
Policy: Professionalism and Professional Conduct

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Section: Student Affairs

Area:

Subject: Professionalism

Purposes of Policy¹

Professional conduct and professionalism are important in education and the health care professions. Individuals seeking service from professionals in health care or education must be able to trust their provider. This policy establishes standards of professionalism and professional behavior for students, staff, and faculty in the College of Health Professions (CHP).

The policy is meant to be consistent with University-wide policies regarding student, staff, and faculty conduct. It does not supersede any policy established by the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences.

Fundamental Attributes of Professionalism

Professionalism in health care and education is based upon values that reflect the very special nature of the interaction between a provider and a patient, client, or family and between a teacher and student. Individuals confronting illness, social disruption, or other life-changing challenges are vulnerable. Individuals learning the knowledge, skills, and attitudes of a profession face many new challenges. Patients and students rely upon professionals to address their needs in an expert, professional manner. All who work with patients and their families and those who work with students are expected to act in accordance with the standards of professional conduct outlined below.

There are core values of professionalism that are universal and apply to those in health care professions and in education. These include, but are not limited to, moral values such as honesty, integrity, and trustworthiness; values that are specific to one's profession (*e.g.*, confidentiality), to society (*e.g.*, commitment to excellence), to oneself (*e.g.*, self-reflection), and to humanistic values such as empathy and compassion.

Standards for Professional Conduct

Professional behaviors and professionalism are critical to the effective education of allied health students and the practice of their respective professions. All students, staff, and faculty in the College of Health Professions are expected to demonstrate high standards of professional behavior in all educational settings, including classrooms and laboratories, professional and clinical sites, and in non-educational settings. Examples of such behavior include, but are not limited to:

1. Honesty and integrity:
 - a. Act with honesty or truthfulness

¹ This policy is partially based upon the "Policy on Professionalism and Professional Conduct" of the Skaggs School of Pharmacy of the University of Montana

- b. Demonstrate integrity or firm adherence to moral principles in academic matters and professional relationships.
2. Trustworthiness:
 - a. Demonstrate dependability to carry out responsibilities.
3. Empathy and cultural diversity:
 - a. Differentiate appropriate interpersonal interaction with respect to culture, race, religion, ethnic origin, gender, and sexual orientation.
 - b. Demonstrate regard for differing values and abilities among peers, other health care professionals, and patients.
 - c. Demonstrate an ability to share someone else's feelings or experiences by imagining what it would be like to be in his/her situation
4. Communication:
 - a. Communicate effectively with faculty, staff, students, patients, and other professionals.
 - b. Demonstrate confidence in actions and communications.
 - c. Formulate written communications with professional content and tone.
 - d. Ensure the confidentiality of communications that contain personal information
5. Punctuality:
 - a. Demonstrate punctuality in academic and professional environments.
 - b. Adhere to established times for classes, laboratories, professional experiences, and meetings.
 - c. Comply with established oral and written deadlines.
 - d. Respond to requests (written, oral, e-mail, telephone) in a timely fashion.
6. Professional behavior:
 - a. Display professional behavior toward faculty, staff, students, patients, and other health professionals in all settings, including but not limited to the classroom, laboratory, and clinical settings.
 - b. Show regard for persons in authority in classroom, laboratory, and clinical settings.
 - c. Exhibit fitting behavior when representing the College of Health Professions in extracurricular activities and professional meetings.²
7. Ethical standards:
 - a. Demonstrate high moral standards to allied health education, practice, research, and service. These standards include, but are not limited to, telling the truth, maintaining confidentiality, and respecting individuals.
8. Social contracts:
 - a. Conduct interactions with patients and their families in a professional manner.
 - b. Relate to patients and their families in a caring and compassionate manner.
 - c. Recognize instances when one's values and motivation are in conflict with those of the patient and his/her families, and proceed in a manner that is patient focused. If there is a conflict of values or motivations that you think may involve something illegal, unethical, or unprofessional, seek guidance from your supervisor, instructor, or chairman.
 - d. Identify to one's supervisor any activity that is dangerous to the welfare of a patient or colleague.
 - e. Demonstrate an attitude of service by putting others' needs above one's own.
 - f. Comply with federal, state, university, school, and institutional requirements regarding confidentiality of information.

