

The Valley College of Osteopathic Medicine Professional Code of Conduct Policy

Policy Number: COM 5-1

Effective Date: May 1, 2024

Revisions and Dates:

Responsible Party: Office of the Dean

Approved by: Alissa Craft, DO, MBA, Dean

Policy & Procedure Statement

The Valley College of Osteopathic Medicine (The Valley COM) strongly supports the foundational values of respect for person, place, and property and as such values the ethical and professional behaviors that support that foundation. Those values can include but are not limited to ethical leadership, practice, and learning; cultural awareness and embracing diversity; accountability to others and self; fostering a culture of service; and providing an environment that is safe and conducive to the goal of learning, healing, community engagement and the practice of medicine.

The Valley COM holds its administration, faculty, staff, and students to the highest standards of professional behavior. Accordingly, all members of The Valley COM community are expected to comply with the rules and regulations of the institution, and to abide by all State and Federal law. Additionally, they are to uphold and carry out the high standards of osteopathic medicine and osteopathic medical education.

This policy extends to The Valley COM administration, faculty, staff, and students as well as any other persons conducting business with or visiting the institution. Outside personnel or who violate the code of conduct may be restricted from any further business with The Valley COM.

Student Professional Identity Development

An important aspect of The Valley College of Osteopathic Medicine curriculum is the development of professional behaviors and identity. Medical education literature demonstrates that unprofessional behavior exhibited during training is a predictor of future referrals to state regulatory boards and/or the need for disciplinary actions. Since such behavior presents a potential danger to the provision of good patient care, equal importance is placed on professionalism, as is placed on academic performance.

Recognizing the responsibility to display appropriate professional behaviors, the college sets expectations for professional conduct and evaluates students in this sphere to document satisfactory acquisition of these important behaviors. The Valley College of Osteopathic Medicine considers breaches of professional conduct similar to academic deficiencies.

Listed below are examples of expectations of professionalism adapted from the Behaviors Reflecting Professionalism identified by the National Board of Medical Examiners. It is expected that every student, faculty, and staff member at The Valley College of Osteopathic Medicine will model these behaviors to ensure respect for others, quality patient care and growth of the profession.

Altruism

- Helps colleagues and team members who are busy.
- Takes on extra work to help the team.
- Serves as a knowledge or skill resource to others.
- Advocates for policies, practices and procedures that will benefit patients.
- Endures inconvenience to accommodate patient needs.

Honor and Integrity (Honesty)

- Admits errors and takes steps to prevent recurrence.
- Deals with confidential information appropriately.
- Does not misuse resources (i.e. school property).
- Attributes ideas and contributions appropriately for other's work.
- Upholds ethical standards in research and scholarly activity.
- Submits original work at all times and on time for graded assignments.
- Requests help when needed.
- Assumes personal responsibility for mistakes.

Caring and Compassion

- Treats the patient as an individual, considers lifestyle, beliefs, and support systems.
- Shows compassion to patients and maintains appropriate boundaries in professional relationships.
- Responds to patient's needs in an appropriate way.
- Optimizes patient comfort and privacy when conducting history, physical examination and procedures.

Respect

- Respects institutional staff, representatives, faculty, and colleagues at all times.
- Adheres to stated ATSU-SOMA dress code policy.
- Participates constructively as a team member.

- Adheres to institutional and departmental policies and procedures.
- Displays compassion and respect for all patients even under difficult circumstances.
- Discusses patients/faculty/colleagues without inappropriate labels or comments.

Responsibility and Accountability

- Presents self in an appropriate manner to patients and colleagues.
- Completes assignments and tasks in a timely manner.
- Responds promptly when contacted (emails, texts, phone calls, etc.).
- Intervenes or seeks help when unprofessional behavior presents a clear and present danger to self or others.
- Uses resources effectively.
- Responds appropriately to an impaired colleague.
- Responds to and reflects on own or other's lapses in conduct and performance.
- Makes valuable contributions to class, rounds and group interactions.
- Elicits patient's understanding to ensure accurate communication of information.
- Facilitates conflict resolution.
- Remains flexible to changing circumstances and unanticipated changes.
- Balances personal needs and patient responsibilities.
- Respectfully provides honest and constructive feedback.

