

# Responsible Conduct of Research: Conflict of Interest

Presented by:

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FACULTY OF MEDICINE

“While the concept of conflict of interest is clearly in vogue in discussions around health policy and the term is used in many different contexts, it is hard to find a clear definition of it.”

Lemmens & Freedman (2000).  
*Ethics Review for Sale? Conflict of Interest  
and Commercial Research Review Boards*



# Conflict of Interest: a definition

“A COI is a set of conditions in which professional judgment concerning a primary interest (such as a patient’s welfare or the validity of research) *tends to be unduly influenced* by a secondary interest (such as financial gain).”

D. Thompson (1993)

Understanding Financial Conflicts of Interests (NEJM, 329(8), 573)



# Conflict of Interest: a definition

"a situation in which a person, such as a public official, an employee, or a professional, has a private or personal interest *sufficient to appear to influence* the objective exercise of his or her official duties. "

Dr. Michael McDonald

[http://www.armsdeal-vpo.co.za/special\\_items/reading/ethics.html](http://www.armsdeal-vpo.co.za/special_items/reading/ethics.html)



# Conflict of Interest: UBC Definition (Policy 97)

- A university member is in a position to influence University business, research, or other that:
  - advance the Member's own interests or the interests of a Related Party
  - are of detriment of the University's interests, integrity or fundamental mission.
- Financial or other personal considerations may compromise an investigator's professional judgment in conducting or reporting research.
- **May be potential, actual or apparent.**



# In Contrast:

## Conflict of Commitment

### UBC Definition (Policy 97)

- Substantial or demanding outside professional activities affect a university member's responsibilities to the University
- The Non-University Activities of a university member involve the use of University resources.