² The Human Resources Employee Relations Basic Code of Conduct may be found at <http://uams.edu/AdminGuide/WIN04401.html>

9. Negotiation, compromise, and conflict resolution:
 - a. Demonstrate good skills of conflict resolution.
 - b. Formulate constructive evaluation of others' performance.
 - c. Display a positive attitude when receiving constructive criticism.

10. Lifelong improvement and professional competence:
 - a. Produce quality work in academic and clinical settings.
 - b. Take responsibility for learning.
 - c. Demonstrate continuous professional development by identifying what should be learned and how one might assess his or her competence in new knowledge and skills

11. Time management and decision-making:
 - a. Utilize time efficiently.
 - b. Demonstrate self-direction in completing assignments.
 - c. Demonstrate accountability for decisions.

12. Appearance:
 - a. Maintain a professional appearance when representing the College of Health Professions.
 - b. Maintain personal hygiene and grooming appropriate to the setting.

Adherence to professional standards is an academic requirement for graduation from the College of Health Professions and a performance standard for staff and faculty. Failure to meet these standards will result in disciplinary action, which may include dismissal from the academic program and the college.

Resolution of Alleged Incidents of Misconduct

Observation of Unprofessional Behavior

When a member of the CHP community (student, staff, or faculty member) observes inappropriate behavior that represents a possible violation of expected professional standards, he or she will meet with the individual directly to discuss the misconduct. If both parties agree that a satisfactory resolution results from the meeting, no further action is required. If the observer is unable to meet the individual, the matter should be referred directly to the supervisor/chairman.

If the observer is not able to meet with the individual or, after discussing the issue with the individual, the observer thinks that a satisfactory resolution has not been reached, he or she will notify in writing either the supervisor of the staff or faculty member or the department chairman of the student and describe the incident, the alleged breach of professional conduct, and the failure to obtain resolution. The supervisor/chairman will discuss the nature of the incident with the individual, the observer, and other students, staff, or faculty as appropriate to assess the evidence of misconduct and to develop a remediation plan or course of action. If the evidence is not considered sufficient to pursue the allegation, the incident is considered to be resolved. If the evidence is considered sufficient, the chairman/supervisor will notify in writing the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs (for student conduct) or the Associate Dean for Administrative Affairs (for employee conduct) the nature of the incident and the corrective steps recommended. The associate dean will review the report and the recommendations by the supervisor/chairman to ensure that policies and procedures have been followed and that the rights, including due process, of all parties involved have been preserved.

The chairman or supervisor will meet with the student or employee and discuss the breach of professional conduct and the proposed remediation plan or plan of action. Students and employees will be given at least five (5) week days' notice of the meeting. The notice will be in writing, and mailed to the student's or employee's address of record. The notice will contain the time, place, and nature of the meeting, and a brief description of the misconduct. The notice will also inform the student or employee of his/her right to present witnesses on his/her behalf. The accused student or employee must notify the chairman or

supervisor about his/her intention to present such witness(es) at least two days prior to the meeting. The chairman or supervisor may have another faculty/staff member present to validate the proceedings in the meeting with the student or employee. The remediation plan may include placing the student or employee on probationary status, mandating counseling, or other actions designed to emphasize the importance of professional conduct and to educate the student or employee about professional behavior. The course of action may also include dismissal or termination. The supervisor or chairman's findings and actions shall be recorded in the individual's file.

At the conference with the student or employee, the chairman or supervisor will:

- a. Present the accusation;
- b. Hear the explanation, admission, and/or denial of the alleged act of misconduct by the accused student or employee;
- c. Discuss the seriousness of the alleged act of misconduct, the implications, and the process for resolution of the allegation;
- d. Inform the student or employee of the probable remediation plan previously determined by the chairman or supervisor, for the alleged misconduct.

If the student or employee admits to the allegation and agrees with the recommended remediation plan, the chairman or supervisor will inform the student or employee in writing of the remediation plan to be imposed. The chairman or supervisor will communicate to the student or employee in a written report of the incident and remediation plan. The report will be signed by the chairman or supervisor and the student or employee and forwarded to the Dean of the CHP for review. The Dean may approve or modify the remediation plan recommended in the report but shall not increase the severity of the remediation plan. The Dean's decision must be communicated to the student and faculty member within five (5) week days after receiving the report, at which time the remediation plan for the admitted misconduct is implemented.

