Medical Student Handbook

2016-2017
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Welcome to UTRGV School of Medicine,

Thanks for choosing to study with us. The experiences you bring along with the experiences you will have as a student studying, working in the community, and caring for patients will help you grow as a person and as a physician. I challenge you to make the most of the opportunities to be part of the University and part of the Valley.

All of us are excited to be part of contributing to the new school. To succeed in that challenge, you will need to learn how to prioritize and utilize the many resources available to you. The study coaches, the librarians, and your faculty mentors are just some of the resources available.

We wish you every success on your journey!

Sincerely,

Steve Lieberman, M.D.
Interim Dean

Steven Lieberman, M.D.
Interim Dean, School of Medicine
Steven.Lieberman@utrgv.edu
About the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley School of Medicine

Mission and Goals

UTRGV SOM Mission
The mission of the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley School of Medicine (UTRGV SOM) is to: educate a diverse group of dedicated students who will become physicians that serve across all the disciplines of medicine; bring hope to patients by advancing medical knowledge through research; integrate education and research to advance the quality and accessibility of patient care; and engage with the Rio Grande Valley (RGV) communities to benefit Texas and the world.

UTRGV SOM Goals
- Provide a forward-thinking medical education experience that graduates physicians dedicated to practicing scientific, evidence-based, patient-centered medicine in any setting, but particularly in underserved communities.
- Leverage UTRGV’s unique geographic location at the border of the United States and Mexico; a place that is enriched by its culture and family traditions but burdened by health disparities.
- Instill dedication to research, generation of new knowledge, and public service.
- Graduate culturally-aware medical students who will provide exemplary care to the diverse populations in the RGV and the nation.
- Increase under-represented minorities in medicine.
- Contribute to substantially improving health outcomes in the RGV and beyond.
- Educate the physician workforce of the future.

History
For nearly 130 years, The University of Texas System has educated physicians and scientists, conducted world class biomedical research, and partnered in caring for patients and their families. Until recently, all education of physicians and scientists occurred in the context of well-developed free-standing Health Science Centers.

In May of 2013, the Texas Legislature created the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley and encouraged the establishment of the UTRGV School of Medicine to serve the Lower Rio Grande Valley (LRGV), an area designated as one of the most medically underserved regions in the United States. As part of this new medical school, the state legislature called on the UT System to use the resources from existing institutions and the Regional Academic Health Centers.

In February 2014, The University of Texas System selected Francisco Fernández, M.D., as Founding Dean and Vice President for Health Affairs for the new UTRGV SOM. By June of the same year, a proposal for a New Doctoral Degree Program in Medicine was submitted to the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) to leverage the existing strengths in health-related fields and establish a school of medicine that would educate the type of physicians needed in the LRGV region. From its inception, the School of Medicine enjoyed staunch support from the LRGV community. In April 2015, the THECB officially notified UTRGV of its approval of the M.D. program, and thus, the UTRGV School of Medicine came to be.
**SOM Organization & Administration**

**Administrative Leadership**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Name</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interim Dean</td>
<td>Steven A. Lieberman, M.D.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education and Academic Affairs</td>
<td>Leonel Vela, M.D.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty Affairs</td>
<td>Robert Nelson, M.D.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clinical Affairs</td>
<td>William Marshall, M.D.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Affairs</td>
<td>Adela Valdez, M.D.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research</td>
<td>Theresa Maldonado, Ph.D. (Interim)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate Medical Education</td>
<td>Yolanda Gomez, M.D.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interprofessional Education</td>
<td>John Ronnau, Ph.D.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finance and Administration</td>
<td>Melba Sanchez, M.B.A.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diversity, Inclusion, Community Engagement</td>
<td>Joseph McCormick, M.D. (Interim)</td>
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**Department Chairs**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Department</th>
<th>Chair</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Biomedical Sciences</td>
<td>Michael Collard, Ph.D. (Interim)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family and Preventive Medicine</td>
<td>Eron Manusov, M.D.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internal Medicine</td>
<td>James Hanley, M.D. (Interim)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical Education</td>
<td>Leonel Vela, M.D.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obstetrics and Gynecology</td>
<td>Tony Ogburn, M.D.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pediatrics</td>
<td>Robert Nelson, M.D.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population and Behavioral Health</td>
<td>Belinda Reininger, Dr.P.H.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychiatry/Neurology</td>
<td>Gabriel de Erausquin, M.D.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surgery</td>
<td>William Marshall, M.D. (Interim)</td>
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**Affiliated Institutions and Clinical Sites**

The following sites offer one or more clerkships in Family Medicine, Internal Medicine, Obstetrics and Gynecology, Neurology, Pediatrics, Psychiatry, and/or Surgery:
- Doctors Hospital at Renaissance
- Edinburg Children’s Hospital
- McAllen Medical Center
- Rio Grande State Center
- South Texas Behavioral Health
- Valley Baptist Medical Center – Brownsville
- Valley Baptist Medical Center – Harlingen

Inpatient clinical rotations are held at the sites identified above as well as the following sites:
- Edinburg Regional Medical Center
- Harlingen Medical Center
- Knapp Medical Center
- Mission Regional Medical Center
- Starr County Memorial Hospital

Ambulatory clinical rotations take place at various private practice clinics including:
- Brownsville Community Health Center
- Doctors Hospital at Renaissance
- HOPE Clinic
Statement of Accreditation

The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley School of Medicine has obtained preliminary accreditation from the Liaison Committee on Medical Education (LCME). The LCME is the nationally recognized accrediting authority for medical education programs leading to the M.D. degree in U.S. and Canadian medical schools. The LCME is sponsored by the Association of American Medical Colleges and the American Medical Association.

Diversity and Inclusion

The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley (UTRGV) School of Medicine (SOM) strives to create and sustain a spirit of diversity, inclusion, and enrichment that will foster an environment of cultural competency, sensitivity, and awareness. The UTRGV SOM goals stem from the School's unique geographic location at the border of the U.S. and Mexico, a place that is enriched by its culture and family traditions but burdened by health disparities. This inspires the School's dedication to research, the generation of new knowledge, public service, culturally-aware care, and increasing underrepresented minorities in medicine. Developing a cross cultural understanding allows students, faculty and staff to embrace and celebrate distinctive perspectives and viewpoints that enrich all members of the UTRGV SOM is essential to strengthening the communities we serve, and improving the health of the public with a critical focus on the benefits of diversity in medicine and biomedical sciences.

UTRGV SOM is committed to providing a diverse environment for faculty, students and staff. The Associate Dean for Diversity will develop recruitment and retention programs to encourage and promote an environment that welcomes and embraces diversity in the faculty, staff, and students. Additionally, a Diversity Committee composed of faculty, staff, and students will assist the Dean in meeting the charge.

Students

UTRGV SOM is committed to recruiting and retaining students from a variety of backgrounds. Diversity is valued in the selection of students; differences in beliefs, opinions, perspectives, experiences, lifestyle, gender identification, sexual orientation, culture and race/ethnicity all enrich the educational experience of students, and thus, are considered. Consideration is given, in particular, to candidates who are: from rural backgrounds, South Texas origin, first-generation college graduates, socio-economically disadvantaged, bilingual (primary and secondary language), female gender, military veteran status, race/ethnicity of any groups historically underrepresented in medicine, including:

- Hispanic or Latino, particularly of Mexican or Puerto Rican origin, and of any race
- Black or African American
- American Indian or Alaskan Native
- Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
Faculty and Staff
UTRGV SOM will employ a standardized faculty and staff recruitment, employment and retention process designed to enhance diversity in the Rio Grande Valley. In particular, the School will seek to employ faculty and staff from the following groups:

- Female Gender
- Hispanic or Latino
- Black or African-American
- American Indian or Alaskan Native
- Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander
- Military Veteran

Systematic training of search committees, oversight of all faculty recruitments, strategies to increase pools of diverse faculty and staff applicants, retention activities (e.g. pipeline programs and partnerships), and data collection to achieve mission-appropriate diversity outcomes in its students are priorities. These strategies will assist the UTRGV SOM in achieving measurable, mission-appropriate diversity outcomes.

By embracing all communities (faculty, administrators, staff, and students), the UTRGV SOM will provide an educational environment that is welcoming and respectful of diverse ideas, cultures and people.
Part I. SOM Student Resources

Student Health and Wellness Services

Student Wellness and Counseling Resources

Counseling and Wellness Services (CWS), under the auspices of the Office of Student Affairs (OSA), provides free, professional, and confidential personal counseling services exclusively to UTRGV medical students. CWS provides a full range of psychological and mental health services designed to support medical student success through professional diagnosis, counseling, and life-skills coaching. Services are designed to foster the academic potential of students by enhancing their personal development as well as their psychosocial and emotional health. The treatment philosophy of CWS is strength focused, embracing the values of individualism, empowerment, positivity, dignity and respect. The personal counseling services offered by CWS are professional and strictly confidential. Licensed professional mental health psychotherapists and psychiatrist are retained by the SOM to provide counseling services exclusively to UTRGV medical students. The Assistant Dean for Student Support /Counseling and Wellness Services oversees the CWS.

In addition to the student support services provided by CWS, UTRGV Counseling and Psychological Services (CaPS) help students with their personal concerns so they can meet the daily challenges of student life. CaPS provides mental health and substance abuse services. CaPS operates within professional ethical guidelines as outlined by both federal and state laws that protect the privacy of students’ mental health records and ensure quality of services. CaPS is staffed by licensed mental health professionals, and is open from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. on Monday, Wednesday and Friday; from 8:00 a.m. to 7 p.m. on Tuesday and Thursday except on designated holidays.

For more information about CaPS, please visit the UTRGV Counseling Service website (http://www.utrgv.edu/en-us/student-experience/student-services/counseling-service/).

Student Health Services

The mission of Student Health Services (SHS) at UTRGV is to meet the health care needs of our students so they can focus on their studies. All UTRGV SOM students are required to pay a Medical Service Fee that allows them to be seen at SHS clinics on both campuses (Brownsville and Edinburg) as often as needed. The office visits are free of charge. There are also low-cost charges for medicines, supplies and any needed lab tests.

The Health Services Clinics offer the same types of services you can get from your family doctor and much more. The services include general medical care as well as specialty clinics in women’s wellness, skin care, and sexually transmitted diseases screening. SHS also performs routine immunizations and TB testing required by many educational programs at UTRGV. Health Services also has a Class D pharmacy can fill most prescriptions written in the clinic and carries a selection of over-the-counter items.

For more information about the specific services provided by Health Services, please visit the UTRGV Health Services website (http://www.utrgv.edu/en-us/student-experience/student-services/health-services/student-health-services/index.htm).
Breastfeeding and Breast milk Storage

The UTRGV SOM understands that women who are breastfeeding or pumping breast milk need adequate room and privacy to do so. We have designated a private location in the SOM building where women can either breastfeed their babies or pump breast milk for later use. A small refrigerator is located there to store pumped breast milk throughout the day. That is the sole purpose of this refrigerator. Women who are breastfeeding or pumping breast milk should communicate with the Associate Dean for Student Affairs to develop a plan that accommodates their schedules and clinical responsibilities.

Parental Leave and Accommodations

The UTRGV SOM is committed to supporting all students (male and female) who have children during medical school and to working with such students to facilitate the completion of their medical education. UTRGV SOM also complies with federal and state law regarding accommodations during and after pregnancy. Our goal is to accommodate the immediate perinatal period and all of its demands on parent and newborn while providing a realistic option for the student to continue making progress toward completion of the MD degree. Students are not required to take parental leave. However, if they choose to do so, the SOM permits parental leaves (birth or adoptive) up to 12 months. Medically necessary extensions of parental leave will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis by the Office of Student Affairs.

Procedures for Requesting Parental Accommodations or Leave

Medical Students

When requesting a parental leave of absence, early communication and good-faith efforts among all parties involved are essential to ensure the least impact on a student's education. Because the structure and demands of the medical education program vary throughout the four-year curriculum, the approach to parental leave accommodation will differ depending on the year of the program in which the parental leave and birth or adoption occur. Regardless of the timing, a detailed plan must be developed by the student in close collaboration with the SOM Office of Student Affairs. The plan must receive written approval from the Associate Dean for Student Affairs. Guidance regarding each portion of the curriculum is below.

Year 1 and 2: A student who wishes to request parental leave during the first two years of medical school should consult with the Associate Dean for Student Affairs to request a leave of absence. Due to the nature of the medical education program, depending on the time of year and the length of the leave, leaves of absence may require a student to take a full year of leave and return the following year. Students must complete all coursework and the Step 1 exam before beginning clerkships for 3rd year.

Year 3: A student who seeks parental leave during the 3rd year should contact the Office of Student Affairs and coordinate with the Assistant Dean for Education Clerkship. A parental leave of absence in Year 3 is less likely to obligate a 12-month leave. Working with the Assistant Dean for Education Clerkship, the student may resume clerkships at a mutually agreed upon time. The plan for time away from clerkships should be completed and approved by all parties at least 3 months before the start of the leave.

Year 4: A student seeking parental leave should work closely with the UME Registrar to schedule the leave. The plan should be completed and approved by all parties at least 3 months before the start of the leave.
**Graduate Students**
Following childbirth or adoption of an infant, the primary care giver (whether female or male) would be allowed to take 30 work days (6 weeks) of parental leave with full stipend and continued health insurance coverage. Graduate students or postdoctoral fellows within the SOM may elect to use any residual sick or vacation time to extend the period of paid parental leave. In the event of a postdoc or graduate student employee wishing to extend the leave beyond this period she/he has the option of leave without pay, but can continue health insurance benefits by arranging with HR to continue payment of the employee contribution. In summary, the proposed parental leave policy for graduate students and postdoctoral fellows would grant up to 12 weeks of leave to a primary care giver, of which 6 weeks would be paid, for care of a newborn or newly adopted infant.

**Financial Aid**
Any student taking a leave of absence who receives financial aid is strongly encouraged to contact the Assistant Director of Financial Aid within the Office of Student Affairs for advice regarding the leave’s effect on the receipt of aid.

**Disability Related to Pregnancy**
Medical students who experience medical complications related to pregnancy and wish to explore disability accommodations should contact the UTRGV Student Accessibility Services (SAS) office or the SOM Office of Student Affairs. We strongly recommend that students consult their health care team regarding any concerns or restrictions due to pregnancy.

**Immunizations**
All students must comply with the immunization requirements as outlined below. Prior to registration, each applicant accepted for admission must submit appropriate medical documentation to include, but not be limited to, documentation of appropriate immunizations required by the University. Exceptions may be granted pursuant to University policies. For example, an exception may be granted in cases where the required vaccination would be injurious to the health and well-being of the student.

**Important Note**: Immunization Records must be provided to Student Health Services at least 30 days prior to Registration.

The following immunizations will be required for all students enrolled in health-related courses that will involve direct patient contact in medical or dental care facilities, or who come in contact with human or animal biological fluids or tissue:

1. **TWINRIX/Hepatitis B**: Student Health Services will accept either the standard Hepatitis B (3 injections) or the expedited Hepatitis A&B (TWINRIX) combo vaccine series (4 injections) and antibody titer results. The Hepatitis B series can take between 4-6 months to complete. The (TWINRIX) combo series can be completed in approximately 3-4 weeks and requires a booster at one year. It may also be given in the same sequence as the Hep B series over a six month period. It is slightly more expensive than the Hep B six month series; however if there is limited time to complete the requirement Twinrix expedited is recommended. If antibody titer is negative then repeat the 3 or 4 series again. Repeat the antibody titer again after one month of the last dose. If antibody titer is negative after the 2nd series then additional test will be required.
2. **Tuberculosis (TB skin test (TST) or BAMT – blood test (Q-gold or T spot))**
   Students:
   - Who have never had a TST or IGRA blood test will need a two-step baseline TST or BAMT.
   - With a previous negative TST result > 12 months will need the two-step baseline TST or BAMT.
   - With a previously documented negative TST < 12 months – one-step TST will need both results documented.
   - With > 2 previous documented negative TST recent TST > 12 months – one step TST need both the results documented.
   - With a previous documented positive TST (≥10mm) – No TST or BAMT will require documentation in mm of the positive TST/ lab results for BAMT, and chest x-ray that states no evidence of active tuberculosis after the positive read and symptom evaluation. A completed symptoms evaluation must be attached.
   - With previous undocumented Positive TST – two-step baseline TST or BAMT
   - With previous BCG vaccination – two-step baseline TST or BAMT

3. **TDAP:** All students must provide proof of one dose of tetanus/diphtheria/acellular pertussis (Tdap) within the prior 10 years.

4. **Mumps, Measles and Rubella (MMR):** All students must submit one of the following:
   - Documentation of two immunizations administered on or after the first birthday and at least 30 days apart; or
   - Laboratory report of positive immune serum antibody titer (IgG). Attach lab report.

5. **Meningitis:** In accordance with the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB), all entering students are to be vaccinated against bacterial meningitis within the past five years in which the student initially enrolls at an institution of higher education. Per the THECB, the following are exceptions to the meningitis requirement:
   - The student is 22 years of age or older by the first day of the start of the semester; or
   - The student is enrolled only in online or other distance education courses; or
   - The student is enrolled in a continuing education course or program less than 360 contact hours, or continuing education corporate training; or
   - The student is enrolled in a dual credit course taught at a public or private K-12 facility not located on a higher education campus; or
   - The student is incarcerated in a Texas prison.

6. **Varicella:** All students must submit one of the following:
   - Documentation of two immunizations administered on or after the first birthday and at least 30 days apart; or
   - Documentation from a M.D., D.O., N.P., P.A. of the month/date/year of the previous disease (chicken pox or zoster); or
   - Laboratory report of positive immune serum antibody titer (IgG) (quantitative). Attach lab report.

7. **Influenza:** If you receive an influenza vaccination during the annual flu season, please provide supporting documentation. Otherwise, mandatory administration of the vaccination will be carried out on campus during the annual flu season.
Bacterial Meningitis
The 77th Texas Legislature (2001) required all public institutions of higher education in Texas to notify all new students about bacterial meningitis (Chapter 51, Education Code, Section 51.9191; Chapter 38, Education Code, Section 38.0025).

This information is being provided to all new college students in the state of Texas. Bacterial meningitis is a serious, potentially deadly disease that can progress extremely fast, so students must take utmost caution. It is an inflammation of the membranes that surround the brain and spinal cord. The bacteria that cause meningitis can also infect the blood. This disease strikes about 3,000 Americans each year, including 100 -125 on college campuses, leading to 5 -15 deaths among college students every year. There is a treatment, but those who survive may develop severe health problems or disabilities.

What are the symptoms?

- High fever
- Severe headache
- Rash or purple patches on skin
- Vomiting
- Light sensitivity
- Stiff neck
- Confusion and sleepiness
- Nausea
- Lethargy
- Seizures

There may be a rash of tiny, red -purple spots caused by bleeding under the skin. These can occur anywhere on the body. The more symptoms, the higher the risk. When these symptoms appear, students should seek immediate medical attention.

How is bacterial meningitis diagnosed?

Diagnosis is made by a medical provider and is usually based on a combination of clinical symptoms and laboratory results from spinal fluid and blood tests. Early diagnosis and treatment can greatly improve the likelihood of recovery.

How is it transmitted?

The disease is transmitted when people exchange saliva (such as by kissing, or by sharing drinking containers, utensils, cigarettes, toothbrushes, etc.) or come in contact with respiratory or throat secretions.

How do you increase your risk of getting bacterial meningitis?

- Exposure to saliva by sharing cigarettes, water bottles, eating utensils, food, kissing, etc.
- Living in close conditions (such as sharing a room/suite in a dorm or group home).

What are the possible consequences of the disease?

- Death (in 8 to 24 hours from perfectly well to dead)
- Permanent brain damage
- Kidney failure
- Learning disability
- Hearing loss, blindness
- Limb damage (fingers, toes, arms, legs) that requires amputation
- Gangrene
- Coma
- Convulsions
Can the disease be treated?

Antibiotic treatment, if received early, can save lives and chances of recovery are increased. However, permanent disability or death can still occur.

Vaccinations are available and should be considered for:
- Those living in close quarters
- College students 21 years old or younger

Vaccinations are effective against 4 of the 5 most common bacterial types that cause 70% of the disease in the U.S. (but does not protect against all types of meningitis). Vaccinations take 7-10 days to become effective, with protection lasting 3-5 years. The cost of vaccine varies, so check with your health care provider. Vaccination is very safe. Most common side effects are redness and minor pain at injection site for up to two days. Contact Student Health Services at 956-665-2511 or 956-882-3896 for details about vaccination.

How can I find out more information?
- Contact your own health care provider.
- Contact Health Services at: 613 North Sugar Road, Edinburg, TX 78539 or Health Services at Cortez Hall 237, Brownsville, TX 78520.
- Contact the regional Texas Department of Health office at: Health Service Region 11: Harlingen, 601 W. Sesame Drive; Harlingen, TX 78550, Mail Code 1907; Phone: 956-423-0130; Fax: 956-444-3298
- Contact websites: CDC Disease Information
  [www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dbmd/diseaseinfo/American or College Health Association](http://www.acha.org/)

Immunization Requirement for Students

Given the responsibilities medical students have to their patients and themselves, required immunizations include bacterial meningitis as mandated and specified above, as well as those immunizations identified in Part I of this Handbook.

Senate Bill 62 (SB62) was passed during the 2013 legislative session and signed into law. For incoming students to UTRGV, this new law, effective January 1, 2014, requires that all entering students 21 years of age and younger attending an institution of higher education in the state of Texas, including transfer students, show evidence of having received the Meningococcal Meningitis Vaccination no more than 5 years and no less than 10 days prior to the start of the semester or 10 days prior to the student taking up residence in on-campus housing. The law also allows for exemptions on medical grounds or reasons of conscience, including religious belief. Students must return the Meningococcal Meningitis Vaccination Requirement Form along with one of the following documents:

- A “Bacterial Meningitis Immunization Record” signed by a health practitioner evidencing that the student has been vaccinated against bacterial meningitis or any other official state or local immunization record. Confirmation of the MCV4 (Menactra or Menveo) vaccine will satisfy as the requirement. The MPSV4 (Menomune) vaccination may be accepted if administered or boosted within the past 5 years. Vaccinations must be administered no fewer than 10 days prior to the first day of the semester for which the student is enrolling.
A “Refusal of Immunization for Medical Reasons” signed by a physician who is licensed and registered to practice medicine in the United States which states the physician’s opinion that the required vaccination would be injurious to the health and wellbeing of the student. A “Texas Department of State Health Services Conscientious Exemption” signed by the student stating that the student has declined the vaccination for reasons of conscience, including religious belief. Students who fail to satisfy this requirement will not be able to attend the university. Failure to submit documentation of the required vaccination does not alleviate the student's responsibility under any contractual relationship with the university. The Meningococcal Meningitis Vaccination Requirement Form and documentation can be mailed, faxed, emailed or hand delivered to the Office of the Registrar. The Immunization waiver received from the Texas Department of State Health Services must be mailed or hand delivered.

In addition, students may be required to receive additional vaccines and/or other medical tests prior to starting classes and/or clinical clerkships, as indicated by the clinical educational affiliate site, guidelines issued by The University of Texas System and Board of Regents, or Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommendations.

Student Health Services (SHS) will monitor the status of student immunizations to ensure that they remain current and will contact students when deficiencies or lapses arise. Medical school faculty and staff members will not have access to students' immunization records.

Student Health Insurance

Providing care to patients poses inherent risks of acquiring a communicable disease. Therefore, all students enrolled at the (UTRGV SOM) are required to maintain continuous health insurance coverage that provides benefits to meet the established minimum standards. Such insurance coverage shall be maintained continuously throughout a student’s attendance at the School of Medicine. Prior to Orientation and annually thereafter, all students must verify their enrollment in an appropriate health insurance plan. Students are responsible for immediately notifying UTRGV SOM should the status of their health insurance coverage change for any reason (e.g., voluntary change in policy, non-payment, etc.). Additionally, health insurance will be available through the University of Texas System Student Health Insurance Plan at https://utsystem.myahpcare.com/ (the health plan premiums are specific to academic year).

The University of Texas System Student Health Insurance Plan covers preventive care services, inpatient and outpatient care as well as laboratory, radiology, pharmacy and rehabilitative services. Urgent care and emergency care, mental/behavioral health services and substance use treatment services are also covered. Preventive services, including immunizations, are generally covered at 100% while students are typically responsible for a co-pay and/or co-insurance for most other services. Referrals are not required and students will experience a cost savings for choosing in-network providers. Deductibles and maximum coverage limits are competitive with other available insurance products.

Dental Care

Dental coverage is available through Academic Health Plans (AHP): https://utrgv.myahpcare.com/, Students coordinate dental coverage directly through AHP. Fees are not assessed as part of tuition fees as is the case with medical health insurance.
**Medical Liability Coverage**

UTRGV SOM adheres to the University of Texas Board of Regents rules regarding liability coverage. This rule can be found at the following link: [http://www.utsystem.edu/board-of-regents/rules/50501-liability-insurance-students](http://www.utsystem.edu/board-of-regents/rules/50501-liability-insurance-students).

