

*Rules and Procedures of the  
Vanderbilt University School of Medicine*

(Revised August 2025)

## ***Introduction***

Successful functioning of a modern medical school requires effective lines of communication and clear definition of authority. *Rules and Procedures* identifies roles and responsibilities in the governance of the School of Medicine. It describes an ordered structure that is based in the faculty, organized by Departments, coordinated by the Executive Faculty of department chairs and other School of Medicine leaders, and administered by the Dean of the School of Medicine (henceforth referred to as “the Dean”).

The School of Medicine is a part of the greater Vanderbilt University community and as such has strong commitments to teaching and research. The faculty of the School of Medicine functions within this university-wide community. Yet, the distinctive role of the faculty of the School of Medicine in patient care and health-related research and its integration with the health-care system of the Vanderbilt University Medical Center as an important setting for its programs lead to unique governance issues. This document identifies features of governance that are especially applicable to the School of Medicine, but consistent with the procedures of the University and the governing protocols of the Medical Center.

The departments are central to functioning of the School of Medicine. Department chairs, in many cases working in close coordination with center and institute directors, have considerable responsibility and authority in hiring faculty and administering departmental programs. The Dean and other School leaders work closely with the chairs to assure these efforts are coordinated with school-wide goals and policies.

In 2016 Vanderbilt University underwent a reorganization that moved the Vanderbilt University Medical Center (VUMC) into a legally separate, not-for-profit entity. As part of the reorganization, four basic science departments remained within Vanderbilt University, while 21 clinical and nonclinical departments became part of VUMC (see Article III, Section 1). Faculty members in departments that are part of VUMC are employed by the medical center and are appointed to the faculty of Vanderbilt University. To preserve the integrated functioning of the medical school with the medical center, the Dean of the School of Medicine also serves as the President and CEO of VUMC. This position reports to an independent Board of Directors for the medical center, while still reporting to the University Chancellor as Dean of the medical school. The Dean also works in consultation with the University Provost for the review and endorsement of actions affecting the faculty. A new position within the School of Medicine, Dean of Basic Sciences, has authority to take actions affecting faculty in the four basic science departments in consultation with the Dean of the School of Medicine and with the review and endorsement of the Provost. The Dean has authority over all aspects of the M.D. educational program and decisions impacting the program (see Article I, Section 2). The Rules and Procedures of the School of Medicine have been updated to accommodate the reorganization.

The faculty remains at the heart of the School of Medicine. Our governance is effective only so long as we are able to attract and retain a highly effective faculty with a breadth of skills and backgrounds – a faculty that can function in the atmosphere of collegiality that has been the hallmark of our institution. In addition to departmental governance, the Faculty Advisory Council provides a complementary mechanism for communication between the faculty at large and the Dean. The roles and responsibilities of the Faculty Advisory Council were revised in 2003, 2020, and 2025. The members of the Council are elected by departmental faculty to represent them in issues of importance to the faculty, students, and administration. The Council enables the School to benefit directly from the ideas and concerns of faculty members.

I look forward to working with all faculty, students, and staff in the medical center and throughout the university to advance the strategic priorities and important vital missions of the School of Medicine.

Jeffrey R. Balser, M.D., Ph.D.

Dean, School of Medicine; President and CEO, Vanderbilt University Medical Center

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## Article I

### *Authority*

1. Insofar as these *Rules and Procedures* address the internal administration of the faculty of the School of Medicine, they are adopted by authority of Chapter II Section C.2 of the *Code of By-Laws* of Vanderbilt University. *Rules and Procedures* contained herein that are administrative in nature are adopted under authority granted through the Chancellor and Assisting Officers under Chapter II, Section B.1 of the *Code of By-Laws*.
2. Insofar as these *Rules and Procedures* address the internal administration of the Doctor of Medicine (M.D.) program and the other degree programs offered by the School of Medicine, the Dean has final authority designated by the Chancellor over all aspects of those programs, and any decision that impacts those programs.
3. These *Rules and Procedures* are supplemental to the *Code of By-Laws*, *The Constitution of the Faculty Assembly and Faculty Senate*, the *Faculty Manual* and other governance documents applicable to the University at large. They address the unique characteristics of the School of Medicine and take into account the delegation of administrative and academic authorities through the Dean of the School of Medicine (hereafter, “the Dean”).
4. In the event of conflicts between these *Rules and Procedures* and governance documents or procedures applicable to the University at large, University governance documents and procedures shall take precedence. In the event that such conflicts are identified, these *Rules and Procedures* shall be amended to eliminate the conflict.

