Student Pharmacist Professionalism Policy

Scope

Professionalism is a foundational component of any highly productive and efficient health care system. As an integral member of any health care system, pharmacists are expected to demonstrate professionalism in all endeavors. The University of Texas College of Pharmacy (UTCOP) is obligated to teach its students about professionalism and other related expectations, and evaluate and address any deficiencies in or lapses of professionalism.

The UTCOP follows the standards of the Accreditation Council for Pharmacy Education (ACPE), which mandates that pharmacy programs impart the knowledge and skills for pharmacist graduates to exhibit behaviors and values that are consistent with the trust given to the profession by patients, other healthcare providers, and society (Standard 4.4, ACPE Standards). As part of that obligation, professionalism and other related expectations are part of UTCOP’s curriculum, and will be routinely addressed in Pharm.D. coursework. Student pharmacist professionalism will be reinforced across the curriculum and in other activities where the student pharmacist is representing the UTCOP, including via the online Professionalism Submission Form Reporting System, accessible by UTCOP students, faculty, staff and preceptors. Finally, the Texas State Board of Pharmacy (TSBP) monitors professional conduct of pharmacist interns and licensed pharmacists.

In addition to the expectations outlined in this policy, student conduct that violates The University of Texas at Austin (“University”) Code of Conduct, the University’s Institutional Rules on Student Services and Activities, any federal, state, or city laws and statutes, or any policies of the University and The University of Texas System may be subject to the University’s Student Discipline and Conduct Policy administered by the Office of the Dean of Students.

Policy

Pharmacists and student pharmacists are expected to develop and demonstrate an exemplary level of professional conduct. As outlined in this policy, the UTCOP has a process for evaluating and providing timely feedback and education with regard to professional conduct, as well as a process for addressing alleged lapses in professionalism (as defined later in this policy). This process is designed to foster the development of students’ professional conduct and to provide education, remediation and support to student pharmacists with minor or developmental lapses of professional conduct. This policy covers non-academic lapses in professionalism as well as any academic penalty if the conduct occurs in a course that assesses professionalism. Should a student pharmacist’s alleged lapse of professionalism warrant review, the reported incident will be referred to the UTCOP’s Education and Remediation Team, or to the University’s Office of the Dean of Students, as appropriate.

Professionalism Definition & Principles

As a Doctor of Pharmacy student at The University of Texas at Austin College of Pharmacy, it is a great privilege to study pharmacy. Over the course of one’s education and training, student pharmacists will assume extraordinary responsibility for the health and well-being of others. This undertaking requires that student pharmacists uphold the highest standards of ethical, compassionate, and professional behavior. Student pharmacists are expected to adopt the principles listed below to guide their academic career while at The University of Texas at Austin, with the hope that these principles become a part of each student
pharmacist’s clinical career, as well:

1. Accountability
   a. Upholds commitments and completes required tasks
   b. Demonstrates timeliness in all domains
   c. Willingness to accept responsibility for one’s actions
   d. Utilizes an evidence-based approach in patient care
   e. In all endeavors, places the patient’s well-being above all other concerns

2. Honesty
   a. Respects the sacred covenant with the patient by protecting personal information in all settings
   b. Maintains standards of academic honesty
   c. Demonstrates ethical decision-making and holds oneself to rigid ethical standards
   d. Exhibits truthfulness, integrity, and pride in all aspects of one’s work

3. Respect
   a. Demonstrates sensitivity towards individual needs, values, and beliefs
   b. Exhibits effective conflict resolution skills
   c. Completes evaluations and provides feedback in a constructive manner
   d. Uses appropriate communication with peers, faculty/staff, residents, preceptors, community partners, patients and all others while representing the College of Pharmacy

4. Pride in the Profession
   a. Engages in professional organizations
   b. Demonstrates strong work ethic in all environments
   c. Conforms to appropriate dress code in all settings
   d. Represents The University of Texas at Austin College of Pharmacy and the profession appropriately in the community, at professional meetings, and in all health care settings

5. Commitment to Self-Improvement
   a. Prioritizes maintaining one’s own health and wellbeing
   b. Recognizes limitations and seeks help when necessary
   c. Accepts and responds to constructive feedback
   d. Dedication to lifelong growth and learning

