organization, NSEA incontrovertibly supports the principles and practices within the *NSEA Principles of Professional Practice*. When a practice or policy arises that appears in conflict with these principles, it is the obligation of the student employment professional to bring this to the attention of those responsible within the respective institution, and to seek resolution consistent with the principles herein.