

Student Code of Professional Conduct

Effective Date: Upon adoption by the Student Senate and Learning Community student representatives

Responsible Party: University of Alabama at Birmingham Marnix E. Heersink School of Medicine Associate Dean for Students

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ABSTRACT

The University of Alabama at Birmingham Marnix E. Heersink School of Medicine Medical Student Code of Professional Conduct outlines the professional behaviors expected of all medical students.

REASON FOR CODE OF CONDUCT

The student body of the Heersink School of Medicine is diverse and varied, but we share a common goal to become physicians who will provide effective care for our patients. The professional development of medical students is an essential part of medical education. The Medical Student Code of Professional Conduct outlines the principles shared by the student body in pursuit of this common goal and promotes the healthy development of professional identity among all students.

The code sets for the required standard of professional behavior expected of our students.

SCOPE

This code of professional conduct applies to all Heersink School of Medicine students.

Code of Conduct

Code of Professional Conduct

By accepting a position in the Heersink School of Medicine, students have embarked on a new phase of professional identify formation: that of a professional medical student. This carries with it certain privileges, responsibilities, and sacrifices. In many ways, the professional student culture and environment mimics and prepares students for the broader professional culture of medicine

The Code of Professional Conduct sets forth our shared values and expectations of professionalism.

While the Code of Conduct expresses our values, the companion Best Practices document serves as a diagnostic tool used to identify areas for improvement or gaps in knowledge. The two documents should be used together, as one is not complete without the other.

Each Heersink School of Medicine student is expected to:

- Strive for attitudes and behaviors that live up to the ideas presented in the code
- Hold each other accountable when behaviors do not meet the standards of the code
- Accept accountability when our own behaviors do not meet the standards of the code
- Trust that this code is in our collective best interest and that of our future patients
- Seek clarification and understanding when there are parts of the code we do not understand
- Attest to this Code of Conduct annually.

As students in the Heersink School of Medicine, we commit ourselves to practicing

- **Respect for ourselves**
 - We recognize we have chosen a profession focused on the well-being and care of others, and that at times may require us to make short-term physical, mental, and emotional sacrifices.
 - We commit to self-evaluation and developing the necessary skills to ensure we are engaged in self-care, particularly in times of increased intensity and stress.
 - We embrace asking for help and seeking out resources to assist us in maintaining our mental, physical, and emotional health and well-being.
 - We will approach all situations of patient care, whether educational simulations or clinical settings, with clear minds so that our focus can be on learning and providing the best possible care.
- **Respect for our classmates**
 - We recognize that our classmates are the first team with whom we will work in medicine. As such, a focus on building and strengthening professional relationships must be a priority.
 - Our school is comprised of a diverse group of individuals from various backgrounds, who have a variety of beliefs, perspectives, personalities, and values. We recognize the strength this brings to our school, and how this diversity will add to our own training and eventual medical careers.
 - We embrace the work that must be done to understand and form working relationships with our classmates. We acknowledge this to be an act of professional growth and development, apart from our personal feelings and preferences.
 - Because we have a vested interest in our classmates reaching their full potential both personally and professionally, we will hold each other accountable to the highest standards of personal, academic, and ethical integrity.
- **Respect for our educators and school**
 - We recognize that being a student of the Heersink School of Medicine means we are part of an organization larger than ourselves with a history, reputation, and impact that extends beyond our time as students.

- We accept that being part of a large, multi-faceted organization means there are rules, policies, and procedures to which we will adhere.
 - We embrace the work of seeking the best for our school, and we commit ourselves to seek clarification, challenge ideas and current thinking, provide feedback, and ask questions in ways that are professional and constructive.
 - We accept that we are both represented *by* and representatives *of* the Heersink School of Medicine, and that external individuals and groups may base their judgements and perception of the School on their interactions and perceptions of us.
 - We recognize and affirm each student's right to freedom of speech and expression, and we understand that we practice free speech as individuals and not as representatives of the school. Even so, we recognize that what we say and do reflects on our classmates, faculty, and school.
 - We acknowledge that the faculty, staff, and administration are professionals here to help us reach our goals, and we will keep this partnership and professional relationship in focus, particularly when we have disagreements or are providing feedback.
- **Respect for our patients**
 - We recognize the centrality of the physician-patient relationship in the practice of medicine, which forms the basis for effective care and treatment.
 - We will model the highest levels of professional behavior during patient encounters, whether simulated or real.
 - We will adhere to the legal standards of privacy and recognize there will be real-world situations and cases, in which understanding the boundaries of patient confidentiality and protecting sensitive information might not be as clear. In such cases we will seek guidance to ensure patient privacy and compliance with the law.
 - We will advocate for our patients to receive the best possible care and focus our advocacy on individual needs when called for.
 - Technology, social media, and changing cultural norms have made it easier than ever before to live public lives in an online space. We affirm that even in an era of new technologies and online expectations, there is the timeless responsibility physicians have to guard patient information and not divulge anything that “should not be published abroad.”
- **Respect for our profession**
 - We recognize that becoming a part of the medical profession is not a single event that happens, but a process that occurs over time. We commit ourselves, as students, to the process of becoming a physician.
 - We acknowledge that the role of physician has great “opportunity, responsibility, and obligation,” and we embrace each of these, even when they require sacrifices others may not have to make.
 - We acknowledge that throughout history physicians have experienced social, political, and cultural pressures. We commit ourselves to understand how the current pressures may affect our careers and the medical profession as a whole. We will not let these pressures — or differences of opinions with our

