Commitments Requiring Prior Institutional Authorization

The University has longstanding policies and procedures applicable to commitments that require institutional authorization before they are undertaken, particularly the execution of documents and agreements that give rise to institutional obligations. In order to minimize institutional vulnerability to legal claims, and unintended program obligations and financial liabilities, there are procedures for document review which have been mandated by the Board of Trustees.

For example, all contracts, letters of agreement, leases, real estate, and construction documents relating to wills and estates, among other matters, must be reviewed as to form and approved by the Office of General Counsel before any commitments are undertaken. (See section on “Legal Services.”)

Commitments (including Appointment Letters and other documents) relating to employment must be approved as to form by University Counsel. All agreements relating to governmental regulations applicable to employees or to members of the staff must also be approved by Labor Counsel.

In addition, whenever a financial obligation or potential liability may be created all relevant documents must additionally be approved by the Vice President for Business Affairs or his designee. The Office of Risk Management will, as appropriate, also review and approve documents before execution. Where necessary, Presidential and/or Board of Trustees authorization must be secured before certain documents are signed.

The institution will not be liable for any obligation undertaken or incurred if these procedures are not followed. Individuals who nevertheless make commitments that have not been authorized and approved as outlined above or who sign documents corroborating such commitments may unfortunately and inadvertently be undertaking a personal obligation and liability. Questions as to whether a particular document is subject to the outlined review and approval procedure should be resolved by submitting the matter for review and approval.

In addition, if at any time you are made aware of possible legal action by any party against the institution or any of its employees (in their official capacity) or if you are contacted by an attorney, immediately consult with the Office of General Counsel.