## Article II

### *The Faculty*

1. The faculty of the School of Medicine shall consist of all its Professors, Associate Professors, Assistant Professors and Instructors, and other academic titles as approved by the Board of Trust and listed in the *Faculty Manual* of the University.
2. Each member of the faculty of the School of Medicine shall have a primary appointment in one of its departments (See Article III), recommended by appropriate School of Medicine committees (See Article IV) and approved by the Dean, and where indicated for tenure track appointments the Provost, the Chancellor, and the University Board of Trust. For School of Medicine basic science departments in Vanderbilt University, the Dean of Basic Sciences will

approve appointments in consultation with the Dean. The primary department is responsible for the provisions of salary support, space and the recommendation of continuation of appointment and promotion for each of its faculty.

3. Each faculty member is responsible to the chair of the department of primary appointment in discharging the obligations of a member of the faculty of the School of Medicine. The Dean is responsible for assuring that standards for faculty conduct are observed and for supporting the processes involved in responding to faculty grievances, as defined in the Vanderbilt University Faculty Manual. In cases of faculty misconduct or faculty grievances involving faculty in School of Medicine basic science departments in Vanderbilt University, the Dean of Basic Sciences will administer the *Faculty Manual* Process in consultation with the Dean.
4. In addition to the primary appointment, faculty members may hold secondary appointments in other departments of the School of Medicine or in other Schools of the University with the approval of the chair of the primary department and the deans of Schools where the primary and secondary appointments are to reside. Termination of the primary appointment automatically terminates all secondary appointments. Unless provided for as a special circumstance under an appointment specified in the *Faculty Manual*, secondary appointments carry no tenure.
5. The School of Medicine general faculty shall meet at least annually. The Dean shall preside at these meetings. The meeting shall be held near the close of each academic year. Additional meetings may be convened by the Dean.

Members of the faculty may petition the Dean to call a meeting of the School of Medicine general faculty by submitting signatures of at least fifty members of the full-time faculty of the School of Medicine. These members must represent at least three departments.

6. The faculty shall have timely access to summaries of the actions of the Executive Faculty (See Article IV) and the Faculty Advisory Council (See Article V) as arranged by the Dean through the Office of Faculty and Medical Staff Engagement. The Executive Faculty and the Faculty Advisory Council may withhold from such review any information that they determine to be confidential.

# Article III

## *The Departments*

1. For the purpose of representation of the Executive Faculty, Executive Committee of the Executive Faculty and the Faculty Advisory Council, the departments of the School of Medicine include four basic science departments in Vanderbilt University as follows: Biochemistry, Cell & Developmental Biology, Molecular Physiology & Biophysics and Pharmacology; and 21 clinical and non-clinical departments in VUMC as follows: Anesthesiology; Biomedical Informatics; Biostatistics; Dermatology; Emergency Medicine; Health Policy; Hearing and Speech Sciences; Medicine; Neurology; Obstetrics and Gynecology; Ophthalmology and Visual Sciences; Orthopaedic Surgery; Otolaryngology – Head and Neck Surgery; Pathology, Microbiology and Immunology; Pediatrics; Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation; Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences; Radiation Oncology; Radiology and Radiological Sciences; Urology; and the Section of Surgical Sciences.

The Section of Surgical Sciences contains departments that are overseen by the Chair of the Section and where faculty may be appointed (Cardiac Surgery, General Surgery, Neurological Surgery, Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery, Pediatric Surgery, Plastic Surgery, Thoracic Surgery and Vascular Surgery) but are not independently represented on the Executive Faculty. Departments may be established or discontinued by the Dean upon consultation with the Executive Faculty and, where appropriate, with the Dean of Basic Sciences. Other academic units within or across departments, such as Centers or Institutes, may be established or discontinued by the Dean after consultation with the Executive Faculty and, where appropriate, with the Dean of Basic Sciences.

