

# STANDARD OF CONDUCT FOR TEACHER-LEARNER RELATIONSHIP

Liberty University College of Osteopathic Medicine is committed to maintaining a positive environment for study and training, in which individuals can pursue their educational and professional activities in an atmosphere that is humane, respectful and safe<sup>1</sup>. As such, student mistreatment disregards these fundamental principles and will not be tolerated.

LUCOM defines mistreatment as behavior that shows disrespect for learners and interferes with their respective learning process. Such behavior may be verbal, emotional, or physical. When assessing behavior that is perceived as mistreatment, students are expected to consider the conditions, circumstances, and environment surrounding such behavior. Provision of healthcare is inherently stressful. Osteopathic Medical Student training is a rigorous process where the welfare of the patient is the primary focus and that, in turn, may impact behavior in the training setting. Osteopathic Medical Students also are required to maintain a high level of individual responsibility for their education and actions.

Reflective of this philosophy, all LUCOM faculty, including community faculty, will abide by this Compact between Teacher and Learners of Medicine. This Compact has been modified from the Compact between Resident Physicians and Their Teachers produced by the Association of American Medical Colleges. This Compact serves both as a pledge and as a reminder to teachers and learners that their conduct in fulfilling their mutual obligations is the medium through which the medical and health professions inculcate their ethical values.

## Guiding Principles

*Duty.* Medical and health professions educators have a duty not only to convey the knowledge, competencies, and skills required for delivering their profession's contemporary standard of care or research, but also to instill the values and attitudes required for preserving their profession's social contract across generations.

*Integrity.* The learning environments conducive to conveying professional values must be infused with integrity. Students learn enduring lessons of professionalism by observing and emulating role models who epitomize authentic professional values and attitudes.

*Respect.* Fundamental to the ethic of osteopathic medicine is respect for every individual. Mutual respect between learners, as novice members of a profession, and their teachers, as experienced and esteemed professionals, is essential for nurturing that ethic. Given the inherently hierarchical nature of the teacher-learner relationship, teachers have a special obligation to ensure that students are always treated respectfully.

## Commitments of Faculty

We pledge our utmost effort to ensure that all components of the educational program for students are of high quality.

As mentors for our students, we maintain high professional standards in all of our interactions with patients, colleagues, and staff.

We respect all students as individuals, without regard to gender, race, national origin, religion, or sexual orientation; we will not tolerate anyone

who manifests disrespect or who expresses biased attitudes towards any student.

We pledge to respect the duty hour requirements for students as stipulated in the applicable accreditation standards.

In nurturing both the intellectual and the personal development of students, we celebrate expressions of professional attitudes and behaviors, as well as achievement of academic excellence.

We do not tolerate any abuse or exploitation of students.

We encourage any student who experiences mistreatment or who witnesses unprofessional behavior to report the facts immediately to appropriate faculty or staff. We will treat all such reports as confidential and do not tolerate reprisals or retaliations of any kind.

## Commitments of Students

We pledge our utmost effort to acquire the knowledge, skills, attitudes, competencies, and behaviors required to fulfill all educational objectives established by the faculty.

We cherish the professional virtues of honesty, compassion, integrity, fidelity, personal responsibility, dependability, and a high moral standard.

We pledge to respect all faculty members, and all students as individuals, without regard to gender, race, national origin, religion, or sexual orientation.

As osteopathic physicians in training, we embrace the highest standards of our profession along with its code of ethics and pledge to conduct ourselves accordingly in all of our interactions with patients and/or colleagues and staff.

In fulfilling our own obligations as professionals, we pledge to assist our fellow students in meeting their professional obligations as well.

## Reporting of Student Mistreatment<sup>2</sup>

Students are encouraged to report mistreatment via three avenues:

1. Notify rotation/program director or department chair
2. Notify a Dean
3. Report the incidence on a course/clerkship evaluation

These mechanisms can be used to report mistreatment by staff members of LUCOM or affiliate institutions as well.

If deemed appropriate, reports will be investigated by the Academic Leadership team, LUCOM Human Resources, or by a Department/Division chair.

Any student who believes that he or she has been the subject of sexual harassment, discrimination or assault in any form should immediately report the incident to the Office of Equity & Compliance and/or the Liberty University Police Department (LUPD). Students who would like assistance in contacting local authorities may request help from campus authorities. For policies and information specifically related to Harassment and Assault, Sexual Harassment and Interpersonal Violence, and Racial Harassment and Discrimination, please read the General Conduct Standards.

## Provider-Patient Relationship Between Faculty and Students<sup>3</sup>

To avoid potential bias, LUCOM faculty health professionals should not enter into a provider-patient relationship with any student for whom they currently, or will in the future, have a role in academic assessment, promotion, or committee review of a student's academic or professional performance. If extenuating circumstances require that the faculty member enter into a provider-patient relationship with a student, the faculty must recuse him/herself from the assessment or promotion of that student. Evaluations administered to the entire class as a standardized objective assessment do not represent a conflict of interest.

A health care provider that is delivering or has delivered physical or behavioral health services to a LUCOM student may not directly participate in any aspect of that student's performance evaluation. This primarily applies to core or elective clinical rotations but may apply to pre-clinical educational events in which the provider is not blinded to the student. As LUCOM may not be aware of the relationship due to confidentiality, it is the responsibility of the health care provider to recuse themselves from having the student on their clinical service. The provider should contact LUCOM through the Office of Clinical Education if it is necessary to switch preceptors for the rotation.

<sup>1</sup> 5.1 Professionalism, 12.6 Public Information

<sup>2</sup> 1.5b Non-Discrimination for Faith-Based Institutions

<sup>3</sup> 9.10 Non-academic Health Professionals