Students of the UTRGV SOM are required to maintain liability insurance and are covered by the UTRGV medical liability plan only when participating in approved activities of UTRGV SOM. The University of Texas system carries a professional medical liability benefit plan for medical or dental students enrolled in a medical or dental school of the system, which covers students only when they are participating (with prior approval of such medical or dental school) in a patient-care program of a duly accredited medical or dental school under the direct supervision of a faculty member of the school conducting such program. Students are billed for this coverage when their fees are assessed. The full liability plan can be accessed at: [http://www.utsystem.edu/university-texas-system-professional-medical-liability-benefit-plan](http://www.utsystem.edu/university-texas-system-professional-medical-liability-benefit-plan).

**Medical Student Drug Testing**

It is the policy of UTRGV School of Medicine (SOM) to provide a safe workplace for all employees, students, and patients. The SOM requires that all Year 3 and Year 4 students have a negative urine drug screen prior to enrolling in any course or clerkship.

The substances tested for will be amphetamines, cocaine, marijuana, opiates, and phencyclidine (PCP). Students may not begin or continue coursework (clinical or non-clinical) until a negative (“clear”) test report is received.

A student’s test is not considered positive until a Medical Review Officer determines that the results are not due to legally prescribed prescription medications and the student has been offered the opportunity to have the original sample retested at the student’s expense.

A positive test will result in a report to the Associate Dean for Student Affairs for intervention and/or possible disciplinary action as authorized by the University of Texas System Regent’s Rules and Regulations.

Drug test results will remain separate from the academic record. Patient safety priorities have led many clinical facilities to require urine drug testing of health care providers. In addition to the SOM’s belief that this is an appropriate patient safety decision, drug testing is now a prerequisite for an increasing number of facilities that accept student assignments. This policy represents the SOM’s attempt to balance the needs of students while protecting the interests of patients. The policy outlines procedures and confidentiality safeguards that are part of the program.

**Procedure**

All students will be tested before beginning year 3. A negative (“clear”) test is required for continuation in the curriculum. The program may be expanded to additional student groups in the future, and retesting may be required if a facility requires a more recent test result than is provided for in the SOM policy.

If a student is not given an appointment for drug testing, he/she should contact the Office of Student Affairs to request an appointment.
If a student does not keep a collection appointment or declines to participate, he/she will not be allowed to begin or continue in the curriculum. This will result in a report to the Associate Dean for Student Affairs.

The test detects amphetamines, cocaine, marijuana, opiates, and phencyclidine (PCP). There will be an opportunity for students to disclose use of prescription medications.

**Collection process**

Students will be scheduled for an appointment by the Office of Student Affairs (OSA) and will be notified by email to pick up their authorization and testing forms from the OSA and sign a testing consent form. A local collection site will be available, and additional collection sites may be authorized in the future. Students cannot choose their own testing date/time or testing facility.

Students must take their authorization and testing forms and student picture ID to the collection site at the appointed day and time. Prior to collection, students have the opportunity, but are not required, to disclose the use of prescription medications they believe may result in a positive test.

Students will provide a urine sample inside the collection facility at the direction of center staff with a container provided to them. The collection is unobserved, but to be valid it must meet specimen specifications for color, temperature, and concentration. A student has a three-hour window to produce a valid specimen.

If a student is unable to produce a valid specimen within the specified time-frame (such as from shy bladder, excessively dilute, off-temperature, or contaminated sample), the student will not be allowed to begin or continue in the curriculum. One additional retesting will be allowed, under direct observation.

If a student is unable to produce a valid specimen on a second attempt, this will result in a “Positive/Not Clear” report. Such students are not allowed to begin or continue in the curriculum and will be subject to the same consequences as any “Positive/Not Clear” result.

**Testing process**

Samples will be collected and properly labeled at the collection site. Specimens will be shipped to a testing facility not affiliated with UTRGV SOM. Standard cut-offs used by the U.S. Department of Transportation will be used to define positive results.

**Results**

A “Negative/Clear” result is reported if the sample is negative for the screened substances, or is positive for one or more screened substances but a Medical Review Officer (MRO) not affiliated with UTRGV SOM contacts the student and determines that a legitimately prescribed medication explains the presence and level of a drug detected.

A “Positive/Not Clear” result is reported if the sample is positive for one or more screened substances, and a Medical Review Officer (MRO) not affiliated with UTRGV SOM contacts the student and determines that a valid explanation of the result does not exist. Before making this report, the MRO will offer the student the opportunity to have the original sample retested by an independent laboratory at the student’s expense. Students will not be allowed to provide a new sample for testing.

The decision of the MRO regarding test results and reporting is final and not subject to appeal.
**Reporting and tracking procedures**
The OSA will receive testing reports from the laboratory and MRO on a regular basis and will maintain the records as part of a secure database available only to the program administrators.

Negative results will be sent directly to the OSA from the laboratory.

Positive results will be sent from the laboratory to MRO, who will send the report to OSA once a final decision is made. Positive reports will include the name of drug but will not have quantitative results.

**Consequences of a positive test**
Students may not begin or continue coursework (clinical or non-clinical) after a positive test result is received.

A positive result will result in a report to the Associate Dean for Student Affairs for intervention and/or possible disciplinary action as authorized by the University of Texas System Regent’s Rules and Regulations.

A student may resume coursework (clinical or non-clinical) only if the student satisfactorily fulfills any requirements set forth by the Associate Dean for Student Affairs, if offered; and if authorized by the Associate Dean for Student Affairs, the student submits a subsequent test sample for which a negative ("clear") test report is received.

**Communicable Diseases**
Students, including all visiting students, with communicable diseases or conditions will not be permitted to engage in patient contact until such conditions have resolved as documented by a physician. This restriction is necessary to protect the health and safety of SOM patients and staff. Persons with the following medical conditions will not be allowed patient contact without prior medical clearance: 1) active chickenpox, measles, German measles, herpes zoster (shingles), acute hepatitis, and tuberculosis; 2) oral herpes with draining lesions; 3) group A streptococcal disease (i.e., strep throat) until 24 hours after treatment has been received; 4) draining or infected skin lesions (e.g. Methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus (MRSA); or 5) HIV/AIDS.

A student who has a communicable disease and is unsure whether he/she should participate in patient care, should seek medical care by a private physician or a physician on staff at UTRGV Student Health Services. All students with a communicable disease must receive written medical clearance by a physician prior to returning to clinical care activities. A case-by-case evaluation of each infected student will be done by his/her physician to determine eligibility to perform the duties required on the clinical rotation. Based on the recommendations of his/her physician, it is the responsibility of each infected medical student to notify the SOM Office of Student Affairs if he/she is unable to perform clinical work. Appropriate documentation is required. All such notifications will be kept strictly confidential.

If a student has a communicable disease and purposely does not notify the SOM Office of Student Affairs, he/she will be suspended pending the decision of the MSEPC on a course of action.

Prior to the start of clinical experiences, a student who has chronic hepatitis B virus (HBV), chronic hepatitis C virus (HCV) or HIV/AIDS is required to notify the Office of Student Affairs
of his/her status. All such notifications will be kept strictly confidential. Prior to the start of any clinical experiences, infected students are required to seek medical consultation by a physician to determine his/her ability to perform the duties required of the clinical rotation. Medical students are not obligated to answer patient questions related to their own HBV/HCV/HIV/AIDS status, nor shall they answer such questions related to other students, other health care personnel, or patients. Serologic testing of medical students for HBV/HCV/HIV antibody will not be performed routinely unless the person is seropositive. Testing is recommended when there has been a documented needle or sharp instrument puncture or mucous membrane exposure to the blood or body fluids of patients, or when there has been a medical student-to-patient exposure.

Students who are at high risk of infection from patients or other personnel because of their immune status or any other reason are encouraged to discuss their work responsibilities and educational activities with their personal health care provider. If the health care provider believes that there are certain assignments the individual should not accept for personal health reasons, this should be discussed with the Associate Dean for Student Affairs or designee. Accommodations may be available under the Technical Standards. Students should contact the Office of Student Affairs to determine whether such accommodations are available. Medical students with HBV/HCV/HIV seropositivity shall have periodic physical examinations by their private physician or a physician on staff at Student Health Services. Written health clearance will be provided to the Associate Dean for Student Affairs or designee, who will notify the student’s clerkship director of his/her ability to return to practice direct patient care. All correspondence will be kept confidential and will not be used as a basis for discrimination.

The greatest theoretical risk of medical student-to-patient transmission of HBV, HCV or HIV/AIDS involves invasive or exposure-prone procedures with manipulation of needles or other sharp objects not under direct visualization. Medical students who have HBV/HCV/HIV seropositivity may not perform invasive or exposure-prone procedures unless such activity is approved in writing by: 1) an expert panel duly constituted to guide and review performance of such procedures (see CDC guidelines below for definition of exposure-prone procedures and recommendations for expert panel oversight); 2) the student’s personal physician (who may be a physician from Student Health Services); 3) the clinical clerkship director; and 4) and the Senior Associate Dean for Education and Academic Affairs or designee.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidelines for the Management of Hepatitis B virus-Infected Health-Care Providers and Students (http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/PDF/rr/rr6103.pdf) and the Society for Healthcare Epidemiology of America (Henderson DK et al. Infection Control and Hospital Epidemiology, 2010; 31 (3): 203-232.) suggest that medical students with HBV, HCV and HIV seropositivity can continue to attend classes and participate in clinical clerkships and preceptorships. For chronically infected HBV/HCV or HIV health-care providers and students who plan on performing exposure-prone procedures, an expert panel will be duly constituted to guide and review performance of such procedures (see CDC guidelines above for definition of exposure-prone procedures and recommendations for expert panel oversight). Chronically infected HBV-infected health-care providers and students are NOT required to: 1) repeatedly demonstrate non-detectable HBV viral loads on a greater than semiannual frequency; 2) pre-notify patients of his/her HBV-infection status; or 3) submit to mandatory antiviral therapy. Standard Precautions should rigorously be adhered to in all health care settings for the protection of both patient and provider.
Education and Training
All students initially receive general information pertaining to the prevention and transmission of occupational exposures during the orientation to the SOM. During this time, students will be required to receive immunizations against hepatitis B, meningitis & varicella, and tuberculosis screening if not documented on the history and physical exam form submitted prior to registration. More formal clinical information about the prevention and pathophysiology of all infectious diseases that might potentially be transmitted in a clinical care setting is provided prior to the start of clinical clerkships. This would include education regarding hepatitis A, hepatitis B, hepatitis C, varicella, influenza, meningitis, tuberculosis, and HIV.

Students will be provided with education on universal blood and body fluid precautions during orientation sessions for first year students, and prior to the start of the clinical clerkships. Students will also receive information on infection control and prevention of the spread of communicable disease. During the first day students are assigned to work at a clinical rotation site, the faculty at the affiliate site will provide information regarding the policies and procedures at their respective sites that students must follow in the event of exposure.

Infection Control

Infection control policies are established for the surveillance, prevention, and control of infection caused by a variety of microorganisms. These guidelines include definitions, symptoms, mode of transmission, as well as prevention and control information. Blood, semen, and vaginal fluids are the three most potentially infectious body fluids but other body fluids such as cerebrospinal fluid, synovial fluid, pericardial fluid, peritoneal fluid, amniotic fluid, and unfixed body tissues should be considered potentially infectious, especially if contaminated with blood. Universal precautions should always be followed, even when handling fluids and tissues that are not normally infectious such as saliva, feces, urine, sweat, sputum, vomitus, and tears. It should be noted that these body fluids carry a greater risk of infection if contaminated with visible blood, which can result from an accidental occurrence or complication of patient contact and procedures.

Students are required to follow appropriate infection control procedures, including the use of personal protective equipment, whenever there is a risk of parenteral, cutaneous, or mucous membrane exposure to blood, body fluids, or aerosolized secretions from any patient, irrespective of the perceived risk of a blood borne or airborne pathogen. Regardless of the real or perceived communicable disease status of the patient, all students and staff should follow standard universal precautions when providing patient care. The basic precautions include:

- Always washing hands before and after patient contact in front of the patient or within sight of patient, according to the policy of the clinical site, even if gloves are used.
- Always wearing gloves when exposure to blood, body fluids, and other body excretions is likely.
- Using gloves appropriately according to aseptic and/or sterile techniques and always change gloves between patients.
- Wearing gowns/aprons when soiling of clothing with blood or body fluids is likely.
- Wearing masks, face shields, and eye protection when aerosolization of blood or body fluids may occur.
- Disposing of sharps in designated rigid sharp containers. Never recap needles by hand.
• Disposing of waste saturated with blood or body fluids in designated red biohazardous waste containers.

The UTRGV Department of Environment, Health, Safety and Risk Management handles cases of occupational exposure for students and staff in UTRGV clinical and laboratory settings. The SOM policies and procedures pertaining to occupational exposure to contaminated body fluids (e.g., a needlestick injury) in both laboratory and clinical care settings are described in the policy regarding Biosafety, Bloodborne Pathogens, and Needlestick Injury.

**Biosafety, Bloodborne Pathogens, and Needlestick Injury**

UTRGV SOM adheres to the institutional policies of the University of Texas system regarding exposure to infectious and environmental hazards on campus, and the institutional policies of its clinical affiliates regarding exposure to infectious and environmental hazards. If a student sustains a needlestick, sharp puncture, or other exposure to body fluids, the faculty will ensure that the student is able to seek post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) within two hours of exposure after the needlestick, sharp puncture, or body fluids exposure. Faculty will provide the student with the name, address, and phone number of the nearest health care facility or emergency room that can provide PEP care. In addition Student Health Services is prepared to provide HIV post exposure prophylaxis intervention if indicated.

Students infected with bloodborne or other pathogens shall not, solely because of such infection, be excluded from participation in any phase of medical school life, including educational opportunities, employment, and extracurricular activities, except as otherwise required by applicable federal, state, or local law, or unless their health condition presents a direct threat to the health and safety of themselves or others. Students infected with airborne pathogens are excluded from participation in such activities during the infectious stage of their disease. Students who know or who have reasonable basis for believing that they are infected with bloodborne or airborne pathogens, are expected to seek medical care at the UTRGV campus clinics or from their private physician. Students will be excused from clinical activities in order to seek medical care.

This policy aims to protect students and faculty from the risks of being occupationally infected with the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV), hepatitis B virus, or other bloodborne pathogens, and to implement the United States Department of Labor Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) Standard 29 CFR Section 1910.1030 Bloodborne Pathogens, which can be found at https://www.osha.gov/pls/oshaweb/owadisp.show_document?p_id=10051&p_table=STANDARDS.

All medical students will receive an orientation to the blood-borne pathogen policy of the affiliate hospital prior to commencing laboratory and/or patient care activities. The sponsoring host faculty member at UTRGV SOM is responsible for ensuring that all visiting students receive the appropriate training and orientation prior to starting laboratory or clinical work at UTRGV or one of its clinical affiliates. In addition, the sponsoring host faculty member is responsible for ensuring the proper procedures are followed in the event of potential exposure.

It is recommended that students receive treatment within two hours of a needle stick or body-fluid exposure. Students are encouraged to seek counseling at the Student Health Services so that their degree of exposure can be assessed and to assure appropriate data is collected
on the source patient. With this necessary counseling, students will be in a better position to manage both their exposure and the related costs.

*Students must be registered in credit courses for this policy to apply.

1. If you sustain an injury with a needle or other sharp object that has been exposed to a patient's body fluids, or if you splash a patient’s body fluid onto broken skin or mucous membranes, you may be at risk to contract infection with human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), the causative agent of AIDS.
2. If this occurs, treatment is available that can substantially reduce the risk of acquiring HIV infection. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends that for maximum protection, you should receive treatment within two hours of exposure.
3. The following are guidelines for what to do if you sustain a needle stick injury or body-fluid exposure.

For Exposures during Normal Weekday Daytime Working Hours in the Rio Grande Valley Area
If the exposure occurs during working hours - M-TH 8:00 a.m.–7:00 p.m. and Friday 8:00am-5:00pm care may be obtained from the Student Health Services. However:

- To avoid delays in treatment, CALL before going to the Student Health Services to be sure it is open and that staff is present. Phone number is 956-665-2511
- If you are more than 30–45 minutes away from the Student Health Services, we recommend that you seek care from the nearest emergency room or health care facility.
- If the Student Health Services is closed, go to the nearest emergency room or health care facility. Contact the ER triage nurse to expedite your care. Report to the Student Health Services on the next (non-holiday) weekday.

For Exposures after Normal Working Hours in the Rio Grande Valley Area
If the exposure occurs after working hours, care may be obtained from the nearest emergency room or health care facility. Contact the ER triage nurse to expedite your care. However:

- Report to the Student Health Services on the next (non-holiday) weekday following the exposure.
- If health care providers at another facility have questions about appropriate care, they can call the national HIV Post-Exposure Prophylaxis Hot-Line for Clinicians at 1-888-HIV-4911, which is open 24 hours per day.

For Exposures outside the Rio Grande Valley Area
If the exposure occurs outside the Rio Grande Valley area, it is recommended that the student seek medical care from the nearest emergency room or health care facility. For a medical emergency call 911. However:

- If health care providers at the facility have questions about appropriate care, they can call the national HIV Post-Exposure Prophylaxis Hotline for Clinicians at 1-888-HIV-4911, which is open 24 hours per day.
- Contact the Student Health Services by phone at 956-665-2511 on the next (non holiday) weekday.

Cost
If the above protocol is followed, cost of medical services received for needle stick or body-fluid exposure will be reimbursed by UTRGV, up to $500 per case. The reimbursement shall be
processed by the Student Health Services after the student submits a medical insurance claim receipt for the same case. In order to be eligible to receive the Needle Stick Policy benefit, each UTRGV student must comply with the following requirements:

1. Each student must consult the Student Health Services at 956-665-2511 immediately.
2. Each student must seek reimbursement from the student’s private insurance company first.
3. The student must initiate the request for reimbursement from UTRGV within 30 days from the date the student’s insurance claim is approved/denied.
4. Each student must provide the Student Health Services with a written report of the incident prior to making any request for reimbursement which must include time, date, and location of incident. The incident must relate to your clinical duties as a registered student at UTRGV.

These guidelines are subject to revision and modification by the Student Health Advisory Committee.

Recommendations of Student Health Advisory Committee Regarding Post Exposure Prophylaxis for Needle Stick or Percutaneous Fluid Exposure

1. For required modules/courses, students should be sent only to locations where the individual schools (medicine, dental, nursing, health professions, and graduate school) have confirmed that resources are available to provide care in the event a student sustains an infectious exposure. Post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) for HIV, as recommended by the current CDC guidelines, should consist of medical counseling, lab work, and antiviral medications within the recommended time frame. These sites would need to be periodically reviewed to confirm that the appropriate policies and procedures are in effect, possibly as part of the annual affiliation agreements.

Departments will confirm that appropriate policies and procedures are in effect before students are sent to remote locations. This information will also be included in affiliation agreements.

For elective rotations in underserved areas, students will be notified that PEP may not be available as recommended by CDC guidelines. When possible, students will be given information as to the nearest facility where this level of care can be obtained. Administration may consider asking legal counsel to develop an informed consent/release form to be signed by students acknowledging their understanding that PEP may not be immediately available to them on a chosen elective.

2. All UTRGV SOM students will be provided adequate education regarding universal precautions for infectious exposure and PEP procedures prior to any clinical rotations. Module directors/faculty must demonstrate that teaching and clinical application of the correct use of universal precautions occurs on clinical rotations.

3. UTRGV SOM will provide educational support to remote clinical sites, to help bring their policies and procedures up to date regarding treatment of infectious exposures. UTRGV will cooperate in providing information to assist in making the needed drug therapy available at these remote sites.

Prior to the placement of a student in a preceptorship, the School will execute a letter of agreement with the preceptor and develop information regarding post-exposure
prophylaxis, including the nearest facility where this level of care can be obtained. Students will be informed by letter of this same information. The School will inform the administrators of the preceptorship programs of the need for this information prior to student placement with a preceptor and will work with the administrators of the preceptorship program to identify the location of the nearest facility to each matched preceptor where the PEP can be obtained.

4. UTRGV SOM will assure continuation of current financial compensation for our students who follow the needle stick protocol and are treated after an injury in a remote location. Reimbursement will be for covered expenses.

Immediately after known exposure, medical students must contact their clinical instructor or attending physician and report the name of the source patient, medical record number, room number, and diagnosis.

This information is necessary to assist in determining the potential severity of the exposure. Appropriate and immediate first aid and a tetanus booster should be administered when indicated. Students who experience needle-stick and other types of injuries at hospitals or ambulatory clinics must immediately notify their physician supervisor. In all cases, students should receive immediate first aid and initial care at the site where the injury occurred. Based on the type of incident and/or the time of the incident, students may be referred to the nearest hospital emergency department, student health clinic or to their primary care physician for diagnosis, treatment, and follow-up.

**Academic Resources**

**Library Services**

**UTRGV SOM Library**
The UTRGV SOM Libraries provide full library services in support of UTRGV SOM programs. These include reference and research services, library instruction, interlibrary loan, collection development, and a website tailored to support medical education, practice and research.

The UTRGV SOM libraries are at the forefront of medical library evolution and possess a nearly virtual (i.e. all electronic) collection. The virtual collection offers access to collection resources from both on and off-campus locations, and also helps reduce student expenditures on textbooks.

The UTRGV School of Medicine Learning and Research Commons (LRC) in Edinburg is located on the first floor of the Academic Medical Building on the Edinburg campus of UTRGV. In addition to study spaces within the LRC, students have access to areas within the Academic Medical Building suitable for individual study and group collaboration. Extended hours are provided for UT Rio Grande Valley School of Medicine students during exam periods.

**University Library**
As a component of The UTRGV, the University Library plays a critical role in the commitment of the University to academic excellence in a balanced program of teaching, research, and service. Its main function is to provide educational support for The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley. The Library facilitates scholarship by securing and providing access to resources and facilities to students, faculty, and the community. The Library actively assists academic and
research programs by providing students with Library use instruction both on an individual and group basis. The University Library serves as the chief information center on campus and plays a strong role as a regional information center.

University Library hours are available online. For the most current information, visit http://www.utrgv.edu/library/about-us/hours/index.htm.

**UTRGV SOM Myles and Sylvia Aaronson Library (Edinburg)**

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*The Aaronson Library is provided primarily for students, faculty and staff of the UTRGV School of Medicine. Users not affiliated with the School of Medicine may access the library during regular business hours (Monday – Friday from 8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.). Study rooms are restricted to medical students. UTRGV School of Medicine affiliates may access the library during extended hours. Users must be registered for building access in advance, and a valid UTRGV ID badge must be worn and visible at all times within the building. Users may be asked to verify affiliation with the School of Medicine. Compliance with the library's policies and procedures, as well as applicable institutional policies is required.

**UTRGV SOM Mario E. Ramirez, M.D., Library (Harlingen)**

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**UTRGV Academic Libraries (Edinburg and Brownsville Campuses)**

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**Security & Safety**

UTRGV Emergency Alert is a mass, urgent notification system, comprised of a variety of methods by which the University can notify students, faculty and staff of an active, major campus emergency:

- Text messages (SMS) to cell phones
- Voice messages to phones
- Emails
- Digital Signage
- University Website
- University Facebook page

When the Division of Security and Campus Affairs determines there is an active emergency in which the public safety of the campus may be at risk, an urgent notification through the UTRGV Emergency Alert system will be initiated. Examples are:
- When a person actively shooting a weapon is on the loose
- When a tornado or a severe thunderstorm with expected winds greater than 70 miles per hour is predicted to strike the campus area
- When a major hazardous material spill is impacting a large portion of campus.

As a large multi-campus system, we require more than a single mode of notification in an emergency. UTRGV Emergency Alert will add to the array of communication methods the Division of Security and Campus Affairs uses during campus emergencies, such as crime alerts, campus emails, digital signage and local news media outlets. Students, faculty & staff are automatically registered to UTRGV Emergency Alerts with the contact information contained in Banner (Students) and Oracle (Faculty & Staff).

Tuition & Financial Aid

The UTRGV SOM Office of Student Affairs includes staff who assist students with meeting the cost of their medical education, offer guidance in navigating the financial aid process, and provide resources on how to manage expenses associated with the pursuit of a medical degree.

The Assistant Director of Financial Aid for the SOM, is dedicated to assisting students with the financial aid application process and providing one-on-one counseling regarding the availability of federal, private, and institutional funds. Students can meet with the Director of Financial Aid from Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Extended office hours are available upon request.

There are several financial aid and scholarship options available to medical students, such as the institutional and private scholarships, as well as federal and private student loans. The main types of aid available are listed below:

- **Scholarships**: Non-repayable awards, which may be based on merit, financial need, and other considerations.
- **Federal Direct Unsubsidized Stafford Loan**: A student does not have to demonstrate financial need to receive this loan. Interest payments on this loan are not subsidized by the government. The student can make arrangements with the lender to pay the interest while he or she is in school or can allow the interest to capitalize, adding to the principal balance.
- **Federal Direct Graduate Plus Loan**: This loan is available to graduate students who are enrolled in an eligible program. Students must file a FAFSA form in order to apply for a Federal Graduate Plus Loan. This loan requires a credit check for eligibility.
- **Private Student Loans**: Private student loans can be obtained in addition to Federal Stafford Loans. Private student loans are based on credit and the interest rate is variable.