2. Each department shall have a chair who is appointed by the Dean acting on the advice of chair search committee formed by the Dean or, where appropriate, the Dean of Basic Sciences. The Dean and the Dean of Basic Sciences will collaborate on the formation of all department chair search committees in the School. The chair shall be responsible for recommending faculty appointments and promotions within the department in accordance with the rules and regulations of the School and University; for administering the educational programs of the department in accordance with the curriculum plan approved by the Executive Faculty; for stimulating and supporting research studies in the department; in the case of departments with clinical roles and responsibilities in VUMC, for the proper discharge of responsibilities that may be required of the department in the medical care of patients; and for other administrative duties of a department chair.

Department chairs are subject to continued evaluation and systematic appraisal by the Dean and, upon his/her request, by competent outside consultants.

3. Each department chair is responsible for holding departmental meetings periodically during the academic year for all members of its faculty. The purpose of these meetings shall be to inform the faculty of events, policies, procedures and decisions at the level of the Department, School, University, and Medical Center.

4. From time to time, the Dean may determine that a department would benefit from extramural review. In these cases, a department may be reviewed by an *ad hoc* committee appointed by the Dean of the School of Medicine at the initiative of the Dean, the Dean of Basic Sciences where appropriate, or the department chair. The review committee shall consist of faculty members from other universities, most of whom will be members of the discipline being reviewed. The committee shall report to the Dean, and the Dean of Basic Sciences where appropriate, who will review and share the findings of the report with the department chair.
5. Each department shall have a Departmental Appointments and Promotions Committee consisting of the department chair or chair's designee and all full-time, tenured, full professors, or, in the case of large departments, at least six full-time tenured, full professors. Full professors on other academic tracks may serve in addition to the tenured members. The Committee shall convene at the call of the chair, and no case less than annually, to review candidates for appointment to the faculty or promotion through the academic ranks. Only the department chair shall have authority to nominate faculty for appointment or promotion to the School, and the chair will submit the credentials of such faculty to the Dean. The Dean may, in turn, ask for approval of the Chancellor and The Board of Trust if a faculty appointment in these departments may be a tenured appointment. For faculty in School of Medicine basic science departments in Vanderbilt University, the Dean of Basic Sciences will approve faculty promotions in consultation with the Dean prior to advancing to the university.
6. Each department shall have an annual process for review of all departmental faculty led by the chair or chair's designee and will provide feedback to the faculty member on their academic performance and when applicable their clinical and administrative performance, and their progress to promotion and when applicable, to tenure.

# Article IV

## *The Executive Faculty*

1. The Dean of the School of Medicine presides at the meetings of the Executive Faculty. In the Dean's absence a member of the Executive Faculty who is designated by the Dean shall preside. The Executive Faculty shall consist of: The Dean of the School of Medicine, the Dean for Basic Sciences, the chairs of all duly established departments in the School of Medicine (except those in the Section of Surgical Sciences), the Chair of the Faculty Advisory Council, and five additional "at large" Faculty Advisory Council members (see Article V), at least one of whom is at the rank of full professor, and at least one of whom is from a Basic Sciences Department. The "at large" members from the Faculty Advisory Council are selected by the Faculty Advisory Council and endorsed by the Dean. *Ex officio* members without vote shall include: Center and Institute Directors appointed by the Dean, and other senior leaders as the Dean may appoint.
2. An acting or interim department chair shall be given voting membership in the Executive Faculty while serving as acting or interim chair.
3. At the discretion of the Dean, other individuals may be invited to attend, without vote, Executive Faculty meetings or portions thereof, when the agenda would make such attendance appropriate.
4. The Dean may designate a staff member to provide such support services as the Executive Faculty may require.
5. The Executive Faculty shall meet regularly during the academic year and whenever requested by the Dean of the School of Medicine or a majority of the Executive Faculty. A quorum shall consist of one-half of its voting members.
6. The Executive Faculty shall approve the policies of the School of Medicine with respect to educational affairs and shall participate by discussion, detailed studies, advice and counsel in the formulation of other major policies of the School of Medicine.
7. The Dean shall appoint an Executive Committee of the Executive Faculty (ECEF), composed of ten members of the Executive Faculty, to facilitate the work of the Executive Faculty and to advise on matters requiring decisions. At least four shall be chairs of VUMC-based clinical departments, two shall be chairs of non-clinical departments (at least one of whom will be from the School of Medicine basic science departments in Vanderbilt University), and one shall be an "at large" member from the Faculty Advisory Council who holds the rank of full professor. Appointed members shall serve a one or two-year term. The ECEF shall possess the full powers of the Executive Faculty and shall act in its stead with full authority. The ECEF may initiate new policies or change previous policies established by the Executive Faculty in matters related to curriculum. Such decisions can be nullified or reversed by a two-thirds majority vote of the Executive Faculty.

