

## **DESHPANDE CENTER MENTOR GUIDELINES FOR CONFIDENTIALITY AND CONFLICT OF INTEREST**

The Deshpande Center's mission is to help commercialize MIT research to positively impact society. It is important for the Center to engage volunteers in order to assess ideas, identify the most effective path to commercialization, and assist the teams in advancing their research. Privileged information is often shared during these discussions.

In engaging mentors with our projects, the risks of conflict of interest and premature disclosure must be managed. The purpose of these guidelines is to enable the greatest amount of cross-fertilization of ideas while protecting intellectual property, minimizing the risk of premature disclosure, and ensuring that advice given to faculty and researchers is fair and objective.

---

### **GUIDELINES FOR MANAGING PRIVILEGED INFORMATION**

Meetings and activities identified as privileged are by invitation only, are not public, and are conducted with the understanding that volunteer participants are specially invited by the Deshpande Center for the academic review of new ideas and mentoring of researchers on a confidential basis. By agreeing to take part, participants in these activities agree to:

- Maintain privileged information in confidence;
- Not use the information for personal gain at the expense of MIT researchers or the Deshpande Center;
- Notify Deshpande Center staff of any potential conflict of interest; and
- Recuse themselves from participating in any activity where there might be a conflict of interest.

#### *A Note on Intellectual Property*

When you advise a research team, intellectual property (copyrights, inventions, trademarks, etc.) may be developed. Ownership of intellectual property is governed by MIT policy: If the research leading to an invention was supported by sponsored research funding or made significant uses of MIT facilities and/or MIT-administered funds, then MIT owns the intellectual property. If MIT licenses a patent or copyright on which you are an inventor/author, you are entitled to receive a portion of the royalty and/or equity MIT receives from the licensee in accordance with MIT's royalty distribution policy. Volunteers do not receive any ownership interest in any intellectual property defined above by participating as a volunteer.

**GUIDELINES FOR MANAGING CONFLICT OF INTEREST**

According to the Institute of Internal Auditors:

*“Conflict of interest is a situation in which [someone] in a position of trust... has a competing professional or personal interest. Such competing interests can make it difficult to fulfill his or her duties impartially... A conflict of interest exists even if no unethical or improper act results. A conflict of interest can create an appearance of impropriety that can undermine confidence” in the ability of that person to act properly.*

Mentors must avoid positions of conflict of interest wherever possible, and notify Deshpande Center staff anytime there is a potential conflict. Conflict of interest becomes a problem in situations where the volunteer tries to influence a decision for personal gain, or use information for personal gain at the expense of the researcher or the Deshpande Center.

Examples of such situations include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Receiving privileged information or giving advice on a project when the volunteer has a financial stake in a potential competitor.
- Giving advice on a project when the volunteer has a potential financial stake in a spinout from the research. As a result, if a mentor decides he/she wants to be involved with the project on a professional level, he/she must notify the researcher and Deshpande Center staff immediately and step back from advising the project.
- Reviewing a proposal when the volunteer has a financial stake in the success of the proposal (such as an interest to invest or a financial stake in a competitor), has a proposal under consideration in the same grant round, or if he/she has a relationship with the team that would make an objective review difficult.

Anytime a potential conflict of interest arises, the volunteer must step away from his/her mentoring role and notify the Deshpande Center staff, who will determine the next steps.

I understand the roles and responsibilities of being a Deshpande mentor, and agree to follow the guidelines set forth above.

---

Mentor name

---

Signature

---

Date