Debt Management and Loan Exit Counseling

During orientation and throughout the students’ medical education, the Assistant Director of Financial Aid holds mandatory group sessions on loan counseling, debt management, and financial planning. Medical students can contact the Director for individual counseling during normal business hours, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday, or by phone or email. The UTRGV SOM Financial Aid website includes information for prospective medical students on financial literacy, debt management, links to scholarship resources, and contact information of preferred lenders.
During the first debt management session, students are given a printed copy of their federal loan histories and are informed how to access the National Student Loan Data System and retrieve their personal loan histories. Students will be provided an updated loan history every year for the duration of their medical education. Students are required to attend a second mandatory debt management presentation toward the end of year 2 before starting their core clerkships in year 3. Debt management and other financial aid information are available online on the UTRGV SOM website. The Assistant Director of Financial Aid will meet with students to encourage smart and conscientious borrowing habits. Personal or group debt management sessions will be available throughout the program. All students who have received loans during medical school are required to attend a mandatory “Loan Exit Counseling” session. This is a federal requirement for graduation for any student who has received federal student loans for school.

Additionally, UTRGV SOM Assistant Director of Financial Aid provides students with written information about financial aid programs and services available to them through the SOM and its parent university. They also have access to various financial aid resources provided by the Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC), including the Financial Information, Resources, Services, and Tools (FIRST) online program at https://www.aamc.org/services/48668/first/ which includes a tutorial entitled, Financial Literacy 101, podcasts, and many other resources.

**Tuition Refunds**

The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley School of Medicine (UTRGV SOM) policy for tuition and fee refund payments to medical students is governed by Texas Education Code Title 3, Chapter 54, Subchapter A, Section 54.0056, and is described below:

Medical students who withdraw in the fall of the academic year will receive a 100% refund of tuition and fees for the second half of the year (spring) and a refund for the first half of the year (fall) based upon the schedule below:

- 100 percent prior to the first day of classes
- 80 percent during the first five class days
- 70 percent during the second five class days
- 50 percent during the third five class days
- 25 percent during the fourth five class days

No refunds will be made in the case of withdrawal after the fourth five-day period. Students who withdraw during a summer term may receive a refund of tuition and applicable fees based on the following schedule:

- 100 percent prior to the first class day
- 80 percent during the first, second, or third class day
- 50 percent during the fourth, fifth, or sixth class day

No refunds will be made on the seventh class day or thereafter, or if still enrolled.

Notice of intention to withdraw must be made in writing to the Senior Assistant Dean of Enrollment and copied to SOM Registrar, and Assistant Director of Financial Aid. The institution will terminate student services and privileges at the time of the student’s withdrawal.
University’s Office of Alumni

UTRGV has more than 100,000 alumni spread across the globe from its two legacy institutions, The University of Texas at Brownsville and The University of Texas Pan American. Graduates of UTRGV and UTRGV School of Medicine will join these alumni to serve as a reminder of successes and sources of support for other UTRGV students. With the support of this strong alumni base, UTRGV will become a significant force in higher education both in the state and in the nation.

Students are encouraged to contact the Office of Alumni before graduating.

Physical Location:
2402 S. Closner Boulevard
Edinburg, TX 78539
Telephone: 956-665-2500
Fax: 956-665-3240
Email: alumni@utrgv.edu

Student Organizations

Medical student organizations and specialty interest groups will provide students with opportunities to attend educational meetings and conferences sponsored by local, regional, national, and possibly even international professional associations of that specialty. Through their participation, medical students will become knowledgeable about, and may even consider becoming an active medical student member of one or more professional associations of that specialty. The Office of Student Affairs will support extracurricular student organizations as another means for students to explore career interests, as well as encourage participation in the AAMC Careers in Medicine (CiM) workshops at the national level.

Academic Advising

The UTRGV School of Medicine Office of Student Success (SOM OSS) offers guidance and personal professional support to medical students by providing resources in several areas such as:

- academic and career advise
- study skills
- tutoring
- time management
- test-taking strategies
- problem-solving and decision-making skills
- Workshops to address areas of concern

Each student is assigned a primary academic advisor who will work closely with the medical student. All medical students are encouraged to first make the effort to discuss any academic concerns with their Module/Clerkship co-director.

The Office of Student Affairs in collaboration with the SOM OSS coordinates academic interventions/activities for those students who self-identify as needing assistance or who are identified by their Module/Clerkship Co-Directors as having academic deficiencies. The priority of the SOM OSS is the wellbeing of the students.
The UTRGV SOM will provide each student with the support and services needed to grow as a person and a health care provider. The Student Success Academies have been formed to support and facilitate this goal. Every student will be assigned to one of five colleges for their medical school career. Each of these colleges will have Faculty mentors who is prepared to guide the student in terms of educational needs, physical and emotional health, career choice, community service, and individual and group activities. The goal is to enhance the development of UTRGV medical students by fostering close relationships and assisting them to make career decisions and access resources in an informed way. The Academy for Success Groups provides continuity of faculty advising throughout the medical school experience. The Directors will have the full resources of the Office of Student Affairs at their disposal. When our students move on to their second year, they will serve as the peer mentors for our incoming first year students. With time, the Academy will house peer to peer mentoring in the form of the Student Peer Advisors’ (SPAs) comprised of up and coming MS2 medical students and the “Mentors in Medicine” (MiMs). In future years, the MiMs program will be comprised of MS3 and MS4 students.

Medical students remain in their assigned groups throughout the four years of medical school. It is a cohesive and interclass system in which each class of students mentors the students following them.

Every student will also have a faculty mentor from year one who will work within the college system and serve as a resource in the areas noted. They will play a special role in terms of course selection and help to develop a learning plan for their students that will pave the way for each to discover their optimal career path and residency choice.

The Careers in Medicine program of the Association of American Medical Colleges will be introduced in the first year, and the colleges will help guide their students in the optimal use of this important resource. Each college will create and build its own identity through the students. They will elect a student to serve on the Admissions Committee.

**Career and Residency Counseling**

All UTRGV medical students receive career guidance from a variety of sources and programs during each year of their medical education. In addition to the Academy for Success, a professional development and career counseling program is in place to:

- Help students identify and achieve their personal and professional goals,
- Assist student in the process of selecting a career, and
- Guide students through the transition from medical school to residency training.

This program will include both formal and informal activities.

UTRGV SOM utilizes the Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC) Careers in Medicine (CiM) Program as a foundation for its career guidance program: [https://www.aamc.org/students/medstudents/cim](https://www.aamc.org/students/medstudents/cim)

The CiM is a four-phase career planning program that works in partnership with medical schools to help students select a medical specialty and apply to a residency program. Oversight and support for the CiM program at UTRGV resides in the Office of Student Affairs, under the direction of the Associate Dean for Student Affairs, and managed by the Director of Medical Student Academic Support.
Formal Activities for First Year (MS I)

During Orientation, students are introduced to the CiM program and the individuals who will assist in their professional development and career guidance process.

The Associate Dean for Student Affairs and Director of Medical Student Academic Support will hold a town hall meeting with mandatory attendance for first-year students early in Year 1 to describe the UTRGV SOM career guidance services. The Careers in Medicine (CiM) program is described and discussed by the Associate Dean for Student Affairs and the Director of Medical Student Academic Support. During the town meeting, the Director of Medical Student Academic Support and staff, in conjunction with the Associate Dean for Student Affairs, will assist students in reviewing the CiM website, the modules, and the various assessment tools. Students are required to register with CiM and create a personal profile by taking an online self-assessment to help you identify their values, interests, skills, personality, and practice needs. This confidential personal information guides students during the second phase as they explore the variety of medical specialties and other career options available to them in the field of medicine. Among the tasks in the CiM process is to “seek out an advisor or mentor.” Students are encouraged to select a mentor with whom they share personal and professional interests, as these mentors are typically the students’ first point of contact for issues concerning personal and professional development. To facilitate this process, the Director of Medical Student Academic Support will provide students with a list of faculty mentors who can assist in the career selection process. The Director of Medical Student Academic Support and staff will assist the students in contacting and working with the faculty mentors of their choice. All students are required to have a faculty mentor. In addition, students can access their assigned mentor through the Student Success Academies.

Near the end of the first semester of year 1, the Associate Dean for Student Affairs and Director of Medical Student Academic Support will host a mandatory class meeting with first-year students entitled “Selecting a Career – The Informed Decision-Making Process.” The focus of this presentation is to help students understand the process of making well-informed decisions when choosing a specialty. It encourages students to be proactive, to explore their personal interests, to survey and “test drive” specialties of interest, and to commit to making a well-informed decision. The program includes early exposure to the presentation “The Competitive Applicant” which reviews the significance of grades, board scores, extracurricular activities, and scholarly activities, as well as presenting oneself in a positive light, and identifying and recruiting advocates to assist students through these processes.

Formal Activities for Second Year (MS II)

During year 2, the Associate Dean for Student Affairs and Director of Medical Student Academic Support hosts a mandatory town meeting with second-year students. The Associate Dean for Student Affairs will remind students of internal and external resources available to them, and introduces them to additional resources such as the Charting Outcomes in the Residency Match.

During the clinical years, the faculty mentor is available to provide advice pertinent to the overall clinical clerkship experiences and help arrange additional extracurricular clinical opportunities in specialties based on the preferences of the student. The faculty mentor is also expected to assist with the process of selecting a residency. Mentors may be changed, or additional mentors may be sought, as students solidify their career choices. Faculty mentors may be involved in formal UTRGV SOM academic advising requirements. The Director of Medical Student
Academic Support and staff will follow-up regularly with the students and faculty mentors to review questions and concerns they might have.

“Exploring Options” is the program that reviews pertinent career information sources such as the AAMC CiM website, and required steps and timelines for the upcoming years. Students meet with different specialties and are invited to meet with up to four specialty subgroups headed by faculty in those disciplines. In addition, students have one-on-one meetings with two specialties of their choice to gather additional information such as the student’s competitiveness for those particular specialties. The consultations with faculty will occur on site, via telephone, and/or via Skype to mitigate geographical distances. Specialists with academic backgrounds and experience in career advising actively participate in reviewing a student’s competitiveness, based on national statistics and other specialty-specific data.

Educational Program Overview

The UTRGV SOM creates a unique opportunity to educate physicians to be skilled clinicians, educators, biomedical scientists, leaders and innovators in the ongoing transformation of the health care system regionally and throughout Texas. Throughout their four years at the UTRGV SOM, students will gain outpatient primary care experiences through the Ambulatory Interprofessional Medical Experience (AIME) including participation in The Colonia Integrated Care Program. The AIME program enables medical students to interact with professionals in a variety of organizations and agencies within the RGV communities. The UTRGV SOM draws on established UTRGV programs in nursing, public health, pharmacy, dentistry, physician assistants, and social work to educate young physicians in interprofessional team-based settings.

Through our curriculum, in combination with a program ethos that prioritizes improving health at the individual and community level, the UTRGV SOM will graduate physicians who are:

- **Patient Advocates**: Dedicated to serving patients and their families through the practice of ethical, evidence-based, patient-centered medicine.
- **Community-Focused**: Committed to improving health outcomes and reducing health disparities of at-risk populations through community and population-based interventions.
- **Culturally-Aware**: Equipped with the tools and empathy to successfully work with the diverse and unique needs of any community.
- **Collaborative Leaders**: Prepared to contribute to effective interprofessional teams, as well as invested in providing leadership on matters of community health.
- **Life-long Problem-Solvers**: Practiced in using critical thinking to approach all health matters including clinical, community, and social issues.
**Degree Requirements Overview**

Graduation from the UTRGV SOM and the bestowing of the degree of Doctorate of Medicine requires the successful completion of pre-clerkship requirements (years 1 and 2), completion of the clinical rotations (years 3 and 4), and passage of the USMLE Steps 1 and 2. Each student’s record is reviewed by the Associate Dean for Student Affairs and the Senior Associate Dean for Education and Academic Affairs in her or his fourth year to confirm the successful completion of all academic requirements and the demonstration of a degree of professionalism deemed to be essential for all physicians. Upon completion of this review, the findings and recommendations of the Associate Dean for Student Affairs and the Senior Associate Dean of Education and Academic Affairs are forwarded to the Dean of the School of Medicine for approval.

**Competencies**

The educational program is carefully constructed and sequenced, vertically and horizontally integrating basic and clinical sciences throughout the medical education program. The foundational pre-clerkship curriculum is taught in ten sequential learning modules (nine organ system modules) and two longitudinal modules (Clinical Skills and Language of Medicine). The following general competencies will be used to guide the curriculum and to ensure that students who graduate have achieved competency in areas basic to being a physician: altruism, knowledge, and skills.
1. **Altruism** - Medical students must be compassionate and empathetic in caring for patients, and must be trustworthy and truthful in their professional dealings. They must act with integrity, honesty, and respect for patients' privacy and dignity.

2. **Knowledge** - Medical students must understand the scientific basis of medicine and be able to apply that understanding to the safe and effective practice of medicine. They must utilize self-assessment and self-knowledge to optimize their learning.

3. **Skills** - Medical students must acquire wide-ranging skills that will enable them to care for patients as a professional.

In addition to the UTRGV SOM’s own competencies, the educational objectives are mapped to core competencies of professional organizations, such as: the Institute of Medicine (IOM), American Colleges of Graduate Medical Education (ACGME), USMLE Physician Tasks/Competencies, and the Core Entrustable Professional Activities for Entering Residency (EPA).

**ACGME Competencies**

1. **Medical Knowledge**: Students must demonstrate the application of knowledge about established and evolving biomedical, clinical, epidemiological and social-behavioral sciences to the delivery of quality and safe patient care.

2. **Patient Care**: Students must demonstrate willingness and ability to provide health care to patients that is compassionate, appropriate, and effective for treating health problems and promoting health.

3. **Interpersonal and Communication Skills**: Students must demonstrate interpersonal and communication skills that result in effective information exchange and teaming with patients, patients’ families, and professional associates.

4. **Professionalism**: Students must demonstrate a commitment to developing a scientific mind, real world comprehensive knowledge, skills and knowledge for optimal patient care and professional behavior.

5. **Systems-Based Practice**: Students must demonstrate an awareness of and responsiveness to the larger context and systems of health care and the ability to call on system resources to provide care that is of optimal value.

6. **Practice-Based Learning and Improvement**: Students must be able to investigate and evaluate patient care practices, appraise and assimilate scientific evidence, and continually improve their practice of medicine.

**IOM Core Competency Areas**

1. **Provide patient-centered care**: Students will identify, respect, and care about patients differences, values, preferences, and expressed needs; relieve pain and suffering; coordinate continuous care; listen to, clearly inform, communicate with, and educate patients; share decision making and management; and continuously advocate disease prevention, wellness, and promotion of healthy lifestyles, including a focus on population health.

2. **Work in interdisciplinary teams**: Students will cooperate, collaborate, communicate, and integrate care in teams to ensure that care is continuous and reliable.

3. **Employ evidence-based practice**: Students will integrate best research with clinical expertise and patient values for optimum care, and participate in learning and research activities to the extent feasible.

4. **Apply quality improvement**: Students will identify errors and hazards in care; understand and implement basic safety design principles, such as standardization and simplification; continually understand and measure quality of care in terms of structure, process, and outcomes in relation to patient and community needs; and design and test
interventions to change processes and systems of care, with the objective of improving quality.

5. **Utilize informatics:** Students will communicate, manage knowledge, mitigate error, and support decision making using information technology.

**Core Entrustable Professional Activities (EPAs)**
- **EPA 1:** Gather a history and perform a physical examination.
- **EPA 2:** Prioritize a differential diagnosis following a clinical encounter.
- **EPA 3:** Recommend and interpret common diagnostic and screening tests.
- **EPA 4:** Enter and discuss orders and prescriptions.
- **EPA 5:** Document a clinical encounter in the patient record.
- **EPA 6:** Provide an oral presentation of a clinical encounter.
- **EPA 7:** Form clinical questions and retrieve evidence to advance patient care.
- **EPA 8:** Give or receive a patient handover to transition care responsibility.
- **EPA 9:** Collaborate as a member of an interprofessional team.
- **EPA 10:** Recognize a patient requiring urgent or emergent care and initiate evaluation and management.
- **EPA 11:** Obtain informed consent for tests and/or procedures.
- **EPA 12:** Perform general procedures of a physician.
- **EPA 13:** Identify system failures and contribute to a culture of safety and improvement.

The UTRGV SOM expects all students to achieve these competencies prior to graduation. The educational program objectives provide the framework on which the curriculum is built and on which the students will be assessed. The UTRGV SOM curriculum represents an integrated four-year medical school education program. Module/clerkship directors and faculty developed the educational objectives which serve as the foundation for the creation of individual module “student learning objectives” that specify desired learning outcomes for each module and clerkship.

**Year 1 Overview**

The first year of medical school provides the foundations of medicine in core basic, clinical, and social sciences. Core basic medical sciences are covered in “Molecules to Medicine,” an integrated look at cell biology, genetics and embryology, tissue structure, principles of disease prevention, pharmacology, and disruptions to homeostasis. Building further upon microbiology basics, students enroll in the “Attack and Defense” course, focusing on immunology and infectious diseases. Organ-based course work during the first year includes “Cardiovascular”, “Respiratory”, and “Renal & Male Reproduction” modules. Problem-based learning in small groups is used to investigate clinical cases and identify learning issues. Interspersed among these modules are the “Medicine, Behavior, and Society” courses (MBS); the MBS series provides students with the basis of professional cultures with which they will come in contact in the health care practice. Interprofessionalism is emphasized, and students will have the opportunity to work with multiple types of health care disciplines, such as nursing, physician assistant, occupational therapy, pharmacy, public health, and social work.

During the first year, students are also introduced to the two longitudinal modules, the “Language of Medicine” and “Clinical Skills”. In these two courses, students learn the fundamentals of anatomy, histology, pathology, embryology, radiology, professional and ethical considerations in medicine, communication techniques, patient history taking skills, physical examination skills, and standardized patient encounters. These courses will be taught in both lecture, laboratory, and on site at the UTRGV Smart Hospital. During these longitudinal
modules, students will be introduced to case studies, each facilitated by a faculty member and based upon a weekly theme. Students apply clinical reasoning skills and are coached by faculty on their performance as a team. Both longitudinal modules continue into the second year.

**Year 2 Overview**

The second year of medical school continues to focus on organ systems and the professional cultures of medicine, with students participating in “Mind, Brain, & Behavior”, “Endocrine & Female Reproduction”, “Digestive Health & Nutrition,” “Musculoskeletal & Dermatology” and the MBS series. The organ-based courses provide students with an intensive understanding of normal function and structure of the system, then transition into manifestations of disease, treatment, research applications, and evidence-based medicine. The longitudinal modules extend throughout the second year, continuing to focus on anatomy, interprofessional development and clinical experiences. Group case studies continue to build upon students’ understanding of clinical applications to disease and prepare them for the Objective Structured Clinical Examinations (OSCEs).

**Year 3 Overview**

The first year of clinical clerkship rotations allows medical students to experience eight required disciplines and one of the students’ choosing: internal medicine, surgery, family practice, emergency medicine, neurology, pediatrics, obstetrics and gynecology, psychiatry, and an elective. Study is predominantly guided by clerkship directors, where students work with interdisciplinary medical teams on increasing complex medical conditions in the outpatient and hospital settings. Students are guided through progressively greater responsibility as they gain experience managing care of patients, with learning enhanced through simulated cases and virtual cases. Core procedural skills are emphasized. Students are expected to pass USMLE Step 1 at the end of this period and to demonstrate general competency in clinical skills, diagnosis of disease, and case management.

**Year 4 Overview**

The final year of the UTRGV SOM program is devoted to advanced medicine, including scholarship and exploration of specialty areas to facilitate choice of postgraduate study. Students select individualized schedules that best serve their long-term career goals. Four weeks are provided for outpatient electives, four weeks for inpatient electives, and 18 weeks for elective coursework. Ten weeks are also incorporated into the final year for students to study for the USMLE Step 2, attend interviews for residency placements, and vacation.

**Research Opportunities**

Research is one of the value domains of the UTRGV SOM curriculum, with a focus on the education and development of clinician-investigators and physicians with an understanding of research and evidence-based medicine. Research experiences and opportunities are integrated longitudinally throughout the four years at the School of Medicine. Student research opportunities are managed, assessed for relevance, approved, and overseen by the Associate Dean for Research.

Students will participate in research as longitudinal threads (seminar series-once per month is targeted) throughout the pre-clerkship years. The research thread will be integrated with the
content of curriculum modules and longitudinally with the Medicine, Behavior and Society, Language of Medicine and Clinical Skills modules.

Students will be strongly encouraged to conduct service learning population health research projects through the SOM or the University of Texas School of Public Health programs. The aim is for these projects to culminate in poster presentations at the UTRGV Annual Research and Quality Fair, regional, state or national conferences and/or be published.

Research/Scholarly Activity Electives will be available to students who want to expand their research experiences. Guidance will be provided by faculty mentors that may include faculty engaged biomedical research, community and population-based research, clinical and translational research, patient safety quality improvement and education. Students will be provided the opportunity to present their research at research symposia, give an oral presentation or poster presentation at regional, state and national poster presentations as well as submit a manuscript for publication. Students are strongly encouraged to participate in research electives and scholarly activities. Funding for research opportunities will be provided via a competitive basis by the Dean of Research in the form of stipends for students and seed money from mentors.

Awards and Honors

Alpha Omega Alpha Honor Medical Society
Alpha Omega Alpha (AOA) Honor Medical Society is a national professional organization whose aims are the "promotion of scholarship and research in medical schools, the encouragement of a high standard of character and professionalism among medical students and graduates, and the recognition of high attainment and service in medical science, patient care, and related fields." Election is based on academic excellence, and on activities and achievements that promote the values of AOA. The top 25 percent of the medical school class is eligible for nomination to the society. From this top quartile of students, up to one-sixth of the class may be elected to the society based on academic achievement, leadership, character, community service, and professionalism. Students may be chosen in the junior or senior year.

Gold Humanism Honor Society
The Gold Humanism Honor Society, sponsored by the Arnold P. Gold Foundation, recognizes students who best exemplify and manifest humanism in their interaction with patients, peers, faculty, and community. Additionally, elected students should demonstrate excellence in clinical care, leadership, compassion and dedication to service. Society membership participates in a community service project that is formulated by the group.
Part II. SOM Academic Policies

Grading Policy

Academic Standards: The academic standards for successful completion of the pre-clerkship modules are determined by the Module Co-Directors (MCDs), each adhering to the grading policy approved by the Central Curriculum Authority Committee (CCAC). Students will be provided with module syllabi which will contain the module learning objectives and the grading policies for the respective modules. MCDs are to review and discuss the grading policy on the first day of class as part of the module orientation process.

Grading Policies: MCDs are responsible for the development of the grading rubrics specific to their individual modules. All rubrics must have both objective and performance-based assessments and clearly explain the criteria for assessment.

Linkage of Assessments to Module Learning Objectives and SOM Competencies: Modules within the pre-clerkship curriculum have established educational objectives with associated outcomes measurements. These objectives are built upon the UTRGV SOM’s competencies and the subject matter for the USMLE. Each outcome measure to assess medical students’ performance, knowledge, and understanding is guided by the expectations of the USMLE and recommendations by the ACGME, Institute of Medicine, and the EPAs.

Grades: Grades are based on a Pass/Fail system for pre-clerkship modules in years one and two. Each module is comprised of two components: objective examinations and performance-based assessments. Students must pass both components to receive a passing grade for the module. Grading policies for each module must be published in the module syllabus and reviewed with students on the first day of class. Depending on their performance on objective examinations and performance-based assessments, students can earn any of the following grades:

Pass “P” Grade: To pass a module, students must earn a grade equal to or greater than 70% in the objective examination component of the module and meet the requirements for passing the performance-based component of the module.

Fail “F” Grade: Students earning a grade below 70% on the objective examination component of the module and/or failing to meet the requirements for passing the performance-based component of the module will fail to pass the module. Students who fail a module will be referred for remediation.

Incomplete “I” Grade: A student who does not complete all of the required coursework may receive an incomplete grade at the discretion of the DOME should it deem that the provision of additional time to allow the student to complete the work is warranted (e.g. illness, family emergencies, or other extenuating circumstances). The Incomplete will change to a “Pass” or “Fail” once the student has completed the required coursework. If a student fails to complete the required course work within a designated time period, the incomplete grade will be changed to a failing “F” grade.

Withdrawal “W”: A student who withdraws from school will receive a grade of “W” for each module in which he/she is enrolled.
Confidentiality of Grades: MCDs are accountable for ensuring the confidentiality of all student educational records in accordance with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA), as amended. Congruent with this responsibility, MCDs of the UTRGV SOM will not post or display, either electronically or in hard copy, lists of students’ grades in personally identifiable forms, including the students name or any four consecutive digits of students Social Security numbers or student identification numbers. Grades cannot be shared with students by email since confidentiality of email cannot be assured. MCDs will post student grades in the Blackboard Gradebook for student access. (See Confidentiality of Academic Records policy).

Grade Appeals: Students may appeal a grade through the academic grievance process. (See the Academic Grievance Process Policy).

Posting of Final Grades: Each course director will complete a grade roster at the end of each course along with a written evaluation of student performances in all required components of the course as well as in any elective activities. Final grades must be provided to the Department of Medical Education (DOME) two weeks from the date of the end of a module.

Academic Grievances/Grade Appeals

Students wishing to appeal final grades or misunderstandings in academic standards should first discuss the matter with the appropriate module or clerkship directors. If no resolution occurs, and the student wishes to pursue the matter further, s/he should appeal in writing to the Chair of Department of Medical Education within 14 calendar days (excluding holidays) after the disputed grade is issued or the misunderstanding occurred. The Department Chair will respond in writing to the student within 14 calendar days (excluding holidays) of the receipt of the student’s written appeal.