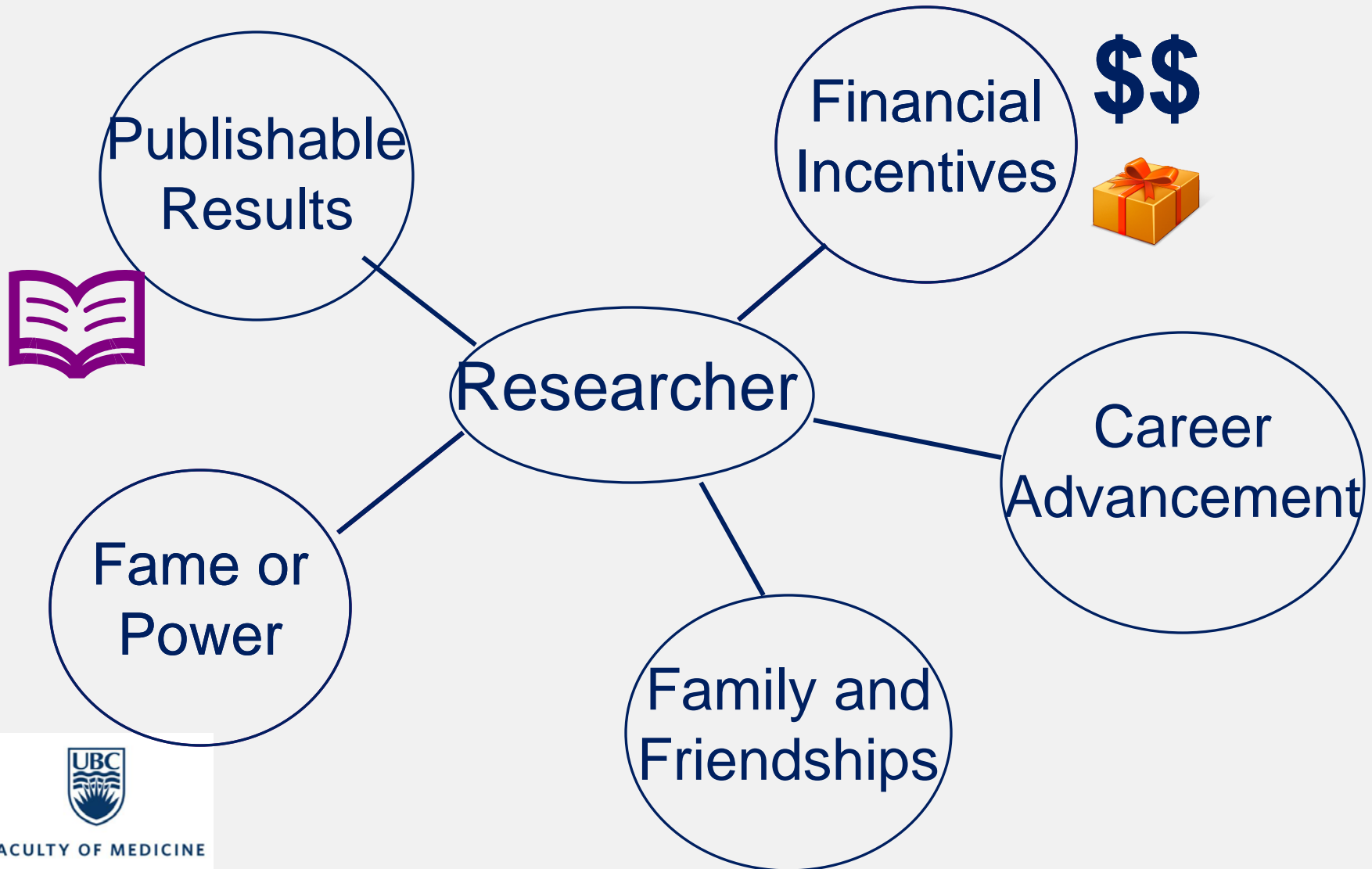
# Conflict of Interest: The Components

- **Relationship:**
  - Trust based; (often) fiduciary in nature;
- **Conflicting interest:**
  - Any influence tending to reduce reliability of one's judgment on a given decision;
- **Proper exercise of judgment:**
  - What people ordinarily expect or are invited to expect;  
What is required by law, professional codes, or regulation.

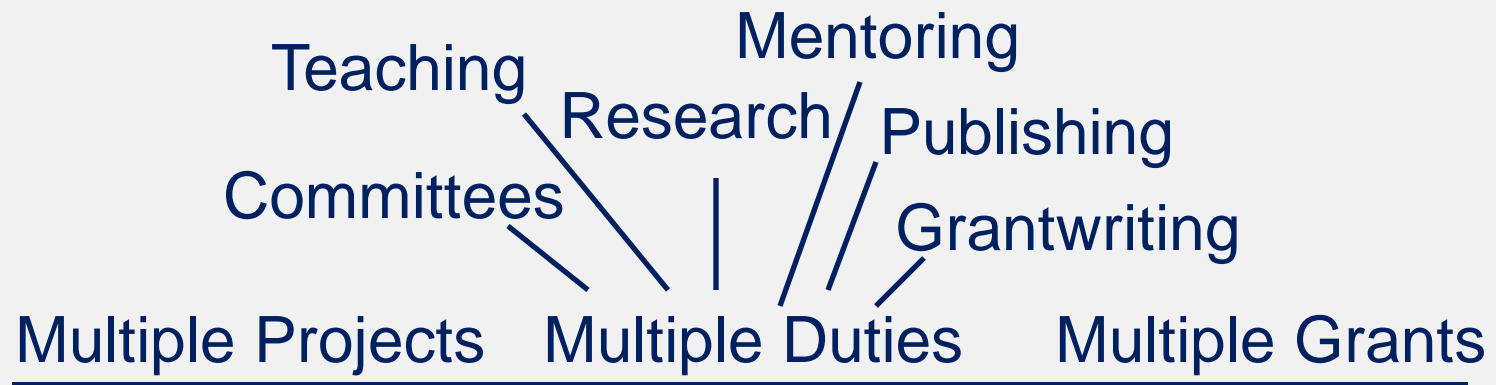
Davis, M. Encyclopedia of Applied Ethics



# Conflict of Interest: Influences



# Balancing Competing Interests



# Conflict of Interest

- Situations where COI may arise:
  - Evaluation of and interaction with students
  - Increased research for private sector
    - Academic freedom vs. restricted access
    - Compensation from multiple sources
  - Staff hiring/supervising
    - family/two-career recruitments
  - Peer Review
  - Entrepreneurial activities



# Conflict of Interest

- “...the mere existence of a Conflict of Interest does not necessarily imply wrongdoing on anyone’s part.”  
[Policy 97]
  - Must be recognized and disclosed
  - Must be managed appropriately
  - ‘Trust test’
- Conflict of interest should be disclosed to:
  - Funding agencies
  - Peer review committees, journal editors
  - Collaborators
  - University Departments



# References

Macrina FL. (2005): Scientific Integrity: Text and Cases in Responsible Conduct of Research. 3rd Edition, American Society for Microbiology Press.

ORI Introduction to the Responsible Conduct of Research. Nicholas H. Steneck, PhD  
HTML Version, September 2006, updated from Revised Printed Edition, June 2004  
<http://ori.dhhs.gov/education/products/RCRintro/>

UBC Policy 97: Conflict of Interest and Conflict of Commitment  
<http://www.universitycounsel.ubc.ca/policies/policy97.pdf>

RCREC Internet Course, a product of the Responsible Conduct of Research Education Committee [http://ethics.ucsd.edu/courses/rcrec\\_internet/about.html](http://ethics.ucsd.edu/courses/rcrec_internet/about.html) (©1992-2007)

[http://www.armsdeal-vpo.co.za/special\\_items/reading/ethics.html](http://www.armsdeal-vpo.co.za/special_items/reading/ethics.html)

