

**BURRELL COLLEGE
OF OSTEOPATHIC MEDICINE
POLICY MANUAL**

SECTION: Student Administration

BCOM Policy 3112

TOPIC: Code of Ethics and Honor

Approval Date: 08/03/17

Effective Date: 08/03/17

Approved: *Signature on File*

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PURPOSE

The Burrell College of Osteopathic Medicine (BCOM) Student Code of Ethics and Honor (“The Code”) helps maintain integrity and accountability within the BCOM community. All BCOM students will act in accordance with the BCOM Student Code of Ethics and Honor, and should expect their peers to do the same. Students should act with integrity and morals, serve as examples to their classmates, and maintain an attitude which promotes mutual respect. Actions not in accordance with the standards set herein constitute a violation of this Code.

SCOPE

The BCOM Code of Ethics and Honor applies to all BCOM students in all programs offered at BCOM. The Code applies to all conduct that adversely affect the BCOM community and/or the pursuit of the BCOM mission and reputation that occur on the BCOM campus, at BCOM-related events and conduct off campus.

RESPONSIBLE POLICY OFFICIAL(S):

The Responsible Official(s) for this policy includes the President, Dean/Chief Academic Officer (CAO), the Associate Dean for Students, the Senior Associate Dean for Academics or the Associate Dean for Graduate Education as appropriate. These individuals may designate another employee of BCOM to oversee the development and administration of the policy, if appropriate and all agree.

POLICY

The BCOM Student Code of Ethics and Honor intends to set explicit minimum standards to which BCOM students will be expected to not only adhere to the Code, but to also support the same standard of conduct amongst their classmates. Personal, academic and professional integrity are the foundation of the Code. Honesty, integrity, accountability, mutual respect and trust are values that BCOM considers as being essential for the medical profession. Students will be actively involved in supporting and working together to achieve these values while at BCOM and throughout their professional careers. The professional environment that BCOM fosters is a crucial component in the education and training of physicians with high standards and integrity.

The Code is not meant to supersede any policies, regulations, statutes, or laws that exist within BCOM, the City of Las Cruces, Dona Ana County, the State of New Mexico, or US federal jurisdiction.

It is not possible to enumerate all examples of expected academic and professional behavior nor is it possible to enumerate all behaviors that would be considered inappropriate, unprofessional, unethical, or not in keeping with the standards of BCOM. Specific examples of behavior that may constitute a violation of the BCOM Code of Ethics and Honor include, but are not limited to, the following:

1. Academic Integrity

The goal of the Code is to foster a spirit of honesty and a high standard of integrity. Therefore, BCOM students are responsible for proper conduct and integrity in all academic and clinical work. Students have an obligation to their future patients to develop to the best of their ability their medical knowledge and skills.

A. Examinations

1. Students must demonstrate honor and integrity during examinations.
2. Examinations are meant to measure *individual* achievement. Cheating during examinations is unethical and will not be tolerated. Cheating includes, but is not limited to:
 - Looking at another student's exam paper or work during an examination.
 - Revealing test information to another student.
 - Referring to notes or textual matter during an examination, unless approved by faculty.
 - Violating any other policy of examinations.
3. During examinations, students have an obligation to maintain a non-disruptive atmosphere.
4. Students cannot communicate specific information regarding an examination to a classmate who has not yet completed that examination during that academic year.
5. As a function of logging in to the online exam software, students provide an affirmation that their conduct was in accordance with the Code of Ethics and Honor.

The attempt of any medical student to present work taken in part or in whole from another source, as their own is regarded by the College as a very serious offense and renders the offender liable to disciplinary action up to and including dismissal from the College.

Dishonesty of any kind on any graded activity, including, but not limited to, examinations, written assignments, unauthorized possession of examination questions, the use of unauthorized notes during an examination, using their phone or any other unauthorized electronic devices, obtaining information during an examination from another medical student, assisting others to violate honesty, altering grade records, or illegally entering a faculty or administrative office without permission, represent violations of academic integrity.

B. Academic Work

Offering the work of another as one's own without proper acknowledgement is plagiarism; therefore, any medical student who fails to give credit for quotations or essentially identical material taken from any published work printed or online (books, journals, encyclopedias, other reference works, etc.) or from the themes, reports, or writings of anyone other than themselves, has committed plagiarism. Students are responsible to become familiar with all standing policies.

In deference to the scientists, doctors, and patients who have shared their knowledge and experience for the betterment of medical learning, students have a responsibility to not intentionally misrepresent the work of others nor claim it as our own.

During training, students will be provided with communal instructional material that will greatly aid their learning.

Students should make every effort to protect and preserve these resources for the use of future peers and classmates. A disregard, intentional or unintentional, for the proper care of these educational resources will be deemed a violation of the Code of Ethics and Honor and may be subject to disciplinary action.