Pursuant appeals will be written and directed within 14 calendar days (excluding holidays) of the date of the Department Chair’s decision to an Ad-Hoc School of Medicine Academic Appeals Committee. The committee will consist of a panel of three faculty members (for appeals in M1 or M2, two will be from clinical departments and for appeals in M3 or M4, two will be from the basic science department). The Dean will appoint the panel members upon receipt of the written appeal and notify the student in writing of the date, time, and location of the hearing and the names of the members of the panel. The student and the faculty member involved may appear in person before the panel and present evidence and/or witnesses (to provide evidence and then leave). The hearing will be closed to the public, and no person other than the student, the faculty member involved and panel members may be present. No person may represent the student or the faculty member.

After the School of Medicine Academic Appeals Committee has heard the appeal, it will deliberate and come to a decision. The committee’s decision will be written and mailed, or delivered in person, to the student and faculty member within five calendar days (excluding holidays) of the close of the hearing. The student may appeal in writing within 14 calendar days (excluding holidays) to the Dean. The Dean’s (or designee’s) decision will be final, and it must be mailed or delivered in person to the student within 14 calendar days (excluding holidays) of the receipt of the student’s written appeal.

Non-academic grievances

The student may appeal all other penalties (except for grades, narrative evaluations and misunderstanding in academic standards, which are addressed above) imposed by the MSEPC
based on the student’s failure to meet academic or professional standards, by submitting an appeal in writing to the Associate Dean for Student Affairs or designee within five (5) business days of receiving notice of the decision from the MSEPC.

The first step to be taken by the student in the appeal is to appear before the MSEPC or to inform it in writing of evidence or mitigating facts which might persuade the MSEPC to rescind or alter its decision. Such a request for reconsideration, however, reopens the case and may lead to a new decision by the MSEPC. The MSEPC will conduct a hearing to review the appeal and will notify the student of its decision within five (5) business days of the hearing.

If the student remains dissatisfied with the outcome of the MSEPC hearing, the student may submit an appeal in writing to the Associate Dean for Student Affairs or designee within five (5) business days of receiving notice of the final decision by the MSEPC. The student must provide a justification for the appeal, which basis will be limited to the following: 1) failure to receive the minimum requirements of process, as described in this Handbook; 2) severity of the penalty; or 3) new material or information that could not be discovered at the time of the MSEPC hearing. This appeal will go to the Executive Advisory Evaluation and Promotions Committee (EAEPC). The EAEPC is an ad hoc committee that is constituted to hear student appeals of grades, evaluations, and penalties or sanctions. The EAEPC is chaired by a faculty member within the School of Medicine chosen by the Dean. Its membership includes the Senior Associate Dean for Education and Academic Affairs; the Associate Dean for Student Affairs; the Associate Dean for Diversity; and the Department Chairs within the SOM. The EAEPC will conduct a hearing in order to determine whether the decision is made in a manner consistent with the requirements and standards of UTRGV SOM, the rights and obligations of the student, and the rights and obligations of the faculty. The EAEPC may accept, reject or modify the decision of the MSEPC. The EAEPC will notify the student of its decision within five (5) business days of the hearing.

If unsatisfied with the outcome of the EAEPC hearing, the student may appeal the decision by the EAEPC by submitting an appeal in writing to the Associate Dean for Student Affairs or designee within five (5) days of receiving notice of the EAEPC decision. The student must provide a justification for the appeal, which basis will be limited to the following: 1) failure to receive the minimum requirements of process, as described in this Handbook; 2) severity of the penalty; or 3) new material or information that could not be discovered at the time of the EAEPC hearing. This appeal will go to the Dean of the School of Medicine. The decision of the Dean of the College of Medicine is final. The student has a right to appeal the Dean’s final decision to an external judicial forum.

**Hearing Procedures**

This paragraph describes the procedures for all appeal hearings described above. The primary purpose of the appeal hearing is to ascertain whether the penalty under appeal was imposed in a manner consistent with the requirements and standards of UTRGV SOM, the rights and obligations of the student, and the rights and obligations of the faculty.

All hearings are closed to the public and the press. The appeal hearing is not adversarial in nature, and the formal rules of evidence do not apply. The student and all other interested parties will be invited to attend and participate in the hearings. The student may choose to have an advisor present. The advisor may consult with the student but may not participate in the hearing directly unless given permission to do so by those conducting the hearing. If the student’s advisor is an attorney, the University will have an attorney present as well. Either party
to the appeal may call witnesses. Summary minutes of the appeal and relevant attachments shall be provided to either party upon request.

Examinations

Exam Scheduling: All major exams, whether delivered through the ExamSoft or the NBME secure exam delivery platforms, in the pre-clerkship years one and two will be scheduled in advance through the DOME. The exact times and dates for scheduling examinations will be coordinated with the Module Co-Directors (MCDs). Students will not be allowed to take more than two exams on the same day.

Exam Facilities: The DOME is responsible for the scheduling of an appropriate examination facility which assures:
- Sufficient space to ensure examinees are seated with an adequate amount of space in-between to assure that they cannot communicate with one another.
- Sufficient local network bandwidth to assure no disruption to exam administration.
- Accessibility to restrooms.
- A place for students to check coats, hats, backpacks, cell phones, and other personal items.

The DOME should also have in place a back-up facility location in the event that the scheduled site becomes unusable for some unforeseen reason. (Power outage, Internet disruption, broken pipes, air conditioning failure, etc.)

Proctors: The DOME is responsible for the provision and training of a sufficient number of proctors to monitor students during exam administration.

Student Responsibilities Prior to the Examination: Students must follow the prescribed protocol (ExamSoft or NBME) for testing their computers one to two days prior to the examination date to assure that they can access the examination platform. Should there be any access issues or technical problems, students are required to bring their laptops to the DOME for assistance by a trained computer technician.

Student Responsibilities during Examination: Students must follow the protocol outlined below. Students:
- Should arrive outside the examination room 20 minutes prior to the exam start.
- Must check-in and show their Student ID prior to entering the examination room.
- Must leave all personal items in their locker including cell phones, tablets, iPods, other electronic devices, study materials, backpacks, brief cases, beverages, or food of any kind, coats, hats, hoodies, etc.
- May not sit for an examination if they bring personal items into the examination room.
- Must be in their assigned seats in the exam room in time for the instructions given prior to the start of the exam. (Students arriving more than 10 minutes after the start of the exam will not be permitted to enter the examination room or take the exam. Extra time, beyond the scheduled end of the examination will not be granted to make up for students arriving late.)
- Must be escorted, one at a time, on all personal breaks taken during examinations. (Extra examination time for personal breaks will not be granted).
- When leaving the examination room for personal breaks during the exam must close their computer and leave it in the exam room.
Failure to Show for an Exam: Students who fail to show for an exam due to an emergency or to extenuating circumstances must notify the Office of Student Affairs as soon as possible to explain their situation.

Failure to Comply with Examination Regulations and Policies: Students who fail to comply with the examination policy and procedures or failing to obey the instructions of an examination proctor will be considered to be exhibiting academic dishonesty and in violation of the UTRGV SOM Code of Academic Integrity.

Policy Regarding USMLE - Step 1 Examination

Scheduling of Step 1: Students are required to take Step 1 of the USMLE prior to the start of the beginning of Year 3 orientation. Students who delay taking Step 1 until after the start of Year 3 orientation cannot begin the Year 3 clerkships until after the first clerkship or at the midpoint of Year 3.

Failure and Retaking of Step 1: Students who fail USMLE Step 1 on their initial attempt will be removed from the Year 3 curriculum (at the end of their current clerkship) and be assigned to Independent Study, to prepare for and retake Step 1. Students must retake Step 1 between August 1st and August 31st. Students who pass on their second attempt can rejoin the Year 3 curriculum at its midpoint. Students who fail their second attempt will continue to be assigned to Independent Study. Students must complete their third attempt to pass Step 1 between March 1st and March 31st. Failure to pass, after the third attempt will result in automatic dismissal from the School of Medicine. After academic dismissal, a student may apply for readmission to the SOM through the standard admissions process.

Policy Regarding USMLE Step 2 Clinical Knowledge and Clinical Skills Examinations

Passage of Step 2 Clinical Knowledge (CK) and Step 2 Clinical Skills (CS) are required for graduation. Initial attempts to pass both Step 2 exams (CK and CS) must be completed by October 31st of the year preceding graduation. To ensure that a student who matches to a residency will be able to start the PGY-1 year on time, any student who will not be able to obtain a passing score on USMLE Step 2 CK and/or Step 2 CS before the final date for submission of the NRMP rank order list will be withdrawn from the residency match by the Office for Student Affairs. At the discretion of the Associate Dean for Student Affairs and the Senior Associate Dean for Education and Academic Affairs, such students will be allowed to walk with their class at commencement and will receive a diploma with a later date, if it is anticipated that they will have met all graduation requirements within a reasonable time after commencement. Passing scores must be documented no later than April 15th of the year the student expects to graduate. Failure to document a passing score for either Step 2 exam by April 15th will result in a delay in graduation.

Medical Student Evaluation and Promotion Policy

Preamble

The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley School of Medicine (UTRGV SOM) has an obligation to evaluate students pursuing the M.D. degree as thoroughly as possible for their cognitive and
non-cognitive abilities, their academic and professional knowledge and skills, their integrity, and their suitability for the practice of medicine.

This Policy on Medical Student Evaluations and Promotions is limited to students pursuing the M.D. degree at UTRGV SOM. Where applicable, UTRGV policies and regulations shall apply to students in the School of Medicine. Definitions and examples of conduct and behavior relating to and/or affecting the professional practice of medicine may be found in some or all of the following documents: this policy, the School of Medicine website, UTRGV and School of Medicine regulations and policies, admission materials, the student handbook, course syllabi, course materials, and lectures. This policy addresses conduct and performance that is academic or professional in nature.

All references in this policy to the Dean of the School of Medicine, Associate Dean for Student Affairs and the Associate Dean for Education and Academic Affairs shall refer to those individuals within the School of Medicine and shall be deemed to include their designees.

**Oath of Academic and Professional Conduct for Students in the School of Medicine**

The practice of the art and science of medicine must be based on reverence for life, compassion and respect for the patient, competence, and integrity. Hence, the School of Medicine expects its students to exhibit compassion; to be considerate and respectful towards patients, their families, instructors, staff, and each other; to grow in knowledge and clinical skill; and to act honourably at all times.

Each matriculating class of students in the UTRGV SOM shall recite their Class Oath at the White Coat Ceremony during Orientation, before they begin their first courses of study for the M.D. degree. This Oath will be written by the students themselves, based on small group exercises and discussions of appropriate academic and professional conduct for students of medicine. The exercise and discussions will be facilitated by School of Medicine faculty. The Oath for each class will be posted in classrooms, used in reflective exercises in various courses, and serve as a guide for student behaviour throughout their studies in the School of Medicine. By writing and reciting their own Oath, students will pledge to adhere to the tenets of their Oath throughout medical school, in all settings that reflect upon the integrity and suitability of the student to practice medicine. Successful progression through the curriculum and graduation with the M.D. degree are contingent upon the student's adherence to the Oath of his/her class and to the AMA Principles of Conduct for medical students.

**Medical Student Evaluation and Promotion Committee**

The Medical Student Evaluation and Promotion Committee is charged with the review of the academic progress and professional development of each student during all components of the four year medical education program, making recommendations to the dean and dean delegates. The Committee has primary responsibility for recommending for graduation only those candidates who have satisfactorily completed all graduation requirements and demonstrated the professional conduct appropriate for a physician. The committee reviews the following and takes appropriate action in accordance with UTRGV SOM policies and standards, to:
• Monitor student’s academic and professional performance and take appropriate action;
• Review any student’s deficient performance and take appropriate action;
• Track individual progress for each student for whom a final grade of “F” has been recorded for the remainder of the student’s educational program;
• Review and approve or deny Leave of Absence request;
• Track progress of individual students on Leave of Absence or independent study;
• Endorse or recommend exceptions to the academic action guidelines (including warning, probation, suspension, or dismissal) for students failing to meet pre-set milestones for satisfactory progression;
• Review students who may not meet the maximum time frame for degree completion;
• Recommend promotion (and graduation) for qualified students;
• Ensure that students recommended for graduation meet professional standards of conduct for physicians; and
• Report its decisions regarding student promotions to the Dean for executive action.

Qualifications for Promotion

To be promoted to the next curricular year, medical students must meet all requirements of the current year, and satisfactorily adhere to all University standards.

To continue and progress through the curriculum, to be promoted from year to year and, thus, ultimately to graduate from UTRGV SOM, each student must be deemed qualified by the Medical Student Evaluation and Promotion Committee (MSEPC) based on standards and requirements described in this Statement of Procedures and in the written Policy Statements of the Medical Student Evaluation and Promotion Committee. Students’ academic and behavioral performances are equally subject to evaluation. Students are expected to be honest, conscientious, respectful, and reliable in carrying out their assignments. Their behavior toward colleagues, faculty, staff, patients, and others with whom they interact in their roles as medical students is expected to be appropriate, reasonable, and considerate—consistent with medical professional standards.

Consequences of Failure to Meet Academic, Professional and Behavioral Requirements and Standards

This section describes the consequences for medical students who fail to meet the academic, professional and behavioral requirements and standards and are subject to a review of concern by the MSEPC. Medical students may be subject to one or more of the following consequences imposed by the MSEPC, in addition to those consequences imposed under University Regulations, policies or procedures.

Emergency/Interim Measures

The Dean of the School of Medicine or the Associate Dean for Student Affairs (or their designees) has the authority to take appropriate immediate action when a student’s presence in the School of Medicine or in an affiliated clinical site poses a danger to the health, safety or welfare of the student, the community or the student’s patients.

Emergency/Interim Measures include but are not limited to, one or more of the following:
(1) Interim Suspension. A student under interim suspension may not attend classes, may not be on or come onto University property or an affiliated clinical site (where such student may be participating in a clerkship), may not participate in any University activities or organizations, and may not use University facilities, equipment or resources.

(2) Interim Removal from University Housing. A student under interim removal from University Housing may not reside in University Housing and may not come into University Housing facilities and/or adjacent areas of University Housing.

(3) If the Dean of the School of Medicine or the Associate Dean for Student Affairs (or their designees) determines that other Emergency/Interim measures are appropriate to protect the health, safety or welfare of the student in question, others in the community, or patients, the Dean or Associate Dean for Student Affairs (or their designees) may:
   A. restrict or bar attendance of any or all classes or participation in clinical education;
   B. restrict or bar access or contact with individuals in the University community or affiliated clinical sites or patients;
   C. restrict or bar access to University property, places, facilities or equipment or affiliated clerkship sites;
   D. restrict or ban participation in University activities or organizations or clinical education; or otherwise restrict conduct or ban access to University resources.

(4) A student subject to Emergency/Interim Measures shall be furnished:
   A. Written notice of the Emergency Measure and the reason(s) for the action.
   B. The opportunity to participate in student conduct proceedings or MSEPC proceedings or to present relevant information for consideration of his/her case.

(5) Emergency/Interim Measures may be taken at any time prior to the conclusion of the University student conduct proceedings or MSEPC proceedings including during the appeal process.

Academic Deficiencies

The MSEPC expects every student to meet the requirements and standards stated in this policy. For the purposes of this policy, academic deficiencies refer to either a Fail (F) or Incomplete (I) grade for a course or a clerkship. Consequences of academic deficiencies are described below. However, even without an academic deficiency, a student with poor academic performance may incur consequences as severe as a recommendation for dismissal for failure to meet these requirements and standards. Decisions by the MSEPC for promotion to the next
academic year or for graduation from the School of Medicine are contingent upon the successful remediation of all academic deficiencies and completion of all academic requirements.

(1) One Deficiency in an Academic Year
A student who has one deficiency (F or I grade) per year will be required to remediate the grade successfully prior to promotion to the next year. If the final grade earned in a course or clerkship is Fail (F) or Incomplete (I), a formal plan (“Plan for Remediating Failing Performance” for a grade of F, or “Plan for Completing Course Requirements” for a grade of I), including expectations for work to be performed, student assessment, and time period for the remediation, will be established by the module or clerkship director and the student and submitted to the Associate Dean for Student Affairs (ADSA), who will inform the Medical Students Promotions and Professional Standards Committee (MSEPC). The plan may include, but is not limited to, additional study time and taking a make-up exam, repeating all or part of a course or clinical clerkship, or repeating the academic year. The recommendation is submitted to the MSEPC for action.

If the student fails to successfully remediate, the student will receive an F in the course or clerkship and further remediation, if allowed, must be by repetition of the course or clerkship. A second grade of failing in the same repeated course in years 1 and 2 may result in dismissal of the student from the School of Medicine M.D. program. A second grade of failing in the same repeated clerkship in years 3 and 4 will result in dismissal of the student from the School of Medicine M.D. program.

(2) Two or More Deficiencies in an Academic Year
A student who has more than one deficiency (F or I grades) per academic year may be dismissed from the program, or be required to repeat the entire year or a part of the year. The MSEPC will determine a plan to resolve the deficiencies merited by the situation and will place the student on formal “At Risk” status (see below).

(3) Multiple Deficiencies Across Academic Years
A student who has had multiple deficiencies during enrollment will be reviewed for the severity of the overall problem and a recommended course of action for the individual will be made by the MSEPC. Consistency of performance is also evaluated. Any student who records two or more deficiencies (F or I grades) throughout enrollment in the School of Medicine M.D. program will be reviewed on an on-going basis by the MSEPC, will be placed on At Risk status, and may be subject to further MSEPC action.

(4) Referrals to Counseling (Tutorial) and Study Skills Service
Students are encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning and will be provided with formative assessment results throughout the M.D. program. All students are encouraged to avail themselves of tutorial and study skills services without referral. However, when students are presented as having difficulty at an
MSEPC meeting, they are strongly encouraged to avail themselves of these services, and in some instances, will be directed to do so in writing. If a student is repeatedly urged to arrange tutoring, counselling or study skills help, but does not do so and subsequently fails a course or clerkship, this will be made known to, and taken into consideration by, the MSEPC to assist in evaluation of the student’s overall performance and professional attitudes.

If a student is directed to seek these referral services, the student has a choice of utilizing UTRGV services or private resources. In addition to the SOM Office of Student Affairs, course/clerkship representatives to the MSEPC are responsible for providing the committee with reports of referrals made by course/clerkship faculty as well as the student’s utilization of referral services. Verification that the student has utilized these referral services may be required. In addition, the MSEPC may require that the student have his/her tutor submit information and/or a recommendation to the MSEPC relating to the student’s academic program.

Other Consequences

Other consequences of failing to meet the academic, professional and behavioral requirements and standards described above include, but are not limited to, the following:

(1) **At Risk Status**
   “At Risk” status indicates that the MSEPC recognizes that the student is at risk of failure to successfully remediate deficiencies. If the student successfully remediates the deficiencies, the fact that the student was placed on At Risk status will not be included in the student’s MSPE or other information transmitted to outside entities (e.g., certifications of training) but will remain in the student’s permanent records in the School of Medicine.

(2) **Probation**
   Probationary status (probation) may be imposed by the MSEPC under various circumstances including, but not limited to, when it has significant concerns that failure to remediate deficiencies will result in dismissal of the student from the School of Medicine M.D. program. The notification to the student of probationary status will be accompanied by a plan for remedial action and specific performance requirements specified by the MSEPC. A successful conclusion of the remedial work normally ends the probationary status following the recommendation to do so by the MSEPC. However, the fact that the student was placed on probation will be included in the student’s MSPE or other information transmitted to outside entities (e.g., certifications of training) and will remain in the student’s permanent records in the School of Medicine.

Remedial interventions in a student's curriculum by the MSEPC are designed to fit particular academic deficiencies and may include, but not be limited to, the following: a specific study or reading program, remedial work and re-examination, changes in
the student’s curriculum, additional training in a set of clinical skills, assignment to clinical sub-internships, repetition of all or part of the curriculum, reorganization of the student's curriculum (especially during the fourth year), and supervision by an advisor from the MSEPC.

(3) Suspension
The MSEPC may conclude that the student should be suspended from the UTRGV SOM for a period of time to be determined in its reasonable discretion.

Reinstatement to the UTRGV SOM is contingent upon completion of all requirements stipulated under the suspension. The Dean of the School of Medicine will either determine that these requirements have been met or seek a recommendation from the MSEPC on the matter. If a recommendation from the MSEPC is sought, the MSEPC shall review the circumstances surrounding the suspension and potential reinstatement, make a determination as to whether the terms and conditions of the suspension have been met, make a determination as to whether the student possesses the potential to pursue the MD degree successfully, and recommend whether the student should be reinstated.

Suspension is automatic for students who have failed to pass Step 1 of the USMLE licensing examination. Students must use the period of suspension to prepare for the next offering of the examination.

(4) Dismissal
The MSEPC may determine that a student be dismissed in the following cases: (1) failure to remediate deficiencies as described above; (2) an accumulation of narrative evaluations indicating serious gaps in knowledge and clinical skills and/or inadequate integration of the content of the curriculum; (3) a specific academic deficiency (e.g., an important clinical skill has not been mastered); (4) a failing performance on either Step 1 or Step 2 of the USMLE examination; (5) failure to assume appropriate professional responsibility; (6) failure to meet professional standards, including those of demeanor and conduct; and (7) a violation of University Regulations, policies or procedures.

In general, prior to dismissal, students shall be placed on probationary status and given a plan for remedial action and specific performance requirements by the MSEPC. However, in extraordinary circumstances, the MSEPC may dismiss a student without prior probation.

Failure to pass, after the third attempt, either Step 1 or Step 2 of the USMLE licensing examination leads to automatic dismissal from the School of Medicine.

After academic dismissal, a student may apply for readmission to the UTRGV SOM only through the standard admissions process.
United States Medical Licensing Examination (USMLE) Policy

In order to become fully licensed to practice medicine in the United States, individuals must pass all 4 USMLE Step exams –Step 1, Step 2 Clinical Knowledge (CK), Step 2 Clinical Skills (CS), and Step 3. Students must take and pass the USMLE Step 1 exam before being allowed to complete Year 3. Students must also take and pass the USMLE Step 2 CK (Clinical Knowledge) and USMLE Step 2 CS (Clinical Skills) exams prior to graduation. Failure to pass, after the third attempt, either Step 1, Step 2 CK, or Step 2 CS will result in automatic dismissal from the School of Medicine. Students are expected to take and pass each examination by the deadlines for that examination set by the MSEPC. Students must be enrolled in the School of Medicine to be able to register for and take the USMLE Step 1, Step 2 CK, and Step 2 CS examinations. Students are required to complete applications for the USMLE examinations in sufficient time to request test dates on or before the MSEPC deadlines. Students with circumstances that prevent them from taking or retaking the USMLE Step 1, Step 2 CK, or Step 2 CS according to the dates in this policy must, as soon as possible, petition in writing to the Associate Dean for Student Affairs and the Senior Associate Dean for Education and Academic Affairs, who will review the request and make a determination.

Academic Workload Policy

Pre-clerkship Courses (MS1 and MS2)
The policy ensures that the schedules developed will take into account student workload:
- Maximum of 24 hours of scheduled activities per week
- Maximum of 8 hours of formal lectures per week
- Additional hours (14-16) will be split between small group sessions, self-directed and active learning activities, on-line preparation or reinforcement, independent study, etc.
- Up to 4 hours of additional instruction among all modules may be approved by the Senior Associate Dean for Education and Academic Affairs

Credits and Workload Basis
- 15 formal instruction hours per credit
- Expected workload per credit is 45 total hours including instruction, expected preparation/review time, and all exams

For lecture, case discussions, small group discussions, and exams, a scheduled hour is logged as a formal instruction hour. For laboratory and clinics, each session of approximately 3 hours equals 1 hour of formal instruction time. Module co-directors are expected to plan and manage courses within the academic workload policy including all scheduled activities and expected independent work.

The pre-clerkship courses are organized into module blocks of varying length that cover different subjects using the same teaching formats. Each module week has a thematic content. For example, a clinical case for the week is opened on Monday morning, and students work in small groups to develop hypotheses and learning objectives. Basic science and clinical lectures on the organ systems and case occur on Tuesday and Thursday mornings. Interactive, small group case discussions occur on Wednesday requiring students to reason clinically and develop problem-solving skills. Case wrap-up in small group and large group discussions are conducted on Friday mornings. There also are two longitudinal courses that have scheduled activities weekly. One afternoon, students focus on learning clinical and communication skills with
standardized patients in the clinical skills center and/or patients in clinical settings. Another afternoon may be reserved for anatomy and histology laboratories.

Violations of the workload policy will be monitored by the Office of Medical Education and reported to the Central Curricular Authority Committee (CCAC).

**Clinical Workload Policy**

**Clinical Clerkships and Rotations (MS3 and MS4)**
Clerkships and rotations vary in length by a set number of weeks and are scheduled in blocks. Students are assigned to various clinical sites and work under the supervision of designated residents and faculty. During clinical clerkships and courses, medical students will be expected to participate in all required clinical and didactic activities. Examples include: direct patient care, patient rounds, patient documentation, case conferences and clinical lectures. Students are expected to assume increasing levels of responsibility and accountability for patient care, as appropriate, under the adequate supervision of residents and faculty. The policy on student hours during clinical clerkships and courses is modeled after the American Council on Graduate Medical Education (ACGME) guidelines for residents. During clinical rotations students are expected to be involved in activities relative to healthcare delivery. Time is needed to adequately meet responsibilities and will vary depending on rotation and may include overnight call. Students are expected to abide by the following duty hour restrictions.

