FAS's new policy does not change professors’ allowed activities. These are, as before, described in the so-called “Grey Book” (the compilation of principles and policies governing “research, instruction, and other professional activities,” which awaits updating to incorporate the new conflicts-of-interest language). For instance, a faculty member can be on a company’s advisory board, but cannot actively serve in management. With faculty members disclosing all their pertinent outside interests now, Fitzgerald and Griffin are in the middle of determining what kinds of potential conflicts may arise. Based on experiences at other schools, they said, 90 percent of covered faculty members will have no potential conflicts.

Griffin cited some quotidian, and perhaps surprising, examples of potential conflicts, compared to straightforward questions governing research grants or investments. What happens when a faculty member requires his own textbook for a course? Appropriate mitigation might include pointing that out to students clearly, early in the course; donating royalties to a charity; or having peers certify that it is the most appropriate book for the class. More subtly, what happens if a publisher discovers a faculty member’s lesson plan for another scholar’s text, and contracts with her to write a study guide to be published for the next edition? Or if a humanities teacher in a course with a long reading list assigns many titles from one publisher, boosting its sales and potentially affecting his future contracts or royalties?

As the reporting began, Griffin noted, faculty members seemed eager to check with peers, to identify issues, to solicit guidance, and to comply with the new policy. “There will be more disclosure” (to the DIO) under the new procedures, Fitzgerald said. “There will be a learning process for the faculty, who had lacked awareness of the old policy—and that’s a good thing.”