8. The ECEF shall approve and recommend to the Dean faculty promotions that carry tenure decisions or are at the senior ranks (Associate or Full Professor) upon the recommendation of the Faculty Appointments and Promotions Committee or the Clinical Practice Appointments and Promotions Committee (see Article 7). Voting on such promotions may be managed electronically subsequent to circulation of the credentials of the nominee(s).
9. Upon the recommendation of the Doctor of Medicine Student Promotion Committees (see Article 7), the ECEF shall recommend to the Dean those students upon whom the degree of Doctor of Medicine and other degrees of the School of Medicine shall be conferred and shall otherwise determine at the end of each year the academic status of medical students.

# Article V

## *Faculty Advisory Council*

1. The Faculty Advisory Council advises the Dean and shall consist of elected representatives from the departments of the School of Medicine, as follows. The Department of Medicine shall elect three representatives; the Department of Pediatrics shall elect two representatives; and the Section of Surgical Sciences shall have two representatives, one elected by the Department of General Surgery and one elected by the other departments in the section. All other departments shall have one representative. All full-time members of the faculty within each department (except the chair) shall be eligible to seek election and to vote on the Faculty Advisory Council. Members shall serve for a term of two years, and elections shall be staggered in such a manner that one half of the Council is elected each year. Continuous elected service shall not exceed four years (two terms).
2. The Dean and the Dean's designees responsible for faculty affairs of the School of Medicine shall be *ex officio* members of the Faculty Advisory Council without vote. The Dean may designate a staff member to provide such support services as the Advisory Council may require.
3. The Faculty Advisory Council shall annually affirm its chair, and elect the vice chair, and four representatives from among its voting membership to constitute the Executive Committee of the Faculty Advisory Council. Ordinarily, the chair will be in the second year of a two- year term and the vice-chair will be in the first year of a two-year term and will become the "chair elect."
4. The Faculty Advisory Council shall meet at least quarterly, but otherwise as needed during the academic year and whenever requested by the Dean of the School of Medicine; by request of a majority of the Council; or upon petition containing the signatures of at least fifty members of the full-time faculty representing at least three departments of the School of Medicine. A quorum shall consist of one-half of its voting members. At the discretion of the chair, other individuals may be invited to attend Faculty Advisory Council meetings or portions thereof, without vote, when the agenda would make such attendance appropriate.
5. The chair of the Faculty Advisory Council, with the advice of the Executive Committee and the Dean or the Dean's designee, shall determine the agenda for Council meetings. The Chair shall have the authority to appoint *ad hoc* committees to aid in the performance of the Council's duties with the approval of the Dean or the Dean's designee and may invite persons not members of the Faculty Advisory Council to serve on these committees when appropriate.
6. The Faculty Advisory Council may be invited by the Dean to participate in the formulation of major policies of the School by requesting studies and by presenting reports of *ad hoc* committees to the Dean.
7. The Faculty Advisory Council may present at its discretion recommendations in written form to the Dean. The faculty shall have access to electronic copies of written reports of the Faculty Advisory Council after the reports have been presented to the Dean.
8. The chair of the Faculty Advisory Committee and five members of the Faculty Advisory Council will be selected by the members of the Faculty Advisory Council and endorsed by the Dean to serve on the Executive Faculty (see Article IV). Of the five members, at least

one must be at the rank of full professor, and one must be a faculty in a Basic Sciences department.

9. Unless otherwise herein provided, the Faculty Advisory Council may adopt its own regulations and rules of order. In the event it does not do so, the transaction of business shall proceed according to Robert's Rules of Order.