This policy ensures an appropriate balance between formal teaching and service:
- Duty hours are limited to 80 hours per week, to include on call hours.
- A 10 hour minimum rest between duty periods (not applicable to night or weekend call) is required.
- Continuous on-site duty, including in-house call, must not exceed 30 consecutive hours; students may remain on duty for up to 6 additional hours to participate in didactic activities, transfer care of patients, conduct outpatient clinics, and maintain continuity of medical and surgical care.
- Students can be on call no more than every third night. Students must be provided with a one (1) day in seven (7) free from all educational and clinical responsibilities, averaged over a 4-week period, inclusive of call.

Students should report duty hour violations to the clerkship director and may also report them to a 24/7/365 hotline maintained by the Dean’s Office (to be confidential with no self-identification necessary). Students will be required to report duty hours weekly. As part of their professionalism responsibilities, students are required to report duty hour violations to the clerkship director. Failure to adhere to the duty hour restrictions as noted by their faculty preceptors or residents will be reported to the site director, who will meet with the student and counsel student on duty hour restriction requirements and violations. Further unjustified violations will be elevated to the clerkship director and reported to the Clerkship Sub-committee of the Central Curricular Authority Committee (CCAC).

One inpatient and one outpatient elective, as well as the senior didactics, must be taken at one of the identified UTRGV SOM affiliated sites. All off-campus rotations (offered via other medical schools) must be approved by the designated faculty member prior to the beginning of the rotation (at least one week before the course begins). Credit will not be given for any rotation that has not been approved in advance. Required paperwork includes: “Course Approval Form,” a written letter or email for acceptance from the physician preceptor with the start and end dates.
of the course/rotation, and a course description of learning objectives and responsibilities during
the rotation. Forms must include a complete address and telephone number for the off-campus
location or residence address for the student while at the off-campus site. Forms will not be
approved once the rotation has already begun, and no credit will be granted.

*Professionalism*

*Communication*
An essential aspect of being an effective and professional physician is learning to understand
and manage communication with patients, families, peers, colleagues and others. Communication,
both verbal and non-verbal, has many forms. One channel that is increasingly
utilized both within and outside of medical practice is the Internet, especially social media.
Medical students are expected to abide by and exemplify the professional standards of
physicians and the UTRGV SOM when communicating as representatives of the medical school
as well as when speaking as private individuals in all environments. It is important to remember
that even with safeguards, nothing is truly private on the Internet and information is generally
permanently present. Physician information and actions online have significant potential to
negatively impact relationships, professional careers and opportunities, and undermine public
trust in the profession and medical school. Therefore, it is crucial to remember that individuals
connected to UTRGV are considered representatives of the institution even in informal
situations. Consequently, SOM medical students should:

- Prioritize patient privacy and confidentiality; these must be maintained in all settings,
  including online. Identifiable patient information must never be posted on the Internet;
- Carefully consider how to develop and maintain their professional identity online; a
  preferred option is to have separate personal and professional online/social networking
  profiles. Information posted online should be accurate and appropriate, and it is
  suggested that students monitor and correct the information that is available online
  about them;
- Utilize privacy settings to safeguard personal information and should be cautious about
  sharing information related to their medical school and professional experiences on
  websites and social networks;
- Carefully consider whether to interact with patients and families on the Internet. These
types of communications require adherence to the boundaries and guidelines of the
physician-patient relationship, similar to the practices in other environments;
- Be cautious about offering medical information and advice to the public. Medical
  students must provide disclaimers that the information is not officially sanctioned by
  UTRGV;
- Maintain courteous and respectful language and tone when offering opinions about
  educational and clinical experiences, colleagues and institutions;
- Recognize and act upon their responsibility to monitor their colleagues’ professional
  behavior by pointing out any inappropriate actions, allowing them the opportunity to
  rectify their behaviors, including removing inappropriate content from the Internet. If the
  involved individuals fail to resolve the issues, medical students have a professional
  obligation to report them to the appropriate authorities; and
- Respect and follow the institutional guidelines and copyright laws on which UTRGV
  information and material (e.g., curriculum) can be appropriately shared publicly and
  online and on which cannot.
These recommendations are based on the guidelines in the AMA Code of Medical Ethics, Opinion 9.124 - Professionalism in the Use of Social Media http://www.ama-assn.org/ama/pub/physician-resources/medical-ethics/code-medical-ethics/opinion9124.page

Student Participation in Evaluations
Students are required to participate in all evaluation activities regarding their educational experience and learning environment. Active student participation in the evaluation process is one of the most important methods the School of Medicine has to assure that all aspects of its educational programs are of the highest quality. Active participation in the process of evaluating their educational experiences and their learning environment (orientation, modules, clerkships, and faculty, student services, etc.) prepares medical students to fulfill similar duties that they will encounter as interns, residents, and practicing physicians. Interns and residents will be asked to evaluate attendings, and physicians are often asked to evaluate other staff and continuing education programs. Active participation in evaluation of educational experiences and the learning environment is one of the rights and responsibilities that keeps the medical profession strong and is an important part of being a medical professional.

Compliance: It is expected that all students will see the benefit of partnering with the SOM to gather information that will ultimately improve the overall quality of the UTRGV SOM educational experience and learning environment and better prepare them for the professional roles and responsibilities that they will have as physicians. Therefore, all students are expected to comply with this policy. Exceptions may be made for legitimate reasons, e.g., family/personal emergencies, illness, etc., but will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis. In addition, it is expected that the feedback provided by students will be constructive and professional in its demeanor and tone. Feedback that is demeaning or derogatory in nature or which is not constructive for improvement is deemed as unprofessional. Failure to participate and/or to provide constructive professional feedback will lead to the submission of a student incident report to the UTRGV SOM Professionalism Portal. Failure to comply on more than two unexcused occasions will result in a professional review of the student by the MSEPC.

Confidentiality: The information provided by students on evaluations is considered confidential. While students will not be asked to provide their names on evaluation forms, the Office of AE&QI and OSA will be able to track and monitor which students have completed surveys and identify students who provide unprofessional responses. Professional competency requires that commentary submitted in surveys and peer assessments be thoughtfully and constructively completed. Accordingly, responses containing abusive language, profanity or offensive personal criticism will be removed from the compiled results. Evaluations are reviewed systematically by a team of AE&QI professional staff and deans, affording value and respect to your evaluative privacy. Anonymity will only be compromised in the event that a response suggests serious individual or campus safety concerns.

Professional Dress Guidelines
As representatives of the medical profession, all medical students at the SOM are expected to place a high value on personal appearance by maintaining an image that inspires credibility, trust, respect, and confidence in one’s colleagues and patients. The reasons are rooted in concerns for infection control, communication and cultural sensitivity. Patient trust and confidence in the health care provider are essential to successful treatment experiences and outcomes. The message communicated by the caregiver by his or her dress and appearance plays a fundamental role in establishing this trust and confidence. The student should consider the cultural sensitivities of their most conservative potential patients and present his/herself in a
manner that will earn their respect, ensure their trust, and make them feel comfortable. Recent
trends in clothing, body art, and body piercing may not be generally accepted by your patients,
and should not be worn by medical students.

When students are assigned to clinical activities in any of the SOM’s participating institutions, or
when they participate in any SOM official activity (i.e. special guest speakers, presentations,
etc.), they should consider themselves a representative of the UTRGV School of Medicine.
Attire and behavior should promote a positive impression for the individual student, the specific
course, and the institution. In addition to the guidelines outlined below, certain departments and
some affiliate clinical institutions may require alternate dress guidelines which must be followed.
These requirements typically will be included in written course materials, but if any doubt exists,
it is the responsibility of the student to inquire. The following are expectations concerning
appropriate dress and personal appearance.

1. General Standards
   a. All clothing must be clean, neat, professionally styled, and in good repair.
      Men: Slacks and shirt, preferably with collar. Tie is optional.
      Women: Dresses or skirts of medium length, or professional style slacks.
   b. Name badges identifying you as a medical student must be worn at all times and clearly
      visible.
   c. Good personal hygiene and grooming should be maintained at all times. This includes
      regular bathing, use of deodorant/antiperspirant, and regular dental hygiene.
   d. Excessive use of fragrances should be avoided, as some people may be sensitive to
      scented chemicals.
   e. Cosmetics should be used in moderation.
   f. Hair should be neat and clean. Hairstyle and/or color should not interfere with assigned
      duties or present a physical hazard to the patient, to the student, or to another person.
      Shoulder length hair must be secured to avoid interference with patients and work, and it
      must be styled off the face and out the eyes.
   g. Facial hair must be clean, neatly groomed and trimmed.
   h. Fingernails should be clean and of short to medium length. Students may not have
      artificial/acrylic nails while providing patient care services.

2. Standards in the classroom setting
   a. For men, a shirt with a collar is preferred.
   b. For women, shirts and blouses must extend to the waistband of the skirt or pants.
   c. Students are permitted to wear casual slacks, jeans, and T-shirts, provided they are
      clean, in good repair, and do not contain any offensive language or pictures.
   d. Short-shorts are not appropriate. Shorts of mid-thigh length are permitted.

3. Standards in the laboratory setting
   a. Students should follow the guidelines as established for the classroom setting.
   b. OSHA regulations prohibit open-toed shoes.

4. Standards in the clinical care setting
   a. Professional attire and physician-identifying clothing:
      Men should wear a shirt, tie, long pants, socks, and hard-soled shoes.
      Women should wear dresses or skirts of medium length, or professional style
      slacks.
   b. A white coat with the UTRGV School of Medicine embroidered logo and a name badge
      are required.
c. Shoes must be comfortable, clean, in good repair and appropriate to the job and duties. In addition, specific footwear requirements, such as steel-toed shoes, may be defined in areas with special safety concerns. Beach-type shoes (such as thongs or flip-flops) and bedroom slippers are not appropriate.

d. Jewelry must be of reasonable shape and size, appropriate to the work setting, as defined by the clinical supervisor, and may not interfere with patient care, job performance, or safety. Rings must be small enough to allow for the use of gloves, with no risk of tearing.

e. Students should not chew gum.

**Note:** While wearing a white coat in the clinical setting, medical students are expected to identify themselves as students at all times and must assume responsibility to clarify their role to patients.

5. Standards for **home visits**
   a. The same as the guidelines for the clinical care setting, except students should not wear white coats or badges when making home visits.
   b. In general, the dress should be casual professional attire that fits in with community standards and does not draw attention to the student.
   c. The dress guidelines for the home visits will be reviewed in more detail as a part of the coursework in preparation for the first home visits.

6. Additional guidelines
   a. Jewelry (e.g., necklaces, rings, earrings, bracelets, etc.) and other fashion accessories should be appropriate and not interfere with assigned duties. Jewelry represents a potential for infection and loose jewelry can be grabbed, causing a potential physical hazard to the student or the patient.
   b. Tattoos and body art with wording or images that may be perceived as offensive should be covered during the time of professional contact with patients and families. Some examples of such offensive art or images include racial slurs, swear words, symbols of death, or inappropriate revealing of body parts in a way that a reasonable person could perceive as inappropriate.

7. Hospital attire (**scrubs**)
   a. In general, medical students should wear their own clothes (rather than scrubs) for patient care assignments in clinics and when performing inpatient services.
   b. Scrubs must be worn in compliance with the policies of the institution in which the medical student is assigned for patient care rotations. They should never be worn in public places outside of the clinical care facility.
   c. Scrubs may be worn in specific patient care areas only. If scrubs must be worn outside of the designated clinical area, it must be clean and covered with a clean white coat.
   d. If scrubs are the property of the hospital, they are not to be defaced, altered or remove from the hospital.
   e. Hair covers, masks, shoe covers, and gowns should be removed before leaving the designated clinical areas and should not be worn while in the outpatient clinics or when making rounds on the inpatient services.

8. Examples of **inappropriate attire** in the clinical setting include, but are not limited to, the following:
   a. Shorts.
   b. Blue denim jean pants of any length.
c. Pants or slacks that are not in good condition (e.g., have holes, ragged hems, or patches).

   d. Exercise or workout clothing, including sweatpants, spandex, or leggings.

   e. Sandals or bedroom slippers.

   f. Pajama pants.

   g. Caps or hats, unless worn for medical or religious reasons or for nature of specific duties.

   h. Shirts or other apparel with images, wording, or logos that may be perceived as offensive to patients, families, or others.

   i. Form fitting clothing, tank tops, halter tops, translucent tops, tops with plunging necklines, or tops that leave the midriff or back exposed.

   j. Clothing that exposes undergarments.

   k. Men's sleeveless shirts.

   l. Dresses or skirts shorter than 2-3 inches above the knee.

   m. Sunglasses when indoors (includes worn on the head).

   n. Any attire that could be perceived as sexually provocative to a reasonable person.

\textbf{Standards of Conduct}

Medical students must adhere to the principles of conduct and ethics as established by the UTRGV SOM and are expected to adhere to the following principles from the American Medical Association’s Principles of Medical Ethics, 1988, which are described as “standards of conduct that define the essentials of honorable behavior for the physician.”

\textbf{AMA Principles of Medical Ethics}

A medical student:

1. Shall be dedicated to providing competent medical care, with compassion and respect for human dignity and rights.

2. Shall uphold the standards of professionalism, be honest in all professional interactions, and strive to report physicians deficient in character or competence, or engaging in fraud or deception, to appropriate entities.

3. Shall respect the law and also recognize a responsibility to seek changes in those requirements which are contrary to the best interests of the patient.

4. Shall respect the rights of patients, colleagues, and other health professionals, and shall safeguard patient confidences and privacy within the constraints of the law.

5. Shall continue to study, apply, and advance scientific knowledge, maintain a commitment to medical education, make relevant information available to patients, colleagues, and the public, obtain consultation, and use the talents of other health professionals when indicated.

6. Shall, in the provision of appropriate patient care, except in emergencies, be free to choose whom to serve, with whom to associate, and the environment in which to provide medical care.

7. Shall recognize a responsibility to participate in activities contributing to the improvement of the community and the betterment of public health.

8. Shall, while caring for a patient, regard responsibility to the patient as paramount.

9. Shall support access to medical care for all people.
**Teacher-Learner Compact**

The UTRGV School of Medicine is committed to promoting academic and professional success in learners and teachers at all levels. The achievement of such success is dependent on an environment free of behaviors that can undermine the important missions of our institution. An atmosphere of mutual respect, collegiality, fairness, and trust is essential. Although both teachers and learners bear significant responsibility in creating and maintaining this atmosphere, teachers bear particular responsibility with respect to their evaluative roles relative to student work and with respect to modeling appropriate professional behaviors. Teachers must be ever mindful of this responsibility in their interactions with their colleagues, their patients, and those whose education has been entrusted to them. UTRGV SOM has adopted the Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC) Teacher-Learner Expectations to ensure that a professional learning environment exists. These will be in place, within the SOM, orientation activities for both faculty and students in order to communicate behavioral expectations both in the classroom and in the clinic.

**Guiding Principles:**

- **Duty:** Medical educators have a duty to convey the knowledge and skills required for delivering the profession’s standard of care and also to instill the values and attitudes required for preserving the medical profession’s social contract with its patients.
- **Integrity:** Learning environments that are conducive to conveying professional values must be based on integrity. Students and residents learn professionalism by observing and emulating role models who epitomize authentic professional values and attitudes.
- **Respect:** Respect for every individual is fundamental to the ethic of medicine. Mutual respect is essential for nurturing that ethic. Teachers have a special obligation to ensure that students and residents are always treated respectfully.
- **Highest Quality of Patient care and Patient Safety:** Preparing learners to be the leaders of healthcare delivery of the future requires that they learn in environments that follow the highest standards of practice. Tenets of quality improvement, patient safety and population health must be taught in interprofessional team based care models. By allowing learners to participate in the care of patients, teachers accept the obligation to ensure high quality, evidence based and compassionate care is delivered in all learning environments.

**Relationships between Teachers and Students**

- Students and teachers should recognize the special nature of the teacher-learner relationship which is in part defined by professional role modeling, mentorship, and supervision.
- Because of the special nature of this relationship, students and teachers should strive to develop their relationship to one characterized by mutual trust, acceptance and confidence. They should both recognize the potential for conflict of interest and respect appropriate boundaries.
- A consensual relationship between faculty/administrator/resident with student can rise to the level of prohibited sexual harassment as defined by the UT Policy. Consensual relationships may adversely affect all learner’s experience due to perceived or actual bias and or creation of a hostile work environment. It is strongly recommended that there are no faculty/administrator/resident student consensual relationships. Faculty and/or staff supervisor/resident will not enter into a consensual relationship with a trainee under
that individual’s authority. All consensual relationships between faculty/administrator/resident and students must be reported to the Senior Associate Dean for Education and Academic Affairs.

Responsibilities of Teachers and Learners

Teachers should:
- Treat students fairly and respectfully
- Maintain high professional standards in all interactions
- Be prepared and on time
- Provide relevant and timely information
- Provide explicit learning and behavioral expectations early in a course or clerkship
- Provide timely, focused, accurate and constructive feedback on a regular basis and thoughtful and timely evaluations at the end of a course or clerkship
- Display honesty, integrity and compassion
- Practice insightful (Socratic) questioning, which stimulates learning and self-discovery, and avoid overly aggressive questioning which may be perceived as hurtful, humiliating, degrading or punitive
- Solicit feedback from students regarding their perception of their educational experiences
- Encourage students who experience mistreatment or who witness unprofessional behavior to report the facts immediately
- Mentor attributes of personal care and well-being
- Be aware and sensitive to cultural, religious, orientation differences.

Students should:
- Be courteous of teachers and fellow students
- Be prepared and on time
- Be active, enthusiastic, curious learners
- Demonstrate professional behavior in all settings
- Recognize that not all learning stems from formal and structured activities
- Recognize their responsibility to establish learning objectives and to participate as an active learner
- Demonstrate a commitment to life-long learning, a practice that is essential to the profession of medicine
- Recognize personal limitations and seek help as needed
- Display honesty, integrity and compassion
- Recognize the privileges and responsibilities coming from the opportunity to work with patients in clinical settings
- Recognize the duty to place patient welfare above their own
- Recognize and respect patients’ rights to privacy
- Solicit feedback on their performance and recognize that criticism is not synonymous with “abuse”
- Mentor attributes of personal care and well-being
- Be aware and sensitive to cultural, religious, orientation differences
Attributes of Professionalism

The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley School of Medicine adopted the professional attributes from the American Board of Internal Medicine’s Project Professionalism. The attributes expected of a student are:

- **Altruism** is the essence of professionalism. The best interest of patients, not self-interest, is the rule.
- **Accountability** is required at many levels — individual patients, society and the profession. Physicians are accountable to their patients for fulfilling the implied contract governing the patient/physician relationship. They are also accountable to society for addressing the health needs of the public and to their profession for adhering to medicine’s time-honored ethical precepts.
- **Excellence** entails a conscientious effort to exceed ordinary expectations and to make a commitment to life-long learning. Commitment to excellence is an acknowledged goal for all physicians.
- **Duty** is the free acceptance of a commitment to service. This commitment entails being available and responsive when "on call," accepting inconvenience to meet the needs of one’s patients, enduring unavoidable risks to oneself when a patient’s welfare is at stake, advocating the best possible care regardless of ability to pay, seeking active roles in professional organizations, and volunteering one’s skills and expertise for the welfare of the community.
- **Honor and integrity** are the consistent regard for the highest standards of behavior and the refusal to violate one’s personal and professional codes. Honor and integrity imply being fair, being truthful, keeping one’s word, meeting commitments, and being straightforward. They also require recognition of the possibility of conflict of interest and avoidance of relationships that allow personal gain to supersede the best interest of the patient.
- **Respect** for others (patients and their families, other physicians and professional colleagues such as nurses, medical students, residents, and subspecialty fellows) is the essence of humanism, and humanism is both central to professionalism, and fundamental to enhancing collegiality among physicians.

Academic Dishonesty

In accordance with the Student Standards of Conduct, the UTRGV SOM considers academic dishonesty to be a serious and potentially career-ending action for its medical student body. Academic integrity is essential to the success of the UTRGV SOM’s mission, and violations constitute a serious offense against the entire academic community and the profession. Academic dishonesty is defined as an act of obtaining or attempting to present academic work through fraudulent or deceptive means in order to obtain credit for this work.

Academic dishonesty includes but is not limited to:

**Cheating**
Failure to observe the expressed procedures of an academic exercise, but not limited to:

- Unauthorized use of commercial “research” services such as term papers.
- Providing information to others without instructor’s permission or allowing the opportunity for others to obtain information that provides that recipient with an advantage on an exam or assignment, including, but not limited to, duplication in any format of exams or quizzes.
• Unauthorized communicating with a fellow student during a quiz or exam.
• Copying material from another student’s quiz or exam.
• Permitting another student to copy from a quiz or exam.
• Permitting another person to take a quiz, exam, or similar evaluation in lieu of the enrolled student.
• Using unauthorized materials, information, or study aids (textbooks, notes, data, images, formulas, dictionary, calculator, etc.) in any academic exercise or exam.
• Unauthorized collaboration in providing or requesting assistance, such as sharing information on an academic exercise or exam through cell phones, texting, or similar mobile technology.
• Using computer and word processing systems to gain access to, alter, and/or use unauthorized information.
• Altering a graded exam or assignment and requesting that it be re-graded—submission of altered work after grading shall be considered academically dishonest, including but not limited to changing answers after an exam or assignment has been returned or submitting another’s exam as one’s own to gain credit.

Fabrication
Falsification or invention of any information in an academic exercise, including but not limited to:
• Fabricating or altering data to support research.
• Presenting results from research that was not performed—submitting material for lab assignments, class projects, or other assignments which is wholly or partially falsified, invented or otherwise does not represent work accomplished or undertaken by the student.
• Crediting source material that was not directly used for research.
• Falsification, alteration or misrepresentation of official or unofficial records or documents, including but not limited to academic transcripts, academic documentation, letters of recommendation, and admissions applications or related documents.

Fraud, Misrepresentation, Lying
Intentionally making an untrue statement or deceiving individuals, including but not limited to:
• Providing an excuse for an absence, tardiness, late assignment with the intent to deceive the instructor, staff, or the school.
• Checking into UTRGV SOM classes, labs, centers, or other resources with the intent to deceive the instructor, staff or the school.
• Using another student’s identification card for use in a class, lab, center, or other UTRGV SOM resource.
• Re-submission of past work as new, unique, or novel to a class whereas the work had been previously submitted.

Plagiarism
The presentation of author’s words, images, or ideas as if they were the student’s own, including but not limited to:
• Stealing the written, oral, artistic, or original works or efforts of others and presenting them as one’s own.
• The submission of material, whether in part or whole, authored by another person or source (the internet, book, journal, etc.) whether that material is paraphrased,
translated, or copied in verbatim or near-verbatim form without properly acknowledging the source. It is the student’s responsibility to cite all sources.

- The submission of material edited, in part or whole, by another person that results in the loss of the student’s original voice or ideas (while an editor or tutor may advise the student, the final submitted material must be the work of the student, not that of the editor or tutor).
- Translating all or any part of material from another language and presenting it as if it were the student’s own original work.
- Unauthorized transfer and use of another person’s computer file or any other electronic/technical product as the student’s own.
- Unauthorized use of another person’s data in completing a computer or an academic exercise.

Multiple Submissions
Resubmission of a work that has already received credit with identical or similar content in another course without written consent of the present instructor or submission of work with identical or similar content in concurrent courses without written consent of all instructors involved.

Facilitating Academic Dishonesty
Assisting another student to commit an act of academic dishonesty, including but not limited to:

- Taking a quiz, exam, or similar evaluation in place of another person
- Allowing one student to copy from another
- Attending a course posing as another student who is officially registered for that course
- Providing material or other information (solutions to homework, project, or assignments, copy of an exam, exam key or any test information) to another student with knowledge that such assistance could be used to violate any other sections of this policy
- Distribution or use of notes or recordings based on college classes without the express written permission of the instructor for purposes other than individual or group study; this includes, but is not limited to, providing materials for distribution by services publishing class notes (restriction on unauthorized use applies to all information distributed or in any way displayed for use in relationship to the class, whether obtained in class, via email, on the internet, or via any other media)

Academic Sabotage

- Deliberately impeding the academic progress of others, including but not limited to:
- Intentionally destroying or obstructing another student’s work.
- Stealing or defacing books, journals, or other library or university materials.
- Altering computer files that contain data, reports or assignments belonging to another student.
- Removing posted or reserve material or otherwise preventing other students’ access to such material.

Students are expected to uphold appropriate professional and ethical standards for themselves. They also are expected to act appropriately (e.g. inform a supervisor/administrator) if their peers and colleagues are not acting in a professional and ethical manner. Students and faculty will report students suspected of academic dishonesty to the
course or clerkship director. The course or clerkship director will investigate the situation by reviewing the student’s work, discussing the issue with the relevant faculty and possibly other involved students or personnel and reviewing the issue with the identified student. The course or clerkship director will summarize the findings in writing and if substantiated, will provide a written summary to the Associate Dean for Student Affairs for review. (Specifics unique to the grievance and persons may require involvement of additional institutional representatives.) The student will be notified.

The summary must include relevant name(s), date(s), location(s), witness(es) and complete description(s) of the problem and a proposed resolution, if possible.

