

**CASE STUDY # 5: How Collaborative Relationships that Change over Time Can Impact Conflicts of Interests – Giving Lectures**

*Dr. Murray is the HSA who runs the Hepatitis Program in NIDDK. He is asked by Dr. Lee of Georgetown University to give a lecture on Recent Findings in Hepatitis Research in a graduate course that Dr. Lee is putting together. Dr. Murray feels that this will not interfere with his NIH duties and would help him maintain his professional standing. When he was a professor before coming to NIH, he had always enjoyed interacting with graduate students. Dr. Murray discusses this with his supervisor and it is agreed that this can be done as an "official duty" activity. There would be no compensation for this lecture.*

*Following the lecture, Dr. Lee and Dr. Murray go to the university cafeteria for lunch. Over lunch they discuss scientific issues of mutual interest. The next week Dr. Lee contacts Dr. Murray to tell him about the positive feedback he's heard from the students about Dr. Murray's lecture. He mentions that he is going to offer the course during the next semester and invites Dr. Murray back to give the same lecture. After again discussing this with his supervisor, Dr. Murray agrees.*

*Over the next couple of years, Dr. Murray's lecture becomes a regular part of the course. The post-lecture lunch becomes a tradition as well and Dr. Murray and Dr. Lee develop a friendship around their mutual scientific interests – they often e-mail each other when they see research articles that they think will interest the other.*

*One day Dr. Murray sees that Dr. Lee's new grant application has been referred to his program.*

*Does Dr. Murray have a personal conflict with Dr. Lee's application?*

He certainly does. Dr. Murray now has a personal relationship with Dr. Lee, even though it began as a lecture and then discussions around scientific issues. POs have such scientific discussions with PIs frequently; however, this relationship is currently described as a "friendship" and most PIs are not friends with their POs. Dr. Murray therefore discusses this issue with his supervisor and the supervisor decides where to transfer the application and which HSA should serve as PO. Dr. Murray did not take the responsibility of reassignment upon himself, since he is in conflict on any actions related to this application.

*Should Dr. Murray be considered in conflict with all applications from Georgetown University?*

Dr. Murray should discuss this situation with his supervisor and may find it useful to include the Director of Extramural Activities in the discussions. Although he does not have the title of Adjunct Professor nor does he receive any compensation, his repeated lectures do provide an ongoing service to Georgetown University. It now appears that this activity would place him in conflict with the university, and his supervisor must consider the impact this conflict has on Dr. Murray's ability to perform his NIH job. The supervisor may decide that Dr. Murray will need to end this activity or perhaps the frequent nature of it.