2. Academic Environment

The College considers both the didactic and clinical aspects of learning to be equally important in the education process. Thus, we strive to create, in all educational settings, environments conducive to optimal learning. The following are policies and recommendations designed to enhance and guarantee such an experience for all our students:

Professionalism is expected of students at all times during their matriculation at BCOM. Students are encouraged to respect the right of their classmates to study and learn in a conducive and enriching environment. The use of electronic devices during class should not in any way distract the student or fellow classmates from participating fully in the educational experience. Examples of unprofessional conduct involving use of electronic devices in the classroom include, but are not limited to: use of mobile phones/devices (phones should be turned off unless an exception is granted for potential emergency notification); or the use of computers for non-class activities (social networking, accessing game sites, watching movies, etc.).

Additionally, small children might become distractions within the classroom environment, and as such are not allowed in the lecture halls or teaching labs during class periods. Students in violation of this policy will be asked to leave the classroom. In exceptional circumstances which require supervision of a child during regular classroom sessions, a student may be allowed to access learning activities from a seminar or conference room equipped with teleconferencing capabilities. Permission must be granted by the Office of Student Affairs in advance (with as much advance notice as possible), in this eventuality.

3. Academic Freedom

BCOM students are members of the academic community. As citizens, students should enjoy the same rights and responsibilities that other citizens of the BCOM community enjoy. As members of the academic community, students are subject to all privileges and obligations entrusted to them by virtue of this membership. Faculty members and administrative officials should ensure that institutional authority and power is not employed to inhibit the academic, intellectual, and personal development of students which is often fostered by exercising these rights. (Adapted from the 1992 American Association of University Professor's statement on Student Rights and Freedom).

4. Social Behavior

BCOM students are representing the College at all times; therefore, the behavior and speech of our students should demonstrate respect for all individuals, and should embrace diversity and the community as a whole. Students should avoid disparaging remarks or actions at all times. Students must work to create an environment that nurtures learning, communication and respect while avoiding verbal, written or physical behavior that could create a hostile or intimidating environment.

BCOM students' actions reflect upon the College, therefore students should adhere to the standards of professional conduct while on campus, but especially while representing the College at any off campus event or venue. Students should be aware that their behavior in any and every environment does reflect on the College.

5. Professional Standards in Social Media

The Burrell College of Osteopathic Medicine recognizes that online social networking has become an increasingly important means of facilitating communication. A social networking site is a space on the internet where users can create a profile and connect that profile to others (whether it be individuals or entities) to establish a personal or professional network. Examples include, but are not limited to, email, Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, Instagram, Pinterest, Snapchat, etc. Blogs are also a form of social media that provide commentary or serve as a personal on-line diary.

Social networking has provided unique opportunities for communication, it has also created a forum for potential issues as future osteopathic physicians. BCOM students, as professionals, are bound by social contracts and professional obligations, therefore medical students must understand the public nature of social networking forums and the permanent nature of their postings on such sites. These sites offer immense potential for lapses of professionalism that may be freely visible by many people, despite the impression of privacy these sites portray.

Unprofessional postings include, but are not limited to: profanity; discriminatory statements; disparaging classmates, faculty, or BCOM; sexually suggestive material. Students should realize that these posts are in a public forum and may be traceable to them as individuals.

Students should be well aware that inappropriate use of social media can severely affect their continued success at BCOM, their future employment and medical licensure.

Potential consequences of unethical online behavior

Postings on any social networking site are subject to the same standards of professionalism as any other personal or professional interaction, and will be treated as made in a public forum. The permanence and written nature of online postings cause them to be subject to higher levels of scrutiny than many other forms of communication.

The use of social networking sites can have legal ramifications. Comments made regarding the care of patients, or that portray a professional colleague in an unprofessional manner, may be used in court as evidence of a variety of claims (including libel, slander, defamation of character, negligence, etc.) or in other disciplinary proceedings (e.g. State Medical Licensing Boards). Libel, slander, and other forms of defamation generally refer to the communication (written, oral, etc.) of a false statement about a person that injures their reputation. Other more severe potential consequences include the revocation of a residency selection or sanctions by a professional licensing board.

Additionally, statements and photos posted within these sites are potentially viewable by program directors and/or future employers. It is not uncommon for program directors to search for the social networking profiles of potential residents and to use the discovered information as a factor in their selection process. Individuals have been denied residency positions and other employment opportunities as a result of information found on social media sites.

The Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) applies to social networking sites, and violators may be subject to legal and civil prosecution, and workplace discipline as with other HIPAA violations.

In addition, cyber stalking and other inappropriate postings can be considered forms of sexual harassment. Improprieties expressed online related to personal relationships with other medical students are governed by BCOM sexual harassment policies.

Guidelines for Online Social Networking:

- The lines between public and private, as well as personal and professional, are often blurred in online social networks. Once a student identifies themselves as a BCOM student, their personal perception about BCOM, as well as its faculty, staff and students, may influence those who have access to your social network profile. Therefore, all content associated with a student's online postings should be consistent with the expectation of professionalism and be in line with BCOM's Mission, values and professional standards.
- Unprofessional online postings by others on your page may reflect poorly on you. It is advisable to monitor others' postings on your profile and strive to ensure that the content would not be viewed as unprofessional. It is recommended to block unprofessional posts when possible.
- Settings should be restricted so that only individuals authorized to access personal profiles may see this

information. Also, no identification numbers or demographic information which might allow recognition of an individual should be shared online.