If the academic dishonesty involves/accuses UTRGV non-medical students or employees, the Associate Dean for Student Affairs will facilitate engagement with appropriate advocacy/supervisory institutional authorities to ensure that coordination of investigatory and resolution processes transcend interschool and student/employee boundaries. Copies of the written academic dishonesty will be made available to named parties and the appropriate advocacy/supervisory institutional authorities.

The Associate Dean for Student Affairs (and appropriate institutional authorities noted above) may, at her/his discretion, hold discussions with or without the involved/accused individual(s) to hear and resolve the academic dishonesty, schedule a meeting between the student and the involved/accused individual(s) and/or involve other parties in facilitating a resolution. If a meeting with the student is requested, the student will be notified in writing and given at least two business days’ advanced notice. This process will be afforded 10 business days from receipt of the formal written academic dishonesty summary to resolve the academic dishonesty, providing the student a written summary of resolution.

If the student is dissatisfied with the resolution, he/she may file a formal written appeal with the Associate Dean for Student Affairs within 5 business days of receipt of the decision. The Associate Dean for Student Affairs has 10 business days to provide a written decision to the student.

Within 5 business days of receipt of the Associate Dean for Student Affairs’ decision, the student may file a formal written appeal to the SOM Dean. The Dean has 10 business days to provide a written decision to the student. The decision of the SOM Dean is final.

In rare circumstances the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) will investigate student complaints.

Professionalism Portal

Members of the UTRGV community, including visitors or special guests, are encouraged to voice concerns about professionalism in students, faculty or staff. Online forms for reporting such concerns are available for peer-to-peer use, as well as for any visitor, special guest, student, staff or faculty member at UTRGV to use for reporting concerns about any UTRGV SOM student, staff or faculty member. The forms are available for confidential use and may be submitted anonymously if preferred:

Medical Students: Report Professionalism Concerns About Others
Faculty/Staff: Report Professionalism Concerns About Faculty, Staff, or Students
The forms may be filled out by any individual. Conversely, concerns may be directed to the Associate Dean of Student Affairs for confidential handling: (956) 296-1410.

Attendance

Medical students as future professionals should conduct themselves appropriately in all curricular activities, including classroom work, laboratory work, and clinical experiences. The professionalism of a medical student includes, arriving to educational activities on time, using laptop computers only for course work during the educational activity, and minimizing disruptions to the educational environment. Faculty may establish specific attendance and punctuality requirements for certain courses and clerkships by notifying students of the course requirements in the syllabus, or by an alternate means of written communication. Medical students are expected to attend all educational activities to best prepare them to meet the curricular goals leading to the M.D. degree.

Attendance, including tardiness, is part of the evaluation for professionalism, and poor evaluations may result in decreased grades, failure of courses, and referral to the MSEPC for a breach of professionalism.

Student Attendance in Years 1 and 2
Attendance in all clinical activities with patients, and for many active-learning exercises, is mandatory. Attendance is required for all examinations in years 1 and 2, and sessions as specified in the course syllabus and calendar.

Student Attendance in Years 3 and 4
Attendance is mandatory for all required clinical clerkships during the third and fourth year of the curriculum. Attendance is required for all examinations in years 3 and 4.

Tardiness
Students are expected to attend all scheduled activities on time and be ready to begin. It is important that students realize that their absence or tardiness can negatively affect other people. Students who expect to be late for a mandatory education or clinical activity for any reason (e.g., car trouble, accident, injury or similar unforeseen event) must contact the Module or Clerkship Director before the start of class. Faculty may deny entrance or participation to a tardy student.

Planned Absences
Students can schedule personal appointments and activities during times when no mandatory activities are scheduled. If a conflict is unavoidable, students must request to be excused as early as possible in advance of the mandatory activity. Students must submit in writing a request for an excused absence to the Module or Clerkship Director, and the Associate Dean for Student Affairs. Students with long-term illnesses must contact both the Office of Student Affairs and the Module or Clerkship Director. Students will need to provide the Office of Student Affairs written documentation of the nature of the illness from his or her personal physician.

Students may request permission to participate in professional activities off campus. Students must obtain approval from the Module or Clerkship Director with final approval from the Associate Dean for Student Affairs prior to registering for conferences and making travel arrangement. The request must include a plan to complete all missed course work.
**Excused Absences**
Excused absence requests are generally granted for these unplanned events (submission of supportive documentation may be required):

- Acute illnesses (a note written by a health care provider is required for absences of three days or more)
- Accidents
- Death of immediate family members

Excused absence requests may be granted for these planned events:

- Health needs (non-acute)
- Religious observances
- Weddings (of a student or his/her first-degree relative)
- Maternity/paternity
- Military orders or officer training
- Administrative matters
- Jury duty or other legal matters
- Residency interviews
- Professional activities (participation in professional development or representation of UTRGV SOM; summer activities)
- Scholarly activities (presentation of scholarly work at meetings)
- Academic activities (e.g., United States Medical Licensing Examination®, academic remediation)

**Holidays and Religious Observances**
Students are expected to report to their scheduled educational or clinical duties during holidays unless otherwise specified by their Module or Clerkship Director.

All students, faculty and staff at UTRGV SOM have a right to expect that the SOM will reasonably accommodate their religious observances, practices, and beliefs. The SOM will attempt, at the beginning of each academic term, to provide written notice of the class schedule and formal examination periods. The SOM, through its faculty, will make every attempt to schedule required classes and examinations in view of customarily observed religious holidays of those religious groups or communities comprising the SOM’s constituency.

Any student who believes that he or she has been treated unfairly with regard to the above should contact the Office of Student Affairs.

**Excused Absences to Access Health Services**
Medical students are required to attend all courses and clinical assignments unless formally excused by the Office of Student Affairs. Excused absences are granted when the health and safety of the student and the student’s classmates might be adversely affected. In circumstances involving illness or other medically related issues that prevent a student from attending a class or completing a mandatory assignment or assessment, he or she must inform both the Module or Course Director and the Office of Student Affairs by telephone/email within 24 hours of the scheduled activity and/or due date. The Office of Student Affairs will then coordinate with the Module or Clerkship Director to make appropriate arrangements for the student to make up missed work or for patient care coverage. Documentation verifying the student’s absence may be requested, and must be provided to Associate Dean for Student Affairs within 3 weeks of the event. If the length of absence is long enough to adversely affect the student’s academic performance, the Leave of Absence Policy will take effect.
Consequences of Unexcused Absences

If a student’s request for an excused absence is denied, the student is expected to report to all required activities. Students who fail to report to required activities do not receive any credit for those activities. Module Directors are under no obligation to provide students with make-up activities due to unexcused absences.

### Guidelines for Excused vs. Unexcused Absences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EVENT</th>
<th>ABSENCE EXCUSED?</th>
<th>MAKE UP TIME NEEDED?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student illnesses, including infections that could put patients or other staff at risk</td>
<td>Yes.</td>
<td>Yes, if &gt; 1 day missed. Student responsible to reschedule missed experiences.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Yes, if &gt; 1 day missed. Student must make up a full continuity week during vacation time if 2 days are missed during an inpatient block.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illness or death of a close family member or close friend</td>
<td>Yes.</td>
<td>Yes, if &gt; 1 day missed. Student responsible to reschedule missed experiences.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Yes, if &gt; 1 day missed. Student must make up a full continuity week during vacation time if 2 days are missed during an inpatient block.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious holidays</td>
<td>Yes, if notification is made 2 months prior to clerkship schedule completion.</td>
<td>Student responsible to reschedule missed experiences.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Attempts will be made to schedule the missed days during outpatient blocks.</td>
<td>Yes, if &gt; 1 day missed. Student must make up a full continuity week during vacation time if 2 days are missed during an inpatient block.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presentation at a medical conference</td>
<td>Yes, if notification is made 2 months prior to clerkship schedule completion.</td>
<td>Student responsible to reschedule missed experiences.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Attempts will be made to schedule the missed days during outpatient blocks.</td>
<td>Yes, if &gt; 1 day missed. Student must make up a full continuity week during vacation time if 2 days are missed during an inpatient block.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attending a medical conference</td>
<td>Yes, if notification is made 2 months prior to clerkship schedule completion.</td>
<td>Student responsible to reschedule all missed experiences.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Student may only miss one day per clerkship before vacation time must be used to make-up absences.</td>
<td>Yes, if &gt; 1 day missed. Student must make up a full continuity week during vacation time if 2 days are missed during an inpatient block.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wedding (student is bride or groom)</td>
<td>Yes, if notification is made 2 months prior to clerkship schedule completion.</td>
<td>Student responsible to reschedule missed experiences.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Birth of a child (student is the mother or father)</td>
<td>Student may only miss one day per clerkship before vacation time must be used to make-up absences.</td>
<td>Yes, if &gt; 1 day missed. Student must make up a full continuity week during vacation time if 2 days are missed during an inpatient block.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attending the wedding of a family member or extremely close friend</td>
<td>Yes, if notification is made 2 months prior to clerkship schedule completion.</td>
<td>Student responsible to reschedule all missed experiences.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Student may only miss one day per clerkship before vacation time must be used to make-up absences.</td>
<td>Yes, if &gt; 1 day missed. Student must make up a full continuity week during vacation time if 2 days are missed during an inpatient block.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
An unexcused absence is a serious matter and will be viewed as a breach of professionalism. It is expected that the student will be counseled by the Module Director or Clerkship Director about such an episode, and that it will be an important element in the assessment of the student’s professionalism competency in the course or clerkship grade. Other potential consequences of unexcused absences will depend on the seriousness of the matter and might include reduction of a course or clerkship grade, failure of a course or clerkship, counseling by the Office of Student Affairs or a breach of professionalism being filed, particularly if there is a pattern of absences across courses or clerkships.

**Student Absences from Third and Fourth Year**

If an unplanned absence occurs, students should make every effort to reschedule missed clinical experiences and preceptor sessions. Unexcused absences will always require make-up time, and in addition, have the potential for being regarded as a breach of professionalism, which could affect a student’s overall grade. It is the student’s responsibility to work with their attending, preceptors, and the Clerkship Director to plan any necessary make-up time.

**Leaves of Absence (LOAs)**

LOA is defined as eight (8) consecutive weeks or more away from the curriculum. Students should be aware that they must complete all course requirements within a six (6) year period from the time of matriculation to receive the M.D. degree. After matriculation to UTRGV SOM, a student may not arbitrarily cease registration without notice.

A student in good academic standing may request a Leave of Absence (LOA), defined as a temporary period of non-enrollment, or suspension of studies, for which an approved time limit has been set and a specific date of return established. A LOA may be either voluntary or involuntary, as described below:

A student may petition in writing to the MSEPC for a LOA for academic, personal, financial, administrative, or non-emergent medical reasons. All petitions for LOAs should be prepared in consultation with the Associate Dean for Student Affairs or her/his designee and must state the reasons for the requested LOA.

If a student must initiate a LOA before the completion of a course or clerkship, the student will receive a grade of Withdraw. A student, while on an approved LOA, is a matriculated student; however, s/he is not registered for any courses in the School of Medicine curriculum. The MSEPC may impose academic conditions relating to any LOA. (All LOAs count toward the expected six-year time frame for UTRGV SOM curriculum completion. Exceptions to this policy may be made by the MSEPC.)
**Medical LOAs**
The student’s petition should include:

A letter from the student’s treating health care professional documenting the medical basis for the LOA and its likely duration. The student will also need a letter from either the treating physician (or a physician designated by the Associate Dean for Student Affairs and the MSEPC). A second opinion from a physician selected by UTRGV SOM may also be required. Any plans the student has to address any current academic difficulties or those that might result due to an extended time away from the curriculum should also be addressed.

The Associate Dean for Student Affairs will develop a written timeline with the student documenting all required contact with the OSA during the LOA as well as the Associate/Assistant Dean assigned to monitor and support the student, to be reviewed at the next MSEPC meeting.

Students will need a letter from their treating health care provider or a physician designated by the OSA or MSEPC, assessing his/her medical fitness to return, prior to re-entering the curriculum. Confidentiality of the student’s medical information will be protected to the extent possible consistent with the needs of the institution.

**Educational / Research / Service LOAs**
LOAs may be granted to allow students opportunities to enhance their medical school experience by participating in educational, research, or service activities at other institutions or other colleges within UTRGV. The student requesting such a leave must submit a letter from an appropriate SOM faculty member recommending the leave to the Associate Dean for Student Affairs, who is responsible for monitoring the student’s time spent in the educational / research / service activities. The Associate Dean for Student Affairs will review the request and make a recommendation to the MSEPC. The Associate Dean for Student Affairs will work with the student if there are any concerns related to the request for an educational/research/service LOA. The MSEPC will review the request and will contact the student with their decision.

**School-Initiated Medical LOAs**
A student may be placed in *Involuntary Leave of Absence* if the Associate Dean for Student Affairs has evidence that a UTRGV SOM the student may be a danger to him/herself or to others, or is unable to perform functions required of a medical student in nonclinical, clinical, or laboratory settings, the Associate Dean may act, either in accordance with the following guidelines.

The Associate Dean will request a meeting with the student, inform the student of the reason for questioning the fitness of the student, and give the student an opportunity to respond.

The Associate Dean will require the student to go before the MSEPC, which may request the student, in writing, to:

- Temporarily absent him/herself from attendance at all or part of the School program, if deemed warranted to protect the safety and well-being of the student and others in the School community, including the School’s affiliates.
- Provide satisfactory evidence of his/her fitness, which may include the results of a medical evaluation of fitness by his/her treating physician/psychotherapist, or by an unaffiliated physician/psychotherapist designated by the MSEPC, to determine whether the student can perform safely and reliably. The student must consent to allow his/her physician/psychotherapist to provide relevant medical information to a physician or
psychotherapist designated by the School to advise the Associate Dean and the MSEPC.

If the evidence indicates that the student is unfit, the MSEPC may request the student to take steps as appropriate based on the evidence, including but not limited to one or more of the following:

- Take a Medical LOA for a specified duration.
- Receive treatment as appropriate during the LOA.
- Enter a treatment and monitoring program.
- Withdraw from the School of Medicine if remediation of unfitness is unavailable as an option, or has been reasonably tried without success.

If the student at any time refuses or materially fails to comply with any request made by the Associate Dean in conformity with this Section of the policy, the Associate Dean for Student Affairs may then proceed under the Student Disciplinary Code of Academic and Professional Conduct. The student will have the rights of hearing and appeal provided under that Code.

If the student agrees to take a Medical LOA at the request of the Associate Dean and/or to enter a treatment or monitoring program, then the Associate Dean for Student Affairs in conjunction with the may require continued medical monitoring and reporting to the Associate Dean as a condition of re-entering the curriculum. In addition, if the student has been or will be out of the curriculum for a significant period of time, the MSEPC will establish any necessary academic requirements for return to the curriculum.

Continued or repeated noncompliance with monitoring required in accordance with this policy or continued or repeated lack of medical fitness may lead to a determination by the Associate Dean in conjunction with the MSEPC that underlying causes of unfitness are not remediable. The Associate Dean may then recommend to the MSEPC that the student be suspended or dismissed from the curriculum for repeated lack of fitness. If the student claims to have a disability, such determinations and recommendations will be made in consultation with the UTRGV Disability Services office and the Dean of the School of Medicine.

**Other LOAs**
A student’s petition should state the reasons for requesting the Non-Medical LOA, the expected duration of the LOA, and describe plans for the period of leave that address any current academic difficulties or those that might result due to extended time away from the curriculum.

The MSEPC must approve non-medical LOAs. The Associate Dean for Student Affairs may approve emergency or urgent LOAs and will copy the MSEPC chair and the student will petition the MSEPC.

**Financial Aid Implications of Leave of Absence**
UTRGV SOM students who are granted an approved LOA must meet certain requirements and be informed of the Financial Aid implications per Federal Student Aid regulations. Medical students should be aware that taking an LOA may affect student loan deferment, grace period, loan repayment, housing, health and disability insurance coverage, and/or financial aid eligibility. Students are advised to investigate these implications as they pertain to their personal situations prior to applying for LOA.
• Leave of Absence Requirements for Financial Aid. Upon initiation of the LOA process, a student is required to meet with the SOM Financial Aid representative for an exit interview to discuss the specific financial aid implications. Upon return from LOA status, the student is required to participate in an entrance interview with the SOM Financial Aid representative to discuss specific financial aid implications and/or future financial aid eligibility.

• Scholarship Recipients. A student granted an approved LOA may continue to receive a scholarship upon return to UTRGV SOM, provided that the LOA is not in conjunction with an academic or professional scholarship.

Excused Extended Absences
Requests for excused extended absences of less than 8 consecutive weeks are not considered LOAs. The Associate Dean for Student Affairs may grant emergency or urgent absence from the curriculum and will copy the MSEPC chair. The MSEPC may bring a student who is not in good academic standing or with more than one emergency absence that the Associate Dean for Student Affairs brings before the committee for further discussion. Students may request a delay in the normal progression of the UTRGV SOM curriculum for non-emergent or non-urgent issues after consultation with the OSA, and must submit a written petition to the MSEPC which must approve any such delays.

Academic Concerns and Conditions Relating to Absences from the Curriculum
Any absence from the MD degree curriculum, whether requested by a student or initiated by the School, raises issues of academic continuity and readiness to return to the curriculum, particularly if the student has prior academic difficulties. Independent of the reasons for the LOA, MSEPC may take academic action based on past academic or behavioral deficiencies or to avert future deficiencies due to time away from the curriculum. Such academic action may include notifying the student of the seriousness of past deficiencies, and/or concerns relating to a requested period of time away from the curriculum. The student may be required to propose an acceptable plan of activity or remediation to be completed during the absence.

Whether a student is permitted or required to take time away from the curriculum (whether by Academic Suspension, Disciplinary Suspension, or by LOA), the MSEPC may require the student to develop, present, and obtain approval from the committee for a plan of academic remediation or a plan to minimize academic discontinuity, or both, as appropriate to the circumstances. Plans should be prepared in consultation with the Associate Dean for Student Affairs or his/her designee.

Plans of remediation should be designed to enhance the student’s insight into any deficiencies in his/her performance and to ensure adequate progress toward remediating any deficiencies. Such plans may include, for example, engaging in professional or social service activities to enhance professional skills and insights and taking steps to assess whether there may be underlying personal or medical factors contributing to any deficiencies in academic performance (e.g., by obtaining a medical, neurological, and/or psychiatric assessment and undertaking treatment, if recommended as a result of such assessment).

Plans to minimize academic discontinuity should include specific proposals for time away from the curriculum, such as engaging in activities to practice or maintain needed skills, and to develop or enhance professionalism and educational mastery (e.g., reading, research, clinical activity, health service activity).
The MSEPC may require students to consult with a faculty advisor, in addition to the Associate Dean for Student Affairs, for assistance in preparing their proposed plans for the period of absence from the curriculum and in monitoring the students’ success in carrying out their approved plans.

Notice to Students at Risk of Probation or Dismissal Due to Absence from the Curriculum

Academic difficulty severe enough to warrant Academic Dismissal precedes some absences from the curriculum, whether requested by a student or required by the MSEPC. In connection with any absence from the curriculum, the MSEPC will review the entire Academic Record of any student who has a deficient Academic Record and will determine whether the student is in jeopardy of immediate Academic Dismissal. If so, the committee will notify the student in writing that s/he is in such jeopardy of immediate Academic Dismissal based on his/her Academic Record, describing the deficiencies in the letter of notification.

If the committee approves, or requires, an absence from the curriculum (and related plans) for such a student, the student will remain in jeopardy of Academic Dismissal until and unless s/he is allowed, in the discretion of the MSEPC, to re-enter the curriculum.

In lieu of Academic Dismissal, the MSEPC may allow a student to attempt to demonstrate evidence during an absence from the curriculum sufficient to justify to the committee, in its discretion, another chance to re-enter the curriculum.

If the plans submitted by such students are unacceptable to the committee or if the student fails to carry out accepted plans during an approved absence in a satisfactory manner, the committee may dismiss the student based on the deficiencies that previously placed the student in jeopardy of immediate Academic Dismissal.

Petition for Return from a LOA

For academic reinstatement to the curriculum after any period of absence from the curriculum, students must file a written petition addressed to the Associate Dean for Student Affairs, who may approve routine petitions to return to the curriculum for students in good academic standing without prior comportment issues or recurrent appearances at the MSEPC.

The MSEPC must review petitions from students whose absence was related to academic or behavioral difficulties. Any student who has been absent from the curriculum for academic reasons or professionalism issues will be requested to appear before the MSEPC before the student re-enters the curriculum. Failure to appear will be taken into account by the committee when reviewing the student’s readiness to return. The Associate Dean for Student Affairs and the Senior Policy Officer must receive petitions at least three working days prior to the scheduled MSEPC meeting. Exceptions to this policy can be made for students with urgent issues that are time sensitive.

Students must provide acceptable evidence as to their readiness to re-enter the curriculum and their completion of any previously accepted plan of remediation of academic deficiencies or of activities to minimize academic discontinuity. Evidence may include reports from professionals with whom the student worked or consulted during the absence from the curriculum, if relevant to academic readiness to return. Students are expected to provide reports from such professionals if an accepted plan of remediation included consultation with healthcare professionals regarding underlying causes of academic deficiencies and treatments if recommended. The Associate Dean for Student Affairs will present such reports of fitness to return to the MSEPC.
After review of a student’s petition and evidence the Associate Dean for Student Affairs can determine that:

- students in good academic standing without comportment issues or recurrent appearances at the MSEPC have satisfactorily demonstrated readiness and fulfilled all conditions contained in their accepted plans of remediation and/or accepted plans to enhance or maintain readiness to return, and report this to the MSEPC, or
- the student has not satisfactorily demonstrated readiness to return, fulfilled all conditions contained in accepted plans of remediation or enhanced or maintained educational continuity, and refer the student to the MSEPC. MSEPC can either:
- Allow the student to return to the curriculum, subject to additional requirements related to deficiencies in the student’s performance of his/her plan.
- Disallow the student’s petition to return to the curriculum and dismiss the student either because the:
  - student has previously been notified of this policy that s/he was at risk of Academic Dismissal based on deficiencies existing prior to the absence from the curriculum; or
  - Student’s extensive time away from the curriculum has resulted in unacceptable academic discontinuity.

**Two-Year Limit on Absences from Curriculum**

The total time taken for LOAs (whether a single leave or multiple leaves) may not exceed two years during the entire period of enrollment at UTRGV SOM. The MSEPC may dismiss a student whose absences exceed two years unless the student is eligible under applicable disability laws for a longer period of absence.

A student who has been dismissed because of absence of more than two years who wishes to return to UTRGV SOM must reapply for admission. The UTRGV SOM Admissions Committee makes the decision as to readmission, which is not guaranteed.

**Voluntary Withdrawal**

A student who wishes to permanently leave UTRGV SOM should prepare the request to withdraw in consultation with the Associate Dean for Student Affairs. The request must include the reason(s) for withdrawal and a statement that the student understands that withdrawal is voluntary and permanent. The Associate Dean for Student Affairs will inform the MSEPC, unless the student requests that this information be confidential. The withdrawal is effective on the date the completed Withdrawal Form is received in the Office of the Registrar.

**Dismissal**

In general, prior to dismissal, students shall be placed on probationary status and given a plan for remedial action and specific performance requirements by the MSEPC. However, in extraordinary circumstances, the MSEPC may dismiss a student without prior probation.

The MSEPC may determine that a student be dismissed in the following cases: (1) failure to remediate deficiencies; (2) an accumulation of narrative evaluations indicating serious gaps in knowledge and clinical skills and/or inadequate integration of the content of the curriculum; (3) a specific academic deficiency (e.g., an important clinical skill has not been mastered); (4) a failing performance on either Step 1 or Step 2 of the USMLE examination; (5) failure to assume appropriate professional responsibility; (6) failure to meet professional standards, including those of demeanor and conduct; and (7) a violation of University HOP or School of Medicine policies or procedures.
**Technical Standards**

The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley is committed to providing equitable access to learning opportunities for all students. The medical school welcomes qualified applicants with disabilities (e.g. mental health, attentional, learning, chronic health, sensory, or physical) who meet the technical standards of the program, with or without reasonable accommodations.

Essential abilities are academic performance requirements that refer to those physical, cognitive, and behavioral abilities required for satisfactory completion of all aspects of the medical curriculum and the development of personal attributes required by the faculty at graduation. The essential abilities required by the curriculum are in the following areas: intellectual (conceptual, integrative, and quantitative abilities for problem solving and diagnosis), behavioral and social, communication, motor, and sensory.

In addition, the medical student must demonstrate ethical standards and a professional demeanor in dealing with peers, faculty, staff and patients. At the time an applicant accepts an offer to matriculate, the applicant is required to attest that she or he can meet the School of Medicine Technical Standards either with, or without, reasonable accommodations. Additionally, enrolled students must attest, annually, that they continue to meet the School of Medicine Technical Standards either with, or without, reasonable accommodations. If you are a student with a disability who needs accommodations to complete this application or has questions regarding reasonable accommodations for technical standards, contact the Director of Student Accessibility Services UCTR 108 1201 W. University Blvd. Edinburg, TX 956-665-7005.

The Technical Standards are as follows:

**Intellectual Abilities**
The medical student must be able to comprehend and learn factual knowledge from readings and didactic presentations, gather information independently, analyze and synthesize learned material, and apply information to clinical situations.