Excellence

- Has internal focus and direction, sets goals to achieve excellence.
- Takes initiative in organizing, participating, and collaborating with peer groups and faculty.
- Maintains composure under difficult situations.
- Inspires confidence in patients by proper preparation for clinical tasks and procedures.

Student Rights and Responsibilities

Students have the right to have support and assistance from the College in maintaining a climate conducive to thinking and learning. Our teaching reflects consideration for the dignity of students and their rights as persons. Student or faculty mistreatment in the course of the teacher-learner environment will not be tolerated. Examples of behaviors or situations that are unacceptable include, but are not limited to:

- Discrimination as described in the Non-Discrimination policy
- Sexual harassment
- Unwanted physical contact
- Verbal abuse, profanity, or demeaning comments
- Inappropriate or unprofessional criticism, which belittles, embarrasses, or humiliates

- Unreasonable requests to perform personal services
- Grading used to punish or reward a student for nonacademic activities, rather than to evaluate performance
- A pattern of intentional neglect or intentional lack of communication
- Requiring students to perform tasks beyond their level of competency without supervision.

Code of Professional Conduct

While it is not possible to enumerate all forms of unacceptable behaviors and actions, the following list provides examples of some of the issues that could constitute a violation of The Valley COM Professional Code of Conduct Policy and could result in the appropriate level of disciplinary action. Other behaviors and actions not listed may be evaluated as a violation of the Professional Code of Conduct and if found to be egregious, may result in an initiation of the policy actions including the potential for appropriate disciplinary measures up to and including dismissal/termination of employment.

- Physical or verbal abuse or threat of such action to an individual
- Harassment, abuse, damage, harm, or theft to an individual or to property or the threat of any such action
- Disruption of teaching, research, administration, or students functions of the college
- Dishonesty to include but not limited to:
 - Cheating
 - Unapproved use of records
 - Plagiarism
 - Alteration or forgery of any document, web-based presence, or other records
 - Providing false information about an individual or the institution
- Unlawful possession, use, or distribution of:
 - Alcohol
 - Illicit drug(s)
 - Non-prescribed controlled substance(s)
- Participation in academic or clinical activities at The Valley COM or one of its affiliated sites while under the influence of alcohol, illicit drug(s) or non-prescribed controlled substance(s)
- Use of social media or other platform that violates protected privacy parameters or is deemed to be degrading to the profession and/or the institution
- Use of any of The Valley COM media or information technology services that does not abide by any of the information technology policies
- Entering or using a Valley COM facility or one of its affiliated sites without appropriate authorization

- Actions that result in being charged with a violation(s) of federal, state, or local laws with the exception of minor traffic violations.
 - Failure to report such charges to The Valley COM administration within 24 hours
- Unethical disclosure of privileged information such as that protected by FERPA or HIPAA
- Placing a patient in needless jeopardy
- Behavior or appearance that demonstrates abusive or disrespectful conduct towards any COM student or employee including credentialed instructional staff, students, visitors to the college, or employee or patient at an affiliated site.
- Bringing any firearm, explosive or other weapon onto campus or any affiliated site and/or the threat to use a weapon of any type to produce harm to another person or damage to a facility
- Violation of any established rule, regulation, and/or policy of any COM department, affiliated institution, or community organization

Procedure Statement

The Valley COM holds professional conduct as a foundational element of the osteopathic profession and therefore expects all engaged in the teaching, learning, administration or service to the college or the profession to comport themselves with honor, respect, and integrity. The college also recognizes the importance of due process and assurance of fair and accurate investigation and proceedings. The college will adjudicate instances of purported violation of the Code of Conduct or any professionalism policy with due diligence and respect to all parties through the appropriate processes. This care and due diligence will occur during all phases of the process to include notification, investigation, hearing, and appeal process.