- It is the student's responsibility to make sure that photos posted online, even those posted by others, are appropriate and professional. As a general rule it is wise to remove any inappropriate photos and to refrain from "tagging" photos of classmates or other individuals affiliated with the College unless you have explicit permission from them to do so. Use the privacy or account settings to block photo "tagging" with personal information.
- Online discussions of specific patients should be strictly avoided, ***even if all identifying information is excluded***. It is possible that someone could recognize the patient referred to in the post based on the context, this is especially true in small town or rural areas.
- Under no circumstances should photos of patients, cadavers or photos depicting the body parts of patients/cadavers be displayed online, ***even if permission is provided***. These photos can be shared by others and their actions could lead to legal or professional consequences for the person who originally posted the image.
- Never have or interact with patients on social media sites. This provides an opportunity for a dual relationship, which may negatively affect the doctor-patient relationship and may have legal consequences.
- Do not infringe upon another's copyrighted or trademarked materials. The posting of any content, including photos or other media, is an acknowledgement of ownership and legal rights to use these items.
- Refrain from accessing social networking sites while in class, at work, or in clinical work areas.

6. **Professional Conduct**

Establishing and maintaining the highest standards of honor and personal integrity during osteopathic medical school are critical to the training of physicians. It is the responsibility of BCOM, and every member of the BCOM community, to actively model and support the highest level of professionalism as well as ethical and intellectual integrity.

A. **Respect for Patients**

Students will take the utmost care to ensure patient respect and confidentiality. BCOM osteopathic medical students will demonstrate respect for patients through appropriate language and behavior, including that which is non-threatening and non-judgmental. Patient privacy and modesty should be respected as much as possible during history taking, physical examinations, and any other contact, to maintain professional relationships with the patients and their families. It is also important that students be truthful and not intentionally mislead or give false information. With this in mind, students should avoid disclosing information to a patient that only the patient's physician should reveal. Students should always consult more experienced members of the medical team regarding patient care, or as requested by the patient. Although osteopathic medical students see patients in clinical settings, students must remember that they are not licensed to practice medicine. Students must never introduce themselves as, or allow patients to carry the mistaken impression, that they are licensed physicians rather than osteopathic medical students.

B. **Respect for Faculty, Staff, Classmates and the Community**

Students must exhibit respect for BCOM faculty, staff, colleagues and others with whom they interact, including guests and members of the general public. This deference should be demonstrated by punctuality,

prompt execution of reasonable instructions and respect for their teachers and anyone responsible for patient care and student education. In addition, students should make every effort to maintain an even disposition, display a judicious use of others' time, and handle private information in a mature and confidential manner. When a disagreement with another individual occurs, students should always express views in a calm, respectful and professional manner, understanding that a mutual agreement will not always be reached. Disagreements should never be voiced in the presence of patients and should be carried out in private as soon as time permits.

Students are expected to promote and nurture strong personal ethics and firm moral character at all times. With the understanding that conflicts may exist or arise between personal beliefs and their practice of medicine, students are encouraged to be proactive in order to resolve these situations.

C. Confidentiality of Information

The written medical record is vital in communicating important patient information to the healthcare team; it is also a legal document and available for patient review. As such, it is crucial that BCOM students recognize the value of the patient's medical information, and manifest this through the accurate chronicling of all pertinent patient data.

Written medical documents, including electronic correspondence pertaining to patients and their care, must be legible, truthful, complete and accurate to the best of the student's knowledge and abilities. To avoid an accidental breach of confidentiality, students will not discuss patient care in common areas. ***Appropriate medical and/or personal information about patients should only be shared with health professionals directly involved in the patient's care.*** Any communication of patient information in the course of educational presentations will always be void of any patient identifying information and with the permission of the attending physician(s).

Students should be aware that disclosing any amount of patient information, even though primary identifying information is omitted, may still compromise the confidentiality and privacy of the patient. This includes sharing information in any public format (in conversation, social media posts, sharing information with friends and associates, etc.).

D. Laws, Policies and Regulations

All BCOM students are required to abide by Federal, State, County, City and any other local laws.

E. Offering Medical Advice

Students should always avoid giving medical advice to anyone, as this could represent the illegal practice of medicine without a license. The consequences of such misrepresentation can result in a violation of HIPAA that may cause harm and endanger others. As a student you are **not** licensed to practice medicine.

F. American Osteopathic Association Code of Ethics

As future osteopathic physicians, BCOM students should also become familiar with the American Osteopathic Association (AOA) Code of Ethics. It is expected that all BCOM osteopathic medical students will abide by the AOA Code of Ethics. The AOA Code of Ethics can be found on their website at the following link: <http://www.osteopathic.org/inside-aoa/about/leadership/Pages/aoa-code-of-ethics.aspx>