**Behavioral, Social, and Professional Abilities**
The medical student must possess the emotional maturity and stability to function effectively under the stress that is inherent in medicine and to adapt to circumstances that are unpredictable or that change rapidly. They must exhibit compassion, empathy, altruism, integrity, responsibility, and tolerance, as well as demonstrate the ability to exercise the requisite judgment in the practice of medicine.

**Communication Skills**
The medical student must be able to, with or without reasonable accommodations, communicate effectively with patients orally and in writing, including gathering information appropriately, explaining medical information in a patient-centered manner, listen effectively, recognize, acknowledge, and respond to emotions, and exhibit sensitivity to social and cultural differences. They must be able to communicate effectively and work cooperatively with all other health care team members.

**Motor Skills**
The medical student must have sufficient physical dexterity to master technical and procedural aspects of patient care. They must have sufficient strength to perform the essential duties and must have adequate physical stamina and energy to carry out taxing duties over long hours.
Sensory Abilities
The medical student should have sufficient sensory abilities of sight, hearing, smell and touch in order to obtain a medical history, perform a physical examination, and to diagnose and deliver patient care.

The UTRGV SOM has posted the technical standards on the UTRGV SOM website for external access and the School of Medicine intranet for internal access so that potential and actual applicants, enrolled medical students, faculty, and others may access at any time. The technical standards will also be disseminated to students during new student orientation and to faculty during the new faculty orientation process.

Statement on the Learning Environment

UTRGV SOM strives to ensure that the values medical students learn, translate from the students undergraduate medical education experience to practicing physicians. Therefore, UTRGV SOM has adopted the AAMC’s Statement on the Learning Environment. A copy of the statement is provided below, and may be found online at https://www.aamc.org/download/408212/data/learningenvironmentstatementdownload.pdf.

Student Mistreatment Policy

UTRGV SOM prides itself on treating its students with respect and dignity. Mistreatment of students is not tolerated at the school and is detrimental to the learning environment. Mistreatment, intentional or unintentional, occurs when behavior shows disrespect for the dignity of others and interferes with the learning process. Student mistreatment may take many forms, all of which impact student performance. Sexual harassment and assault, which are defined by policy through the University of Texas System Rules and Regulations of the Board of Regents Rule 30105, “Sexual Harassment and Misconduct and Inappropriate Consensual Relationships” at https://www.utsystem.edu/sites/utsfiles/offices/board-of-regents/rules-regulations/30105.pdf, are included in this section as forms of student mistreatment.

Examples of behavior that are unacceptable to the UTRGV SOM include:

- Physical or sexual harassment/assault
- Discrimination or harassment based on race, gender, age, ethnicity, religious beliefs, sexual orientation, or disability
- Disparaging or demeaning comments about an individual or group
- Loss of personal civility including shouting, displays of temper, public or private abuse, belittling, or humiliation
- Use of grading or other forms of evaluation in a punitive or retaliatory manner
- Sending students on inappropriate errands

Medical students who feel they have been mistreated may report such perceptions to any of the following:

- Deans in the Office of Student Affairs
- Counseling Services
- Module, course and clerkship directors
- UTRGV Ombudsperson

These school representatives are empowered to informally discuss a student’s perceptions related to mistreatment, providing guidance. These school representatives should refer the
student immediately to the Associate Dean for Student Affairs for further instructions. Students wishing to report anonymously may do so by filing a report on the secured section of the SOM Student Affairs website.

A grievance involving perceived mistreatment can be resolved in an informal or a formal manner. A student pursuing an informal non-academic grievance resolution must contact the Associate Dean for Student Affairs, in writing, within five (5) business days of the alleged grievance. If the grievance involves staff, faculty, student(s) from the broader UTRGV community, the Associate Dean for Student Affairs will liaison with other appropriate authorities, as indicated. The Associate Dean for Student Affairs will assist the student in the informal resolution of the grievance, to be completed within 30 calendar days from the written grievance. If an informal resolution is not achieved, the aggrieved student has an additional five (5) business days to file a formal written grievance.

The Associate Dean for Student Affairs, acting as a student advocate, assumes the responsibility for formulating and facilitating the most appropriate response.

The Associate Dean for Student Affairs and UTRGV Ombudsperson Office monitors the frequency at which medical student mistreatment occurs and notifies the appropriate administration members as necessary. Additionally, within each written evaluation, students have an opportunity to state if they felt mistreated. If the affirmative is reported, the student will be asked to provide a summary of the events that characterized their mistreatment. This will trigger a confidential meeting with the Associate Dean for Student Affairs to address the concern.

Technology Policies (Email, Computers, Mobile Devices, Social Media)

Email Policy
Only the SOM’s faculty, staff, students, and other persons who have received permission under the appropriate authority are authorized users of the UTRGV SOM email systems and resources. Use of email is encouraged where such use supports the University’s academic goals and facilitates communication between faculty and students. However, if a student uses email in an unacceptable manner, he/she is subject to sanctions, including but not limited to, having his/her campus email account deactivated. The student will receive an initial warning and reports of any subsequent violations will be sent to the MSEPC for final recommendations and action.

Portable Computers and Mobile Devices Policy
Portable computer users must take personal responsibility for the security of the equipment, software and data in their care. Students are required to purchase their own laptops which must meet the specifications provided by the school with regard to the necessary operating system and software needed for the four years of medical school.

Standards Pertaining to the Use of the Personal Computers
- Students must ensure that their laptop is not used by unauthorized persons.
- Students are required to use their own laptops during examinations. The UTRGV SOM Library will maintain spare laptops in the event that a student’s unit requires repair or maintenance or fails to function during an exam.
- All students will be encouraged to regularly save all data to the network drives and a central location, i.e., Blackboard. The SOM will not be responsible for any loss of data on the laptops themselves.
• Laptops should never be left unattended in public places (e.g., car, library, restaurant, restroom, etc.).
• Laptops in cars must be stored out of sight when the car is left unattended. Take care when leaving laptops in cars in hot weather where they can overheat or become damaged.
• Students must immediately report any possible security breaches to the UTRGV IT department (e.g., if their laptop is stolen or misplaced).
• Students must abide by all of the UTRGV IT policies. This includes all HIPAA and FERPA regulations pertaining to security and privacy.

The UTRGV SOM provides students with iPads for their use during their four years of medical school. The iPads are issued to students during Orientation and students must sign a separate user agreement.

Standards Pertaining to the Use of UTRGV SOM-Issued iPads
• Students understand that the UTRGV SOM maintains full ownership of the iPads and all accessories and control of its use. Under no circumstances is the iPad to be loaned to another person or institution.
• Students are solely responsible for this iPad and all accessories included. If the iPad or any accessories are found to be faulty upon first use, the student must return the item(s) by contacting the UTRGV SOM within 72 hours so as not to be charged for any replacement items.
• The iPad is provided in support of student’s educational experience in the MD program at the UTRGV SOM and will not be used at a non-University connected job for the purpose of making money. Violation of this condition may lead to a suspension of the privilege of using the iPad.
• Students delivering their iPads to another student or faculty member or to staff in an office other than the UTRGV SOM does not absolve their obligation to the UTRGV SOM iPad use/lease agreement responsibilities.
• Failure to return the iPad by the end of the four year lease period (or when the student leaves the UTRGV SOM MD program at any time for any reason) will be a breach of this agreement and will result in UTRGV placing a financial bar restricting student enrollment and registration for any future courses.
• If student drops/withdraws from this program and does not return the iPad to UTRGV within five business days from the drop day, the student will be required to pay the University $802.00 for the replacement cost of the iPad. Failure to do so will result in UTRGV placing a financial bar restricting student enrollment and registration for any future courses.
• Students must agree not tamper with the iPad operating system.
• The student understands that all data stored on the iPad will be deleted or removed when the iPad is returned. UTRGV will not be responsible for lost data or information left on the iPad.
• Students are to report any damage to the iPad immediately to the UTRGV SOM. The iPad will be prepared and then returned to the student.
• In the case of a damaged or cracked screen, the student will immediately return the iPad to the UTRGV SOM and pay the deductible cost as per his/her signed UTRGV insurance agreement. In the case of continuing issues after a screen replacement, the student will notify the UTRGV SOM within 30 days or will be charged another deductible for any subsequent replacement.
• Students will take appropriate steps to protect the iPad and data against loss or theft, including but not limited to the following: the student will not: leave the iPad unattended in any public place; the student will not leave the iPad in a location of extreme heat (>95°F) or cold (<32°F); the student will not leave the iPad in a car because temperatures in parked cars can exceed this range; student will not place the iPad in checked luggage.

• The student agrees to pay the University $802.00 for the replacement cost of the iPad in the event that it is lost, stolen, or damaged beyond repair as determined by Information Technology (IT). In addition, the student agrees to pay for all lost or stolen accessories and damage that is not considered normal wear. If accessories are damaged, the student agrees to pay the cost for the replacement of the damaged accessories.

**Social Media Policy**

The administration of the SOM recognizes that social networking websites and applications are an important and timely means of communication. However, faculty, staff, students and post graduate students (e.g., residents and fellows) who use these websites and other applications should be aware of the critical importance of privatizing their websites so that only trustworthy “friends” have access to the websites/applications. They should also be aware that posting certain information may be illegal. Violation of existing statutes and administrative regulations may expose the offender to criminal and civil liability, and the punishment for violations may include fines and imprisonment. Offenders also may be subject to adverse employment actions and/or academic actions that range from a letter of reprimand to probation to dismissal from employment, school and/or resident training. All faculty, staff, students and post graduate students in the SOM are also subject to University policies and/or regulations on social media and social networking, as well as all other applicable University policies and regulations.

The following actions are strictly forbidden:

• Any violation of University IT policies.

• In your professional role as a care-giver, you may not disclose the personal health information of other individuals. Removal of an individual’s name does not necessarily constitute proper de-identification of protected health information. Inclusion of data such as age, gender, race, diagnosis, date of evaluation, or type of treatment or the use of a highly specific medical photograph (such as a before/after photograph of a patient having surgery or a photograph of a patient from a medical outreach trip) may still allow the reader to recognize the identity of a specific individual, and therefore is prohibited.

• You may not disclose private (protected) academic information of another student or trainee. Such information might include, but is not limited to: course or clerkship grades, narrative evaluations, examination scores, or adverse academic actions.

• Sharing information within a class is acceptable, but sharing material between classes or outside UTRGV SOM is not. Many of our cases have been generously provided to us by other medical schools with the stipulation that they would be used only by our students. In addition, it would defeat the purpose of problem-based learning if the learning objectives, study materials, etc. were available to students encountering cases for the first time. Therefore, the use of Facebook or other social media sites by students for any curriculum materials is strictly prohibited. All postings for classes
should be to our secure Blackboard site or another non-public, password protected site.

- In posting information on social networking sites, you may not present yourself as an official representative or spokesperson for UTRGV or the SOM, unless authorized to do so by the President or Dean of the SOM, respectively.
- You may not represent yourself as another person, real or fictitious, or otherwise attempt to obscure your identity as a means to circumvent the provisions of this policy.
- You must respect limited personal use permissions, when applicable, and may not utilize websites and/or applications in a manner that interferes with your official work and/or academic commitments. That is, do not consume university, hospital or clinic technology resources with personal use when others need access for patient or business-related matters. Moreover, do not delay completion of assigned clinical responsibilities in order to engage in social networking.

In addition to the absolute prohibitions listed above, the actions listed below are strongly discouraged. Violations of these suggested guidelines may be considered unprofessional behavior and may be the basis for employment and/or academic disciplinary action. Specifically, students who fail to adhere to the standards of professionalism regarding social networking may be referred to the Associate Dean for Student Affairs and/or the MSEPC. Faculty and staff in the SOM who engage in the actions below, or similar conduct, may be subject to disciplinary action.

- Display of vulgar language.
- Display of language or photographs that imply disrespect for any individual or group because of age, race, gender, ethnicity, or sexual orientation.
- Presentation of personal photographs or photographs of others that may reasonably be interpreted as condoning irresponsible use of alcohol, substance abuse, or sexual promiscuity.
- Posting of potentially inflammatory or unflattering material on another individual’s website, e.g. on the “wall” of that individual’s Facebook site.
- Fraternization between faculty/staff and students in an inappropriate manner of a personal nature.

When using these social networking websites/applications, faculty, staff, students, residents and fellows are strongly encouraged to use a personal email address, rather than their UTRGV email address, as their primary means of identification. Individuals also should make every effort to present themselves in a mature, responsible, and professional manner. Discourse should always be civil and respectful.
Part III. Institutional Policies

Non-Discrimination and Complaint Procedure

The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley (UTRGV) is committed to providing equal opportunity in all programs and activities UTRGV sponsors or conducts, in compliance with and to the extent provided by applicable state and federal laws and regulations.

The University’s policy on non-discrimination is outlined in the UTRGV Handbook of Operating Procedures – Non-Discrimination and Complaint Procedure (http://www.utrgv.edu/hop/policies/adm-03-100.pdf).

Title IX of the U.S. Department of Education’s Education Amendments of 1972 ("Title IX") prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex/gender in any aspect of a federally funded education program or activity. Such discrimination includes, but is not limited to: sexual harassment, sexual violence, sex or gender-based bullying, hazing, stalking, domestic violence, dating violence, and failure to provide equal opportunity in admissions, activities, employment and/or athletics. As a recipient of federal funds, UTRGV complies with Title IX and has designated a Title IX Coordinator to oversee all complaints of sex discrimination. The Title IX Coordinator is responsible for identifying and addressing any patterns or systemic problems that arise during the review of such complaints. Additionally, other responsibilities include the coordination of training, education, and communications regarding Title IX procedures for the university community. UTRGV has designated the following individual to serve as the Title IX Coordinator:

Alicia G. Morley, Director of the Office of Institutional Equity
(956) 665-2103
Alicia.morley@utrgv.edu

A students, staff, faculty member, or an applicants for admission or employment who believes that he or she has been discriminated against on the basis of sex, may file a complaint with the Title IX Coordinator or a responsible employee as provided by UTRGV policy. The Title IX Coordinator will ensure that action is taken to resolve the complaint in a prompt and equitable manner.

Accommodations for Individuals with Disabilities

The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley School of Medicine (UTRGV SOM) is committed to serving all students by providing equitable access to learning opportunities in compliance with federal and state law. The medical school welcomes qualified students with disabilities (as defined by Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990) who meet the technical standards of the program, with or without reasonable accommodations. If you are a student with a disability who requires reasonable accommodations during your interview or to fully access the medical education program, please contact the Student Accessibility Services (SAS) office or the School of Medicine (SOM) Office of Student Affairs. To ensure equitable access, students are encouraged to register with SAS in advance of the start of the program. Accommodations are not provided retroactively.

The SAS office ensures students with disabilities are provided reasonable accommodations so that they have the opportunity to participate in the full range of educational experiences. The office’s goal is to facilitate students’ equal access to all university programs and services while
fostering independence and self-advocacy. In addition, the office works to promote an environment that is free of physical and attitudinal barriers.

**Student Accessibility Services Office Contact Information**

UTRGV – Edinburg
1201 West University Drive
University Center 108
Edinburg, TX 78539
Phone: (956) 665-7005
Fax: (956) 665-3840
Email: ability@utrgv.edu
Website: Student Accessibility Services

UTRGV – Brownsville
One West University Blvd.
Cortez Hall 129
Brownsville, TX 78520
Phone: (956) 882-7374
Fax: (956) 882-7861

**School of Medicine Office of Student Affairs Contact Information**

Assistant Dean for Student Support/Counseling and Wellness Services
1210 W Schunior Street, Edinburg, TX 78539
EMEBL 3.161
Phone: (956) 296-1412
Email: eugenia.curet@utrgv.edu

**Requesting Reasonable Accommodations**

To receive services from the SAS office, the student, according to the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), must have a physical or mental disability that substantially limits one or more major life activities. These disabilities can include, but are not limited to learning, hearing, visual, psychiatric, psychological, health and physical disabilities. Students who suffer a broken bone, severe injury or undergo surgery during the semester are eligible for temporary services. Temporary services may be provided for weeks, months or the remainder of the semester depending on the severity of the impairment.

Interested students are welcome to contact the SAS office to register for services. Students registering for services must first complete a Student Accessibility Services Registration packet, either in person or online, before initial appointment with a SAS counselor. The office requests that students bring documentation of disability from a qualified professional to the initial appointment.

For detailed instructions on how to request accommodations with the SAS office, please refer to the SAS Procedural Guidelines Manual.

Students are not obligated to disclose personal health information, nor the origin of their disability, to faculty, administrators, or other program personnel in order to access accommodations approved by the SAS office.

The SAS office will coordinate with the SOM Office of Student Affairs to determine whether the requested accommodation would be effective, reasonable, and enable the student to perform the essential functions required and achieve the essential educational goals and program objectives. The SAS office will follow-up on the student’s status/progress each semester.

An accommodation request is generally deemed reasonable if it:
- Is based on current individual documentation (with the last three years)
- Allows an integrated experience
- Does not compromise essential requirements of a course or program
- Does not pose a threat to personal or public safety
- Does not impose undue financial or administrative burden to the School
- Is not of a personal nature (e.g., hiring of personal care attendants.)

Below is the process map to determine if your disability would qualify for reasonable accommodation:
**Review of SAS Decisions**
A review of the accommodation decision may be requested by submitting an email or requesting to meet in person with Ms. Tonya Paulette, Director of Student Accessibility Services UCTR 108 1201 W. University Blvd. Edinburg, TX 956-665-7005 Tonya.paulette01@utrgv.edu

The Director of Student Accessibility Services will review the request and the student’s file, and then meet with the student to discuss their request. In order to reach a decision, he or she may also request additional documentation of a student’s disability, request to consult with their treatment team or diagnostician, or consult with outside experts. A written determination of the resolution shall be issued by either Director and/or a staff representative and forwarded to the student within ten (10) working days after the written appeal and all supporting evidence are submitted. The SAS office shall maintain files and records relating to appeals for a period of three (3) years.

**Complaints Regarding Final SAS Decisions**
Consistent with the spirit of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), the SAS office determines disability accommodations through a deliberative and interactive process involving disability services professionals, appropriate members of the SOM community, and, of course, the individuals with disabilities themselves.

Occasionally a problem arises because of a misunderstanding or miscommunication; clarification can lead to a quick and effective solution. It is often best to discuss the issue with the person(s) most closely involved with the decision or incident first. But, we strongly encourage you to let the SAS office and the SOM Office of Student Affairs know about any problems as soon as possible so that we can work together to solve the problem as quickly as possible.

Though attempts at internal resolution are always recommended first, external means for resolution are available, and may be exercised at any time. Throughout any of these procedures you should expect to be treated with respect, receive a timely response, have your issues dealt with in a confidential manner to the greatest extent possible, and should not fear any form of retaliation. Disability-related law and UTRGV policy prohibit retaliation in any form against persons who file complaints.

The SOM expects that you address any problems early, give clear and detailed information, and be respectful of those people who are working with you. If you wish to know more about your rights as a disabled person under Federal and State law and UTRGV policy, the SAS office or the SOM Office of Student Affairs can refer you to the appropriate entity.

Students who wish to file a complaint regarding a final decision made by the SAS office may do so in writing to the Office of Institutional Equity within ten (10) working days from the date of the alleged violation. Complaints must contain the following information:

1. Name, address, phone and email of the person(s) filing it
2. Brief description of the justification for reasonable accommodation

The policy and procedures can be found at [http://www.utrgv.edu/hop/policies/adm-03-200.pdf](http://www.utrgv.edu/hop/policies/adm-03-200.pdf)
Confidentiality

UTRGV SOM recognizes that student disability records contain sensitive and private information. Therefore, documentation of a student’s disability is maintained in a confidential file in the SAS office and is considered part of the student’s educational record.

The Family Educational Rights Privacy Act (FERPA) regulates disclosure of disability documentation and records maintained by SAS. UTRGV’s FERPA policy can be found at: http://www.utrgv.edu/hop/policies/stu-03-700.pdf. The interest of serving the needs of the student in the provision of services may involve SAS staff disclosing disability information provided by the student to appropriate UTRGV officials, including SOM personnel participating in the accommodation process. The amount of information that may be released is determined case by case, in the context of the service being coordinated. SAS seeks to preserve the student’s wish to keep their disability information and status confidential. The SAS office staff are extremely sensitive to this issue.

Online Resources

The following websites have further information on Section 508, Section 504, the ADA and facility access:

1. Section 508 Accessibility Program
   www.section508.gov

2. Office of Civil Rights – information on Section 504 and the ADA:

3. Department of Justice – information on the ADA
   www.usdoj.gov/crt/ada/adahtm1.htm

4. Texas Department of Licensing and Regulation – information on Texas Accessibility Standards
   www.license.state.tx.us/ab/abtas.htm

Sexual Assault

The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley is committed to creating and maintaining a community in which students, faculty, and staff can work and study in an atmosphere free from all forms of harassment, exploitation, or intimidation. Every member of the university community should be aware that the university does not tolerate student harassment, including sexual assault, dating violence, domestic violence, or stalking, and that such behavior is prohibited by both federal and state law and by University policy. UTRGV will take action to prevent, correct, and if necessary, discipline or prosecute behavior that violates this policy and the law. All forms of sexual assault, sexual harassment, dating violence, domestic violence, and stalking, and all attempts to commit such acts, are regarded as serious University offenses that will result in disciplinary action which may include, suspension, required withdrawal, expulsion, or termination.

UTRGV is committed to assisting all victims and survivors of, sexual harassment, including sexual violence. A member of the university community who wishes to file a complaint or who has information regarding a violation of university policy has various options regarding filing a report including contacting the Title IX Coordinator, University Police Department or filing an
anonymous report at www.utrgv.edu/ReportIt. Prosecution can also take place in accordance with Texas criminal law, independent of University actions.

Students, faculty and staff are also encouraged to seek assistance through the Office for Victim Advocacy & Violence Prevention (OVAVP) at 956-665-8287, OVAVP@utrgv.edu, or www.utrgv.edu/OVAVP. Services through advocates at OVAVP are confidential and advocates can assist in navigating campus and community reporting, available resources, and accommodations for victims/survivors.

A chart illustrating the reporting options and detailing the services available campus can be found on the website for the Title IX Office at www.utrgv.edu/Equity.

Title IX
Sexual harassment, including sexual assault, dating violence, domestic violence, and stalking can have serious effects on a student's school performance, in addition to many other significant effects. Title IX provides that all students have the right to receive an education free from sex discrimination. UTRGV will take immediate action to eliminate such crimes when they occur on campus, prevent recurrence, and address the effects of such crimes, regardless of where they occurred.

Students, faculty, and staff of UTRGV, as well as family, friends, or bystanders, are encouraged to report suspected incidents of sexual harassment, including sexual assault, dating violence, domestic violence, or stalking to the university’s Title IX Coordinator – www.utrgv.edu/Equity. Any faculty or staff member who receives a report of one of these crimes, and who is not bound by professional confidentiality (advocates, counselors, and healthcare providers are confidential resources on campus), is required to report it to the Title IX Coordinator.

What to Do If You Think You Have Been Sexually Assaulted or Have Experienced Sexual Harassment, Dating Violence, Domestic Violence, or Stalking

Sexual Assault
Students are strongly encouraged to report attempted or completed sexual assaults to the University Police Department (956-665-7151 or 956-882-3832). Reporting the incident does not mean that the victim/survivor must proceed with prosecution. Immediately following an attack, the victim/survivor should try to write down everything she or he remembers about the incident, including the physical description of the suspect(s) and any further information about the identity or location of the suspect(s).

For students unsure about whether to call the police, a confidential victim advocates are available 24/7 who can offer more information through campus (OVAVP – 956-665- 8287 from 9:00 am – 6:00 pm and OVAVP@utrgv.edu after hours) and through community organizations (Mujeres Unidas in Hidalgo County – 956-630-4878 or 800-580-4879 for the 24-hour crisis hotline, Friendship of Women in Brownsville - 956-544-7412, and Family Crisis Center in Harlingen - 956- 423-9305 or 866-423-9304 for the 24-hour hotline).

If a student has been sexually assaulted, she/her should be aware that Mission Regional Medical Center (956-323-1111) and McAllen Medical Center (956-632-4000) in Hidalgo County and Valley Baptist Medical Center (956-389-1100) in Harlingen have dedicated SAFE nurses (SAFE = Sexual Assault Forensic Examiner) available 24/7 in private, dedicated spaces to conduct rape exams. Performing a rape exam does not obligate a victim or survivor to proceed with prosecution and rape exams are stored for two years in case a victim or survivor wishes to
proceed with prosecution at a later date. The University Police Department and OVAVP advocates can assist in transporting sexual assault victims for a rape exam. The hospital will not charge a victim or survivor for performing a rape exam.

**Notification of Law Enforcement**
Victims of sexual assault or persons who have information regarding a sexual assault are strongly encouraged to report the incident to the University Police Department (956-665-7151 or 956-882-3832) immediately.

It is the policy of the University Police Department to conduct investigations of all sexual assault complaints with sensitivity, compassion, patience, and respect for the victim. Investigations are conducted in accordance with guidelines established by the Texas Penal Code, Code of Criminal Procedure and the Hidalgo County District Attorney’s Office and the Cameron County District Attorney’s office.

All information and reports of sexual assault are kept strictly confidential. In accordance with the Texas Code of Criminal Procedures Art. 57, victims may use a pseudonym to protect their identity. A pseudonym is a set of initials or a fictitious name chosen by the victim to be used in all public files and records concerning the sexual assault. Victims of sexual assault are not required to file criminal charges or seek judicial actions through the university disciplinary process. However, victims are encouraged to report the assault in order to provide the victim with physical and emotional assistance. Students may also contact local law enforcement agencies. Members of the University Police Department, OVAVP advocates, and other University offices will assist the student in notifying the appropriate agency in the applicable jurisdiction.

