



ASPIRE Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct/ Affirmation Statement

ASPIRE, Inc. is the umbrella governing organization that connects Colorado, Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, Wyoming, and Utah TRIO programs to support educational access and support to students who are low-income, first-generation and students with disabilities.

The mission of ASPIRE, Inc. is to increase the educational and success opportunities for low-income, first-generation and college students with disabilities through advocacy, professional development and legislative awareness.

In keeping with the core mission and purpose of the overall association, this Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct set forth standards of behavior for the Regional ASPIRE Board of Directors (Board). This document is intended to assist members of the Board in fulfilling their duties.

It is the obligation of all covered under this document to observe the Code of Ethics and to act accordingly to advance the effectiveness of the Board. All actions of the Board shall reflect the core values of the organization and shall include **Care, Fairness, Honesty, Integrity, Respect, Responsibility, and Trustworthiness.**

In all actions, the Board should:

1). **Be Informed**

Board members owe the ASPIRE Region a duty of **Care**. The duty of **Care** requires them to exercise their authority to make decisions for ASPIRE with the prudence that an ordinary person would exercise. To be able to fulfill this fiduciary duty of care, it is necessary that the Board Member be well informed with accurate information about the organization, its mission, its operations, and the transactions in which it proposes to engage.

The Board Member should require that the ASPIRE President and Treasurer provide him or her financial reports and information adequate to understand revenues and expenses of the Region. The information should be adequate to allow the Board Member to make informed and prudent decisions about the budget, the operations and balancing the short- and long-term needs of ASPIRE. It is important that each Board Member comprehend the full scope of ASPIRE's finances and operations.

The Board Member should have access to a wide range of information about ASPIRE and its operations. The ASPIRE President should report regularly to the Board and answer questions that members may have. In most circumstances, it is difficult for the



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Board Member to satisfy their duty of **Care** unless they review information provided to them prior to any meeting.

2). Participate

Each Board Member must regularly attend, pursuant to ASPIRE Operating Guidelines section 2.1.4, and participate in each board meeting. It is not possible to satisfy the duty of **Care** without doing so. In addition, the Board must meet regularly, no less than twice per year, and traditionally, four times per year as outlined in the ASPIRE Operating Guidelines (see section 3.2). If the Board is not meeting regularly, it is incumbent upon the Board member to request such meetings.

3). Use Independent Judgment

As a Board Member votes on matters, he or she must exercise independent judgment on the matter on hand. The Board Member may seek advice and input from consultants, other Board Members, and Educational Opportunity professionals; however, ultimately the Board Member must decide independently based upon his or her understanding of the situation. A Board Member should not vote “yes” or “no” merely because someone else is doing so. A Board Member should not “rubber stamp” the recommendations of others. A Board Member should not vote on something he or she does not understand.

4). Act in the best interest of ASPIRE

A Board Member has a duty of loyalty to ASPIRE and its members, i.e., must act in the best interest of the TRIO professional, the students they serve and taking into consideration the needs of his or her state. The Board Member should not take into consideration his or her own personal interests (financial, professional or otherwise) or even the interests of some third party. The Board must take particular care to highlight the local, state, regional, and national impact of all decisions. Board members must ensure that they conduct themselves professionally and refrain from engaging in behavior that is illegal, unethical or have the appearance of impropriety.

5). Disclose Conflicts (Conflict of Interest)

Because a Board Member must act in the best interest of ASPIRE, it is necessary that the member disclose any facts that may cause the individual to be unable or appear to be unable to execute his or her loyalty. As circumstances arise, the Board Member should disclose any actual or potential conflict when the Board or committee on which they serve, considers a transaction. A conflict of interest can arise from any relationship



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or activity that might impair, or even appear to impair, a Board member's objective and fair decisions when performing their duties.

6). Recuse

After disclosing an actual or potential conflict of interest, the Board Member should leave the room while the matter is discussed and should not vote on the matter. Notwithstanding the fact that some state laws allow the conflicted Board Member to be considered for purpose of ascertaining a quorum, the better practice is to assure that a quorum consisting of un-conflicted Board Members is available. The conflicted Board Member should not attempt to influence the decision in any way but may provide information requested by the Board.

7). Maintain Confidence

A Board Member will frequently receive confidential information about ASPIRE and Council for Opportunity in Education (COE) matters and membership. The Board Member is obligated to keep such information confidential. The Board Member should not discuss such information with non-Board Members unless specifically instructed by the Board to do so. The Board Member should be alert to circumstances where confidentiality obligations may create conflict.

8). Support ASPIRE

Board Members should support ASPIRE, in addition to their state associations during their tenure on the Board. This includes public support of the mission, policies and the work of ASPIRE.

9). Maintain Professional Relationships

In respecting the individual responsibilities of the positions they hold, Board Members shall:

- Show respect for the diversity of the viewpoints among colleagues, just as they show respect for the diversity of viewpoints among the students served.
- Refrain from unjustified or unseemly criticism of fellow Board Members.
- Use their position, title and professional associations only for the conduct of official business.
- Uphold agreements when participating in joint activities and give due credit to collaborators for their contributions.



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- Carry out, in a timely and professional manner, any ASPIRE responsibilities they agree to accept.

10). Exercising Caution in Public Statements

When making public statements regarding activities for ASPIRE and COE, Board Members will clearly distinguish, in both written and oral public statements, between their personal opinions and the views of ASPIRE and COE. They will provide accurate, complete, current, and unbiased information. Board Members should refrain from making opinion-based statements regarding ASPIRE and/or COE when such statements violate confidentiality or negatively affect another member whose inputs or view has not been considered. Direct all formal media responses to one of the sitting of Presidents of the Board (Past, Current or President-Elect).

11). Intellectual property and moral rights

ASPIRE Inc. retains the moral rights in, and ownership of, all intellectual property that we create unless agreed otherwise in advance with our partners. In return, we respect the moral and intellectual copyright vested in our partners' intellectual property.

12). Equality and discrimination

ASPIRE Inc. expressly prohibits any form of harassment based on race, color, religion, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, national origin, age, genetic information, disability or veteran's status.

13). Violations to ASPIRE's Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct

Any suspected violations of this Code of Ethics should be reported promptly in writing to the President of ASPIRE. Should the President be the source of concern, then the Past-President or President-Elect may receive the complaint. The complaint shall specify the nature of the violation and its relevance to the Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct. The President or other appropriate officer shall appoint a special committee comprised of at least three Board Members. The special committee shall report the outcome of the investigation to the Board during Executive Session and may recommend sanctions as necessary and appropriate for Board discussion/approval. ASPIRE's Bylaws and Operating Guidelines shall be applied accordingly.



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***AFFIRMATION of the CODE of ETHICS and
PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT STATEMENT***

I have read and understood the purpose of ASPIRE as delineated in its Bylaws and Operating Guidelines. I have read and understood the Code of Conduct and Professional conduct governing the Board Members and agree to conduct myself in accordance with the Code during my tenure on the Board. I understand that any violation of this Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct will be addressed on a case-by-case basis and that the Bylaws and Operating Guidelines of ASPIRE will be applied accordingly.

Board Member:

Printed Name

Signature

Dated: _____