Appeal Process for Students

If the student disagrees with the recommended remediation plan, the student may appeal the decision in writing to the Dean of the CHP, within five (5) week days after being informed of the decision by the chairman. The Dean's decision on the appeal will be based on the student's written reasons for disagreement and other pertinent evidence, as well as the written report cited above. The Dean, in ruling on the appeal, may enlist the aid of the Professional Conduct Advisory Panel. The Dean's decision is final and must be communicated to the student within 15 week days from the date the appeal was received by the Dean. If the Dean's decision is to implement the remediation plan, it is implemented at the time of notification.

If the student denies the allegation at the time of the initial meeting with the chairman, the chairman and the student will each prepare a written report to be forwarded to the Dean. The reports shall include a description of the alleged incident of misconduct, the process used to address the allegation, and the outcome of the meeting. The student's written report should include a clear statement of his/her rebuttal to the allegation. The chairman's report should include a description of the alleged act of misconduct and all evidence to the allegation. These written reports are to be signed by the authors and submitted to the Dean within five (5) week days following the meeting between the chairman and accused student.

The Dean's decision will be based on the student's and chairman's written reports and other available relevant evidence. The Dean of the CHP has the prerogative of establishing a Professional Conduct Advisory Panel, as the need arises, to consider the issues to alleged incidences of professional misconduct and/or the proposed remediation plans. The purpose of the Professional Conduct Advisory Panel is to insure full investigation of incidences of alleged misconduct and/or the remediation plans when use of the informal process, described previously, has not resolved an issue to the student's satisfaction. The panel shall be advisory to the Dean, and its recommendations shall not be binding upon him/her. The Dean's decision is final and must be communicated to the student within fifteen (15) week days from

the date the appeal was received by the Dean. Following this notification, the applicable remediation plan is implemented.

The composition of the Professional Conduct Advisory Panel shall be:

1. A chairman appointed by the Dean
2. Two faculty members selected by the Dean. One faculty member shall be from the department in which the accused student is enrolled, but he/she shall not be involved in the allegation. The other faculty member shall be from another department of the CHP. If it is not possible to identify a faculty member in the student's department who is not involved in the allegation, both faculty members shall be appointed from other departments.
3. Two students selected by the Dean. The students shall be in good standing. One student shall be selected from the department, in which the accused student is enrolled, but not from the same class as the accused student. The second student shall be from another department in the CHP. In the event the department has only one class, both students will be selected from other departments.

The primary duty of the Professional Conduct Advisory Panel shall be to review as rapidly and discreetly as possible all information provided about the alleged incident of misconduct and to seek other facts deemed necessary to insure adequate review of the allegation and/or recommended remediation plan. The student and the chairman involved in the allegation may be present and hear all witnesses. Confidentiality is expected from all Panel members and others involved. At the time the Panel is convened for this purpose, a reasonable deadline by which the Panel's work must be completed will be established by the Dean, recognizing the overall 15-day deadline. At the completion of its review, a written report of the Committee's process of review, findings, and its recommendations shall be forwarded to the Dean of the CHP, thereby completing the work of the Panel. Following the review of the findings and recommendations of the Professional Conduct Advisory Panel, the Dean of the CHP shall make the final decision.

Appeal Process for Staff

If the employee disagrees with the allegation and/or remediation plan proposed by his/her supervisor, the employee may submit a grievance in accordance with the general grievance procedure for non-academic employees of UAMS (See attached Grievance Procedure from the UAMS Staff Handbook). The employee will grieve the decision to the next level above his/her supervisor.

Appeal Process for Faculty

If a faculty member disagrees with the allegation and/or the remediation plan proposed by his/her supervisor, the faculty member may grieve to the Dean by following the procedures outlined in Section G-3 of the 1996 UAMS Faculty Handbook (See attached Academic Employee Grievance Procedure from the UAMS Faculty Handbook).

4.6.5 Immediate Responses

If the observer believes that an individual has committed a serious breach of professional conduct that may place another individual, the College, or a clinical site in jeopardy, he or she will refer the matter directly to the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs or the Associate Dean for Administrative Affairs who will take appropriate action as defined under the Policy On Administrative Actions (See the CHP Catalog).

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