

Policy and Procedure

Professionalism, Collegiality and Student Advocacy

The University of Tennessee, Memphis College of Dentistry maintains a strong commitment to the principles of professionalism and collegiality between, and among, its students and faculty. Dental education occurs optimally in an atmosphere of mutual respect among all parties of interest. Behaviors which result in a lack of respect, such as discrimination, harassment, or abuse are contrary to the spirit of dental education, violate the trust between individuals and colleagues, and will not be tolerated by the College of Dentistry. This document outlines the rights and responsibilities of students and faculty in their professional and collegial interactions. In addition to describing the basic expectations of students and faculty in their interactions this document provides a framework by which conflicts arising from such interactions may be resolved, to the mutual benefit of all involved.

Students have a right to expect to be treated fairly, professionally and in a positive, collegial manner in their interactions with faculty. Conversely, students have a responsibility to respond in a like manner to legitimate requests and directives from faculty. Faculty are entitled to similar treatment by students, with analogous responsibilities in their interactions with students.

Students entering the College of Dentistry are assigned to a team of two faculty mentors by the Associate Dean for Student Affairs. These faculty mentors are primarily responsible for advising students in their academic pursuits and tracking student performance throughout their matriculation in the College of Dentistry. In the absence of extenuating circumstances, students will maintain the same teams of faculty mentors for their first two years of matriculation. Clinical coordinators will be assigned for the final two years of matriculation.

Faculty mentors are expected to:

1. Maintain close contact with the student, meeting with the student at a mutually convenient time, to discuss student progress and any related problems
2. Meet at least quarterly with all students in their advisee groups to discuss common issues and concerns.
3. Refer student concerns and issues to appropriate offices and individuals as indicated.
4. Advise students as to the most appropriate way in which to resolve conflicts with individual faculty members.
5. Act as an advocate for the student when it appears that a student has been unjustly dealt with.

6. Act as an intermediary for the student, when it is inappropriate or inadvisable for the student to directly confront a faculty member over a disputed issue.
7. Inform the Student Support Committee of the College of Dentistry in instances of excessive or repeated inappropriate behavior on the part of individual students or faculty.

Students are expected to:

1. Comply with requests to meet, as requested by their mentors or other faculty members.
2. Consult with their mentors whenever instances of conflict occur to determine the most appropriate method of resolution.
3. Accept appropriate faculty decisions with cheerful acquiescence.
4. Abide by the rules, regulations, policies and procedures of the College of Dentistry, the UT Memphis Health Science center campus, and the University of Tennessee.
5. Accept responsibility for their actions, provided they have been informed of the expectations of their actions.
6. Refrain from making unfounded accusations regarding the behavior and actions of others.
7. Inform the Association Dean for Student Affairs of any irreconcilable conflicts with their faculty mentors

Faculty are expected to:

1. Treat students in a fair and impartial manner in the evaluation of their academic performance.
2. Treat students in a professional and collegial manner in their interpersonal interactions.
3. Refrain from remarks and actions which might be interpreted as being unprofessional and uncollegial.

Professional education involves a significant amount of pressure and anxiety on both students and faculty. Occasionally, such pressure and anxiety results in unprofessional or uncollegial behavior. The resolution of conflict resulting from unprofessional or uncollegial behavior is best obtained through frank and open discussions between the parties involved. Frequently, however, this is difficult to accomplish due to fear of additional unprofessional and uncollegial responses. In such cases, a readily accessible, neutral party is necessary to act as a mediator in an effort to resolve the conflict. This neutral party/mediator will be the Student Support Committee.

The function of the Student Support Committee would be to evaluate the situation and make recommendations intended to resolve the issue. The Student Support Committee is appointed by the Dean on an annual basis and will receive training in mediation and conflict resolution as necessary. The identity of the Student Support Committee is made known to the students, faculty and staff on an annual basis, in conjunction with information to students, faculty and staff on the issue of professionalism and collegiality.

In the event that the Student Support Committee is unsuccessful in resolving the conflict, the matter can be addressed through more formal channels, i.e., grievance. If, in the opinion of the Student Support Committee, the conflict involves serious issues, the matter will be discussed with the Dean and, where appropriate, referred to other appropriate organizations or individuals.