Identification of Professional and Non-Professional Behavior

An online Professionalism Submission Form Reporting System (“Professionalism Form”) will be used to report professional and unprofessional conduct. The Professionalism Form, in the form of an online survey, will be open to anyone within the UTCOP community. Faculty, preceptors, staff, students, and any members of the College of Pharmacy community are encouraged to report both commendable and questionable conduct. Anonymous submissions will not be accepted, however, privacy will be maintained to the greatest extent possible allowed by law. Following submission of a Professionalism Form, the reports are forwarded to the Education and Remediation Team for review. The Education and Remediation Team consists of the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs, the Assistant Dean for Student Success, the Assistant Dean for Experiential and Professional Affairs, one staff member, one faculty member, and one student. The Education and Remediation Team will review all reports and will confirm receipt of the submission to the reporter within two (2) business days.

Triage and Process

The Education and Remediation Team shall review all submitted Professionalism Forms and assign the incident to a pathway: Commendation, Emergent, Level 1, Level 2, or Level 3.

Commendation
Submissions that detail exceptional professional conduct are encouraged to be reported. The Education and Remediation Team shall send a notice of the commendation with specific details, as available, to the student(s). Commendations will be retained and sent to the Honors & Awards Committee of the College of Pharmacy for potential recognition at official University ceremonies.

**Emergent**

Submissions that allege a threat of safety to student(s) or others will be promptly reported to the Office of the Dean of Students, or other offices as appropriate (Behavioral Concerns Advice Line, Student Emergency Services, UTPD, etc.).

**Level 1 Concerns**

Level 1 concerns consist of lower level incidents, such as, but not limited to:

- Tardiness, without good cause, at a pharmacy-related event;
- Unprofessional attire, not compliant with dress code;
- Failure to show up to an official College of Pharmacy event (i.e., health screening, simulation, etc.) without notifying the event coordinator(s) and without finding replacement coverage; and
- Continued use of electronic devices at inappropriate times/settings, as designated by course and/or event coordinators.

The student who is the subject of a Level 1 concern will be required to discuss professionalism and other related expectations with one of the following individuals:

- Foundations of Professional Development (FPD) faculty mentor,
- Student organization faculty advisor,
- Course Coordinator
- Preceptor, or
- Other relevant parties.

**Level 2 Concerns**

Level 2 concerns consist of moderate offenses, such as, but not limited to:

- Failure to provide professional care to a patient;
- Repeated level 1 concerns that are not addressed by the student pharmacist; or
- Engaging in conduct disruptive to the learning environment, including experiential education sites.

The Education and Remediation Team shall investigate the alleged facts of the incident and will develop a remediation plan for the student pharmacist.

Level 2 concerns may result in:

- Mandatory attendance at an ethical decision-making seminar;
- Completion of an online educational professionalism course;
- Ineligibility to receive a College-awarded travel stipend to attend professional meetings;
- Ineligibility to receive a College-awarded scholarship;
• Additional compliance and accountability plans based on the specifics of the incident; or
• Referral to the University’s Office of the Dean of Students.

Level 3 Concerns

Level 3 concerns consist of such conduct as:
• Conduct that violates professionalism standards and may impact the student pharmacist’s ability to obtain licensure;
• Repeated Level 1 or 2 concerns that are not adequately addressed by the student pharmacist;
• Failure to comply with a Level 2 remediation plan;
• Substance abuse;
• Criminal activity;
• Falsifying any record; or
• Violence.

Upon receipt of a Level 3 Concern, the Education and Remediation Team shall review the allegation of misconduct, and will meet with the student pharmacist to discuss the alleged misconduct. If the Team determines further action is required, the Team may do one or more of the following:
• Require a fitness of duty evaluation;
• Require the student pharmacist to complete a chemical use assessment;
• Require a repeat administration of the Criminal Background Check or Urine Drug Screen required at matriculation;
• Referral to the University’s Office of the Dean of Students; or
• Report the matter to the Texas State Board of Pharmacy.

Last Reviewed: February 28, 2020