colleagues — interfere with our ability to work effectively as a team to provide optimal patient care.

Violation of the Student Code of Professional Conduct

- The UAB Heersink School of Medicine expects its students to adhere to the standards set forth in the Code of Professional Conduct.
- The goal of addressing violations of the Student Code of Professional Conduct will always be the personal and professional growth of the individual(s) involved. However, there may be instances when the behavior is egregious and considered a violation of these standards. As a result, a student may be sanctioned or dismissed.
- The Heersink School of Medicine will conduct a thorough investigation of any reported violation of the Student Code of Professional Conduct
- The following groups are charged with investigation of potential Acts of professional misconduct. A description of the process for investigation by each group and possible outcomes are described on their respective sites.
 - Honor Council: The Honor Council investigates reports of academic misconduct as defined in the [Honor Code](#). Academic misconduct is defined as any act or failure to act that could impact an academic record, or is intended to impact an academic record to give an impression that is not an accurate reflection of the academic effort or accomplishment of any student.
 - Student Academic Standing Committee: The [Student Academic Standing Committee](#) will review cases of non-academic professional misconduct. Non-academic professional misconduct is defined as any willful act or failure to act that demonstrates a lack of respect for self, classmates, educators and school, patients, or the profession.
 - Potential acts of sex discrimination, sexual harassment, and sexual violence are referred to the [UAB Student Affairs Title IX Office](#)
 - The UAB Office of Student Conduct investigates potential acts of [Prohibited Conduct](#) as outlined in the Student Conduct Code.

Reporting violations of the Student Code of Professional Conduct

- Medical students are encouraged to report any behavior that they perceive to be a violation of the Code of Professional Conduct. This includes behavior directed toward them as individuals, or toward other learners, teachers, residents, patients, or staff.
- The school provides several mechanisms for such reporting, including personal meetings (with course directors, the Associate or Assistant Deans for Students, or Medical Student Services team members on any campus), confidential or anonymous online reporting within the School of Medicine (i.e., [ReportIt](#)), and confidential or anonymous online reporting outside of the medical school (i.e., [UAB Ethics Hotline](#) and [Title IX Office; UAB Office for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion](#)).
- The medical school understands that confidentiality and anonymity of reporters are critical to ensuring that reporters feel empowered to report a potential violation of the Code of Professional Conduct. The medical school takes every step to ensure confidentiality. The medical school abides by the UAB retaliation policy, which

states that “retaliation against any individual who reports, in Good Faith, wrongful conduct or who participates in the investigation of wrongful conduct is prohibited.”

Student Misconduct including Mistreatment of Other Students.

Reports of student misconduct will be managed and addressed, using the following process.

- **Reports made directly to Medical Student Services, or via the ReportIt system**
 - When a report of student misconduct, including mistreatment, is made directly to Medical Student Services or via the ReportIt system, the Associate Dean for Students, or their designee, will make a determination, based on the details of the report, whether to do additional information-gathering or pass the report to appropriate UAB official and/or department for review. This could include: the Honor Council, Student Academic Standing Committee, Student Conduct, Title IX, etc.
 - The group which takes over the addressing the report, will provide updates, as appropriate, to the Associate Dean for Students, or designee.
- **Reports made directly to one of the groups charged with investigating Acts of professional misconduct.**
 - When a report of student misconduct, including mistreatment, is made directly to one of the groups charged with investigating Acts of professional misconduct, the group will notify the Associate Dean for Students, or their designee, that the report has been received, in accordance with that group’s own processes and protocols.
 - As appropriate, and where necessary, the group will inform the Associate Dean for Students, or designee, of outcomes and required action.

HISTORY

Created: 2014

Approved: July 01, 2018 by Medical Education Leadership

Revised: July 01, 2018

Revised: September 20, 2022

Approved: October 1, 2022 by the Student Senate

University of Alabama at Birmingham Marnix E. Heersink School of Medicine policies, statements, guidelines, and codes shall be reviewed periodically to determine whether revisions are appropriate to address the needs of the medical school community.