**Accommodations for Victims and Survivors**
OVAVP advocates and the UTRGV Dean of Students Office and the SOM Office of Student Affairs can assist victims and survivors with issues including, but not limited to, class schedule changes, withdrawal procedures, or campus housing relocation. If the reporting student provides credible evidence that the accused student presents a continuing danger to person or property or poses an ongoing threat of disrupting the academic process, the Office of Student Rights and Responsibilities may take interim disciplinary action against the accused student as appropriate.

**Procedures for Campus Disciplinary Action**
A student may also choose to report an assault to the Office of Student Rights and Responsibilities for disciplinary action regardless of whether or not the student has decided to press criminal charges. A student may also file a report of sexual assault against another student, or a faculty or staff member, by directly contacting the Associate Dean for Student Rights and Responsibilities, 956-665-5375 (UTRGV Edinburg Campus) or 956-882-5141 (UTRGV Brownsville Campus) or by www.utrgv.edu/ReportIt. Procedures for resolving complaints regarding sexual assault, sexual harassment, dating violence, domestic violence, and stalking are detailed in the UTRGV Handbook of Operating Procedures. In any case, both the accuser and the accused are entitled to the same opportunities to have others present during any disciplinary proceedings. Both the accuser and the accused will be informed of the outcome of any proceedings.

During any complaint proceeding, the university has a wide range of latitude when developing sanctions. Those sanctions may range from probation to expulsion from the university.
Sexual Harassment, Dating Violence, Domestic Violence, and Stalking

More information and national hotlines are available for these crimes:
- Domestic Violence and Dating Violence: www.thehotline.org
- Stalking: National Stalking Resource Center: www.victimsofcrime.org/our-programs/stalkingresource-center
- Sexual harassment: www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/sexharassresources.html
- OVAVP advocates are available to assist in directing victims and survivors to campus and community resources (956-665-8287, OVAVP@utrgv.edu, www.utrgv.edu/OVAVP).
- Victims and survivors of these crimes are strongly encouraged to contact the University Police Department (956-665-7151 or 956-882-3832) or the UTRGV Title IX Coordinator (956-665-2103).

Education and Prevention Programs

There are many campus resources that can help campus community members to understand, address, and prevent sexual assault, sexual harassment, dating violence, domestic violence, and stalking, including services from the following:

- **Student Rights and Responsibilities**: Multiple programs are offered focusing on how to be an active bystander, healthy relationships, what to do if you are a victim of sexual assault and assault awareness throughout the year. More information can be obtained by calling 956-665-5375 (UTRGV Edinburg Campus) or 956-882-5141 (UTRGV Brownsville Campus). Student Rights and Responsibilities can also connect students with resources in the region.

- **The Office for Victim Advocacy & Violence Prevention (OVAVP)**: provides proactive educational programs to raise awareness/reduce the likelihood of sexual assault of both women and men. In addition, OVAVP provides comprehensive services for victims of sexual assault including Sexual Assault Advocates. OVAVP staff are available to provide specialized trainings, informational sessions, and talks. More information can be obtained by calling 956-665-8287, emailing OVAVP@utrgv.edu, or visiting www.utrgv.edu/OVAVP.

- **University Police Department**: The University Police Department offers prevention programs and specialized talks for campus groups. More information can be obtained by visiting www.utrgv.edu/police.

**Sexual Violence:**

To file a complaint of sexual violence, please contact the Title IX Coordinator. In addition, you may also contact:

**University Police Department**
Emergency: 911
Non-Emergency:
  - Edinburg Campus – (956) 665-7151
  - Brownsville Campus – (956) 882-8232

**Inquiries:**
Inquiries about Title IX and UTRGV’s compliance may also be directed to:
US Department of Education – Office of Civil Rights
400 Maryland Ave. SW
Vehicle Registration and Parking Permits

All students, whether full- or part-time, who operate a motor vehicle in the campus area must register the vehicle with the University Parking and Transportation Department. A hangtag permit or decal to be placed on the vehicle indicating the permit number and parking privileges will be provided. The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley enforces all Texas Vehicle inspection codes (Texas Education Code, Sec. 51.207). All vehicles that park on the campus premises must have current inspection stickers and a current parking permit properly displayed. Parking and Traffic rules and regulations are available at the Parking and Transportation Department or at www.utrgv.edu/pts. Note: A disabled veteran with a disabled veteran license plate may park with either a free University permit or without a University permit (as determined by University parking regulations) in a disabled parking space for an unlimited period of time.

Student Travel

The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley has set forth University rules and procedures regarding student and pre-college University program participant travel and to comply with The University of Texas System policy and State Law (Texas Education Code, Section §51.949) relating to student travel. University students may travel off campus when representing a student organization, University department or engaging in intercollegiate competition or academic activities. Examples of student travel include, but are not limited to, class field trips and assignments; attendance at scholarly or professional conferences; University-funded student organization travel; class trips for educational or cultural enrichment; student leadership conferences; placement forums; and graduate school visits. All student travel must be registered with and approved by the dean of students or his or her designee. For more information regarding student travel, please refer to the UTRGV Handbook of Operating Procedures.

Gang-Free Zones

Premises owned, rented or leased by The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley and areas within 1,000 feet of the premises are “gang-free” zones. Certain criminal offenses, including those involving gang-related crimes, will be enhanced to the next highest category of offense if committed in a gang-free zone by an individual 17 years or older. See Texas Penal Code, Section 71.028.

Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), 20 U.S.C. §1232g, and the Texas Public Information Act, Texas Government Code §552.001 et seq., are respectively federal and state laws that provide for the review and disclosure of student educational records. In accordance with these laws, The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley has adopted the following policy. Individuals are informed of their rights under these laws through this policy, which is included in the UTRGV Handbook of Operating Procedures and this catalog.
The University will not permit access to or the release of personally identifiable information contained in student education records without the written consent of the student to any party, except as follows:

- To appropriate University officials who require access to educational records in order to perform their legitimate educational duties.
- To officials of other schools in which a student seeks or intends to enroll, is enrolled in or receives services from, upon request of these officials.
- To federal, state or local officials or agencies authorized by law.
- In connection with a student’s application for, or receipt of, financial aid.
- To accrediting organizations or organizations conducting educational studies, provided that these organizations do not release personally identifiable data and destroy such data when it is no longer needed for the purpose for which it was obtained.
- To the parents of a dependent student as defined in section 152 of the Internal Revenue Code of 1954.
- In compliance with a judicial order or subpoena provided a reasonable effort is made to notify the student in advance, unless such subpoena specifically directs the institution not to disclose the existence of a subpoena.
- In an emergency situation if the information is necessary to protect the health or safety of students or other persons.
- To an alleged victim of any crime of violence, the results of the alleged perpetrator’s disciplinary proceeding may be released.

Additionally, any law enforcement information provided by state law enforcement agencies concerning registered sex offenders may be released from the University Police Department. The police department can be contacted at 956-665-7151. The University will release information in student education records to appropriate University or University of Texas System officials as indicated in no. 1 above when there is a legitimate educational interest. A school official is a person employed by the university in an administrative, supervisory, academic or research, or support staff position (including law enforcement unit personnel and health staff); a person or company with whom the university has contracted (such as an attorney, auditor or collection agent); a person serving on The University of Texas System Board of Regents; or a student serving on an official committee or assisting another school official in performing his or her tasks. A school official has a legitimate educational interest if the official needs to review an educational record in order to fulfill his or her professional responsibility. Upon request, the university discloses education records without consent to officials of another school in which a student seeks or intends to enroll. Where required by regulations, a record of requests for disclosure and such disclosure of personally identifiable information from student education records shall be maintained by the custodian of the public record for each student and will also be made available for inspection pursuant to this policy. If the university discovers that a third party who has received student records from the university has released or failed to destroy such records in violation of this policy, the university will determine any future access by that third party and may take further appropriate action. Respective records no longer subject to audit nor presently under request for access may be purged according to regular schedules.

**Directory Information**

At its discretion, the university may release directory information, which shall include:

- Name, address, telephone number
- Date and place of birth
Students may withhold directory information by notifying the Office of the Registrar in writing.

The institution will honor requests for nondisclosure until the student grants permission in writing, to release the information.

Access to File

Upon written request, the university shall provide a student with access to his or her educational records. The vice president for business affairs at The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley has been designated by the institution to coordinate the inspection and review procedures for student education records, which include admissions files, academic files and financial files. Students wishing to review their education records must make written requests to the vice president for business affairs listing the item or items of interest.

Education records covered by the Act will be made available within 45 days of the request. A list of education records and those officials responsible for the records shall be maintained at the Office of the Executive Vice President for Business Affairs. This list includes:

Academic Records

Students may obtain their records using ASSIST. You can login to myUTRGV with your UTRGV username and password and click on the ASSIST icon under the Applications area. Students requiring a paper copy of their grades may submit the Transcript Request Form to U Central, UTRGV’s one-stop –service center for student support, including Financial Aid, Registration, Admissions, and the Bursar’s Office. Requests are only accepted using our online ordering option. If you are not able to access our online ordering system, please email us at transcripts@utrgv.edu.

Online: Complete an online request for an official transcript.

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<tr>
<th>Department</th>
<th>Brownsville Campus</th>
<th>Edinburg Campus</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Office of Undergraduate Admissions</td>
<td>Main, Rm. 1.100</td>
<td>SSB, 1st floor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Office of the Registrar</td>
<td>Main, Rm. 1.100</td>
<td>SSB, 1st floor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate College</td>
<td>SABH, Rm. 1.202</td>
<td>MASS, Rm. 1.158</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Affairs/Student Services Records</td>
<td>Cortez Hall, Rm. 206</td>
<td>STHC, Rm. 1.105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counseling and Psychological Services</td>
<td>Cortez Hall, Rm. 237</td>
<td>UC, Rm. 109</td>
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<tr>
<td>Learning Center: Executive Director</td>
<td>Student Union, Rm. 2.10</td>
<td>UC, Rm. 104</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dean of Students</td>
<td>Cortez Hall, Rm. 204</td>
<td>UC, Rm. 104</td>
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<tr>
<td>Residence Life</td>
<td>Casa Bella</td>
<td>UC, Rm. 315</td>
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<tr>
<td>Career Center</td>
<td>Cortez Hall, Rm. 129</td>
<td>SSB, Rm. 2.101</td>
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Educational Records do not include:
- Financial records of the student's parents or guardian.
- Confidential letters of recommendations that were placed in the educational records of a student prior to January 1, 1975.
- Records of instructional, administrative and educational personnel that are kept in the sole possession of the maker and are not accessible or revealed to any other individual.
- Records of law enforcement units.
- Medical and psychological records.
- Records that only contain information about an individual built or acquired by the university after the individual is no longer a student at the institution.

**Challenge to Record**
Students may challenge the accuracy of their educational records. Students who believe that their educational records contain information that is inaccurate or misleading, or is otherwise in violation of their privacy or their rights, may discuss their problems informally with the department that generated the record in dispute. If an agreement is reached with respect to the student’s request, the appropriate records will be amended. If an agreement is not reached, the student will be notified within a reasonable period of time that the records will not be amended, and he or she will be informed by the head of that department of his or her right to a formal hearing.

A student’s requests for a formal hearing must be made in writing to the vice president for business affairs who, within a reasonable period of time after receiving such requests, will inform the student of the date, place and the time of the hearing. Students may present evidence relevant to the issues raised and may be assisted or represented at the hearings by one or more persons of their choice, including attorneys, at the students expense. The hearing officer who will adjudicate such challenges will be appointed by the vice president for business affairs in non-academic matters and by the provost/vice president for academic affairs in academic matters.

Decisions of the hearing officer will be based solely on the evidence presented at the hearing, will consist of the written statements summarizing the evidence and stating the reasons for the decisions, and will be delivered to all parties concerned. The education records will be corrected or amended in accordance with the decision of the hearing officer, if the decision is in favor of the student. If the decision is unsatisfactory to the student, the student may place with the education records statements commenting on the information in the records or statements setting forth any reasons for disagreeing with the decision of the hearing officer, or both.

The statements will be placed in the education records, maintained as part of the student’s records and released whenever the records in question are disclosed. Students who believe that the adjudications of their challenges were unfair or not in keeping with the provisions of the Act may request, in writing, assistance from the president of the university.

**Copies**
Students may access their academic records using ASSIST. Furthermore, students may have copies of documents included in their educational records and this policy. These copies will be made at the students expense at rates authorized in the Texas Public Information Act. (There is no charge for student transcripts.) Official copies of academic records or transcripts will not be released for students who have a delinquent financial obligation or financial “hold” at the university.
Complaints
Complaints regarding alleged failures to comply with the provisions of the FERPA may be submitted in writing to the Family Policy Compliance Office, U.S. Department of Education, 400 Maryland Avenue SW, Washington, D.C. 20202-4605.

Alcohol and Drug Policy

The University’s policy concerning the manufacture, sale, possession, distribution, or use of alcohol or illegal drugs is outlined in the UTRGV Handbook of Operating Procedures – Alcohol and Drug Free Workplace (http://www.utrgv.edu/hop/policies/adm-04-109.pdf).

The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley is a drug-free school and complies with the Drug Free Workplace Act of 1990. The Drug Free School and Communities Act of 1989 requires institutions of higher education to adopt and implement programs to prevent the unlawful possession, use, or distribution of illicit drugs and alcohol. Information concerning these programs must be distributed to students annually. For information regarding these policies please refer to the following: Drug Free School and Communities Act provided by the Dean of Students at www.utrgv.edu/dos.

UTRGV is committed to maintaining a safe and healthy environment for the campus community. Alcohol and other drugs should not interfere with the university’s educational mission. All UTRGV students, faculty members, staff members, administrators and visitors are subject to local state and federal laws regarding the unlawful possession, distribution, or use of alcohol or illegal drugs.

The following university policies can be found in the UTRGV Handbook of Operating Procedures. The possession, transportation, and/or consumption of alcohol by individuals less than 21 years of age is strictly prohibited. University police officers enforce laws regulating the use of alcoholic beverages and underage drinking with court appearance citations, referral to the Office of Student Rights and Responsibilities and/or arrest. Alcoholic beverages may not be consumed or possessed in public areas of the university. Additional policies regarding alcohol apply at campus housing areas. If a student is found responsible for violating the alcohol policies, sanctions range from educational programs to expulsion. In addition, according to the UTRGV Student Code of Conduct the use, manufacture, possession, sale, or distribution on the campus of the substances defined and regulated under Chapters 481, 484 and 485 of the Texas Health and Safety Code, except as may be allowed by the provisions of such articles. If a student is found responsible of the illegal use, possession, or sale of a drug or narcotic on campus, the minimum penalty shall be suspension from the institution for a specified period of time; and/or suspension of rights and privileges.

Hazing

Hazing in state educational institutions is prohibited by both state law (Sections 51.936 & 37.151 et seq., Texas Education Code) and by the Regents’ Rules and Regulations (Rule 50101). Individuals or organizations engaging in hazing could be subject to fines and charged with criminal offenses. Additionally, the law does not affect or in any way restrict the right of the university to enforce its own rules against hazing.
A person commits an offense if the person: engages in hazing; solicits, encourages, directs, aids or attempts to aid another engaging in hazing; Recklessly permits hazing to occur; or Has firsthand knowledge of the planning of a specific hazing incident involving a student in an educational institution, or has firsthand knowledge that a specific hazing incident has occurred, and knowingly fails to report that knowledge in writing to the dean of students or other appropriate official of the institution.

Organizations
An organization commits an offense if the organization condones or encourages hazing or if an officer or any combination of members, pledges, or alumni of the organization commits or assists in the commission of hazing.

Definition
The term “hazing” is broadly defined by statute to mean any intentional, knowing, or reckless act, occurring on or off the campus of an educational institution, by one person alone or acting with others, directed against a student, that endangers the mental or physical health or safety of a student for the purpose of pledging, being initiated into, affiliating with, holding office in, or maintaining membership in an organization. Hazing includes, but is not limited to:

- Any type of physical brutality, such as whipping, beating, striking, branding, electronic shocking, placing of a harmful substance on the body, or similar activity.
- Any type of physical activity, such as sleep deprivation, exposure to the elements, confinement in a small space, calisthenics, or other activity that subject the student to unreasonable risk of harm or that adversely affects the mental or physical health or safety of the student.
- Any activity involving the consumption of a food, liquid, alcoholic beverage, liquor, drug or other substance that subjects the student to an unreasonable risk of harm or that adversely affects the mental or physical health or safety of the student.
- Any activity that intimidates or threatens the student with ostracism, that subjects the student to extreme mental stress, shame or humiliation, that adversely affects the mental health or dignity of the student or discourages the student from entering or remaining registered in an educational institution, or that may reasonably be expected to cause a student to leave the organization or the institution rather than submit to acts described in this subdivision.
- Any activity that induces, causes, or requires the student to perform a duty or task that involves a violation of the Penal Code.

The fact that a person consented to or acquiesced in a hazing activity is not a defense to prosecution. The University of Texas System Board of Regents’ Rules and Regulations, Rule 50101, Sec. 2.8 provides that, “Any student who, acting singly or in concert with others, engages in hazing is subject to discipline. Hazing in state educational institutions is prohibited by state law (Texas Education Code, Section 51.936). Hazing with or without the consent of a student whether on or off campus is prohibited, and a violation of that prohibition renders both the person inflicting the hazing and the person submitting to the hazing subject to discipline. Initiations or activities of organizations may include no feature that is dangerous, harmful, or degrading to the student, and a violation of this prohibition renders both the organization and participating individuals subject to discipline."

Hazing with or without the consent of a student is prohibited by the System, and a violation of that prohibition renders both the person inflicting the hazing and the person submitting to the hazing subject to discipline. Initiations or activities by organizations may include no feature which is dangerous, harmful, or degrading to the student, and a violation of this prohibition
renders both the organization and participating individuals subject to discipline. Activities which under certain conditions constitute acts that are dangerous, harmful, or degrading, in violation of Rules include but are not limited to: calisthenics, such as sit-ups, push-ups, or any other form of physical exercise; total or partial nudity at any time; the eating or ingestion of any unwanted substance; the wearing or carrying of any obscene or physically burdensome article; paddle swats, including the trading of swats; pushing, shoving, tackling, or any other physical contact; throwing oil, syrup, flour, or any harmful substance on a person; rat court, kangaroo court, or other individual interrogation; forced consumption of alcoholic beverages either by threats or peer pressure; lineups intended to demean or intimidate; transportation and abandonment (road trips, kidnaps, walks, rides, drops); confining individuals in an area that is uncomfortable or dangerous (hot box effect, high temperature, too small); any type of personal servitude that is demeaning or of personal benefit to the individual members; wearing of embarrassing or uncomfortable clothing; assigning pranks such as stealing; painting objects; harassing other organizations; intentionally messing up the house or room for clean up; demeaning names; yelling and screaming; and requiring boxing matches or fights for entertainment.

**Immunity**

In an effort to encourage reporting of hazing incidents, the law grants immunity from civil or criminal liability to any person who reports a specific hazing event in good faith and without malice to the dean of students or other appropriate official of the institution and immunizes that person for participation in any judicial proceeding resulting from that report. Additionally, a doctor or other medical practitioner who treats a student who may have been subjected to hazing may make a good faith report of the suspected hazing activities to police or other law enforcement officials and is immune from civil or other liability that might otherwise be imposed or incurred as a result of the report. The penalty for failure to report is a fine of up to $1,000, up to 180 days in jail, or both. Penalties for other hazing offenses vary according to the severity of the injury, which results and include fines from $500 to $10,000 and/or confinement for up to two years.

**Copyrighted Material**

Using peer-to-peer (P2P) file-sharing applications to illegally share copyrighted music and movies is the number one way students violate federal copyright law. Students, faculty and staff are all obligated to comply with federal law and university policy regarding appropriate use of information technology and avoiding copyright infringement.

**Bandwidth**

The university enforces network policies regarding bandwidth usage and limits. Under some circumstances, the university may activate monitoring tools designed to detect abnormal or potentially infringing traffic in order to determine its appropriateness and, if necessary, initiate disciplinary procedures.

**Copyright Complaints and Legal Content Alternatives**

If you copy and distribute copyrighted material without legal permission, you may be found liable for civil or criminal copyright infringement. Civil penalties for Federal Copyright infringement range from $750 per song to $150,000 in damages for each willful act. Criminal penalties can run up to five years in prison and $250,000 in fines. The university cannot protect you from a copyright complaint. The university may also be required by law to disclose information about you to a complainant for use in pursuing legal action against you. The process for handling DMCA notices received by the university is outlined in the Digital Millennium Copyright Act (DMCA) policy. The penalties for violation of copyright law can range from university sanctions
to civil and criminal prosecution. You are not protected from financial penalty just because you received material at no cost or are distributing material with no charge. Your only protection is to not possess or distribute any unlicensed copyrighted material. There are many Web sites that provide legal online music, movies, and other content. Refer to the Keep It Legal page for a list of services that comply with the DMCA.

Peer-to-peer Software
Peer-to-peer (P2P) applications such as BitTorrent, BearShare, Limewire, Morpheus, iMesh and KaZaA make it easy for you to share files, and there are legitimate uses for this class of software. However, please keep the following guidelines in mind.

Network Bandwidth
Most P2P applications are configured so other users can access your hard drive and share your files all the time. This constant file transfer can degrade your computer’s performance and generate heavy traffic loads on the university network. P2P applications can consume your weekly allocation very quickly. The university’s network bandwidth consumption is monitored. If your usage impacts the overall performance of the network, your computer may be blocked. If you use a P2P application to share content legally, you should know how to control or disable the application.

Privacy
If you are running a P2P application, you may be inadvertently sharing personal information, such as email messages or credit card information. You need to make sure you know which files and data the application is sharing. You should know how to control or disable your P2P application to ensure that you are not inadvertently sharing personal information.

Security
Viruses are easily spread using P2P applications. Many P2P applications include “malware” in the download, so you may be unintentionally infecting your computer. To protect your computer, keep your anti-virus program up-to-date and only install programs acquired from reputable sources. You can download anti-virus software on the UTRGV Downloads site.

Resource Use
Some P2P applications use your computer as a computational or storage resource for another organization’s use. This may not be an acceptable use of state-owned resources such as the university network or university-owned computers. Do not permit any such use of your system without the consent of the university. For assistance, please contact the Information Security Office at ciso@utrgv.edu.

University Policy and Assistance
By running a P2P application, you may be consuming excessive network bandwidth and/or violating copyright law, both of which are violations of the university’s rules for acceptable use of information technology. You may also be sharing confidential information and/or making your computer insecure.

If you have questions about P2P applications, please call the IT Help Desk at 956-665-2020 or send an email to the IT Help Desk.

Solicitation on Campus
The University’s policy on solicitation is outlined in the UTRGV Handbook of Operating Procedures – Solicitation on Campus (http://www.utrgv.edu/hop/policies/adm-10-104.pdf). Please refer to the policy for a list of permissible activities.

**Housing and Residence Life**

The Office of Housing and Residence Life provides convenient and affordable housing to students attending the university, including those enrolled in the School of Medicine. Living on campus is a great way for students to get save time commuting, collaborate with peers in group settings and common learning spaces in the dorm, and be involved. UTRGV Housing and Residence Life offers shared suites in Troxel Hall designed to meet students’ needs and provides an environment that supports academic growth and community respect by offering opportunities for leadership, involvement, and connections for residents that live it up on campus. Students living on campus will also be able to participate in social and educational events hosted by the Residence Life staff. Students who live on campus will also have a meal plan that will provide meals at the University Dining Hall or other on-campus venues through the use of Dining Dollars. Scholarships, grants and loans are available through Financial Aid department to assist with students’ housing costs. The office offers affordable pricing and payment plans with no credit checks to meet students’ financial needs. Contracts work with the academic year and semesters so that students are only in housing while attending classes.

**Steps to apply:**

1. Visit my.utrgv.edu and Log in with your UTRGV Credentials.
2. Click on the Student Housing Icon which will reroute you to the StarRez Housing Portal
3. Click on the Application Link and select the term Fall 2015-Spring 2016.
4. Have your credit card ready to pay online the $100 refundable deposit and $50 nonrefundable application fee to advance to contract page.
5. Complete all 15 sections and submit application.
6. Wait for email from home@utrgv.edu on room assignments and further instructions.

Students needing help with the Residence Life Application Portal or those with disabilities who require assistance or special accommodations should contact 956-665-3439 or email home@utrgv.edu. The Office of Housing and Residence Life is entitled to check the all applicants’ criminal history record and will notify the student if this information is used to deny them housing as per Texas Government Code, Section 411.0945. All policies and procedures related to the Office of Housing and Residence Life can be referenced in the Resident Handbook. The Resident Handbook can be downloaded from our website at www.utrgv.edu/housing or students may pick up a copy at any of our offices.

**Disclaimer**

The Student Handbook is not all encompassing and may not account for all situations or changes in laws that may arise in the course of operations during the academic year. The SOM Office of Student Affairs reserves the right to amend or add to the Student Handbook at their discretion. The Associate Dean for Student Affairs will interpret and make administrative decisions as needed to this handbook to continue operations and services to students.

Updated: 10/21/2016