



Office of the Senior Vice Chancellor for Legal Affairs
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TO: All CUNY Employees and Faculty

FROM: The Office of the Senior Vice Chancellor for Legal Affairs and General Counsel,
The City University of New York

DATE: December 1, 2025

SUBJECT: Holiday Reminder 2025 — Acceptance of Gifts

Please be reminded that the City University of New York's ("CUNY" or "University") [Conflicts of Interest Policy](#) and the New York State Public Officers Law prohibit the acceptance of gifts of more than nominal value from interested sources. Accordingly, as a CUNY employee you may not solicit or accept such gifts, either directly or indirectly, from any interested source, regardless of whether the gift was intended to influence or reward you.

Interested sources are persons and business entities with which CUNY or its constituent schools or colleges are doing business, and also those persons and business entities interested in doing business with CUNY or its constituent schools or colleges. Interested sources also include those persons and business entities who have a history of doing business with CUNY or any of its constituent schools or colleges in the recent past.

The New York State Commission on Ethics and Lobbying in Government ("COELIG" or the "Commission") excludes from the definition of "gift" any food or beverage worth \$15 or less, and any promotional items with no resale value such as calendars or pens. This exclusion has no restriction on place, purpose or source. Any perishable gifts worth more than \$15, such as fruit baskets or other food, must be either returned to the sender, donated to charity, or placed in a common area of the office. Non-perishable gifts must be returned to the sender. Holiday parties hosted by interested sources may not be attended without prior approval from your ethics officer.

For more information, please see the Commission's ***"Ethics Reminder: Tis the Season to Remember the***

Ethics Rules for Gifts,” available at:

ethics.ny.gov/system/files/documents/2021/12/2021-gifts-reminder_ethics-reminder_winter-2021.pdf

and **“Ethics Reminder: Accepting Gifts – yes and no”**

ethics.ny.gov/system/files/documents/2022/12/2022_accepting-gifts-yes-or-no_ethics-reminder_final_12_14_22.pdf

Additionally, CUNY’s Conflicts of Interest Policy and the New York State Public Officers Law also prohibit gifts from CUNY subordinates to CUNY supervisors (this term includes managers, directors, deans, and all executive staff titles). Such gifts from subordinates may give an appearance of impropriety or give the impression that someone may improperly influence a decision-maker. There is no prohibition on supervisors giving modest gifts to their subordinates as tokens of their appreciation.

The CUNY policy and state law regarding gifts apply to all CUNY employees, including faculty.

A CUNY professor cannot accept a “thank you” gift or gift card from a student as it could be seen as a reward for performing their state job. For more information please see the COELIG’s FAQs on gifts at: [2025-05-1-gifts-faq.pdf](#) and our website at:

www.cuny.edu/about/administration/offices/legal-affairs/policies-resources/ethics/#gifts

If you have any questions regarding CUNY’s and the Commission’s interpretation of the law, I encourage you to ask before you act. Please contact your Campus Ethics Officer:

www.cuny.edu/about/administration/offices/legal-affairs/policies-resources/ethics/college-ethics-officers/

If you receive a non-perishable gift, please send it back to the person/entity along with the sample letter (www.cuny.edu/about/administration/offices/legal-affairs/policies-resources/ethics/no-gifts-sample-letter-template/).

The Commission’s detailed regulations about Gifts are referenced in Title 19 NYCRR Part 933:

ethics.ny.gov/sites/g/files/oeel281/files/documents/2017/09/19-nycrr-part-933-gifts-pursuant-public-officers-law-final-rule.pdf

For additional information regarding gifts, please see the Commission’s website on gifts at:

[Gifts | New York State Commission on Ethics and Lobbying in Government](#)