## Article VI

### *Amendments*

1. Amendments to these *Rules and Procedures* may be proposed by the Dean, the Executive Faculty, or upon petition containing the signatures of at least fifty members of the full-time faculty of the School of Medicine representing at least three departments.
2. Proposed amendments shall be ratified (sanctioned and validated) by a vote of two-thirds of those present and voting at a meeting of the Executive Faculty Notification of that meeting, together with copies of proposed amendments, shall be distributed to the Executive Faculty at least thirty days in advance. For such action, a quorum shall consist of six members of the ten-member ECEF.
3. Amendments so ratified by the Executive Faculty are subject to approval by the Dean, with the advice of the Chancellor of Vanderbilt University (Code of By-laws, Vanderbilt University, Chapter IV, Section 2.A).

# Article VII

## *Standing Committees*

### **Brief descriptions of School of Medicine Standing Committees:**

#### **Faculty Appointments and Promotions Committee**

The FAPC consists of two committees, whose make up consists of faculty at the rank of Professor, from the Investigator and Educator track, representing diverse disciplines within the School of Medicine, including the 21 departments in VUMC and the School of Medicine basic science departments in Vanderbilt University. These committees evaluate nominations for appointment or promotion to the senior ranks on the Investigator and Educator tracks. The committee's recommendations are advisory to the Dean and are further reviewed by the ECEF. For tenure appointments and promotions, further approvals are required as delineated in the *Faculty Manual*.

#### **Clinical Practice Appointments and Promotions Committee**

The CPAPC consists of faculty members at the rank of Professor, from the Clinical Practice track, representing the diverse clinical disciplines within the School of Medicine. This committee evaluates nominations for appointment or promotion to the senior ranks on the Clinical Practice track. The committee's recommendations are advisory to the Dean and are further reviewed by the ECEF.

#### **Doctor of Medicine Admission Committee**

The M.D. Program admission committee has the responsibility of reviewing medical school applications for admission and admitting those applicants considered most qualified for admission. Co-Chairs and the Director of Admission oversee and continually review the entire admission process, recruit committee members, schedule and conduct training sessions for the committees, and organize and lead committee meetings. Co-Chairs are named by the Dean for five- year appointments.

#### **Undergraduate Medical Education Accreditation Standards Committee**

The UME Accreditation Standards Committee (UASC) is a faculty committee established to monitor ongoing compliance of the M.D. program with the Liaison Committee on Medical Education (LCME) standards and elements. Its members are appointed by the Dean or the Dean's designee. UASC has the following responsibilities:

- a. Continuously monitor compliance with all twelve standards and corresponding elements.
- b. Identify standards and elements for which improvements are required to assure compliance.
- c. With assistance from other faculty and staff members, develop formal quality improvement processes for these standards that include measurable outcomes.
- d. UASC shall have the authority to assure that quality improvement processes are implemented, and outcomes are monitored, in order to achieve necessary results.

Reporting: UASC shall report to the Executive Faculty on an annual basis with additional updates as needed.

### **Doctor of Medicine Student Promotion Committees**

The Dean or the Dean's designee appoints a Promotion Committee to each of three phases of training (Foundations of Medical Knowledge, Foundations of Clinical Care, Immersion). Promotion Committees meet regularly to review the progress of individual students and the aggregate progress of the cohort of students in its assigned phase. Each promotion committee has the responsibility for making recommendations to the Dean and the Executive Faculty concerning promotion, remedial action, or dismissal as appropriate for each student in the class/phase for which it is responsible. Each committee consists of at least seven faculty members who represent a variety of clinical and basic science departments, as well as the broad diversity of the School of Medicine community. Each member serves a four-year term, with staggered terms.

### **Doctor of Medicine Undergraduate Medical Education Committee**

The Undergraduate Medical Education Executive Committee (UMEC) is composed of members of the School of Medicine leadership appointed by the Dean to include key faculty leaders from multiple departments, the phase team leaders, and leaders of longitudinal elements, led by a faculty chair of the committee, also appointed by the Dean. UMEC is advisory to the Dean and, along with the Dean, holds authority for central oversight of the UME curriculum.

### **Doctor of Medicine Phase Teams**

Phase Teams consist of the course directors and major teachers responsible for implementation of the curriculum for each of the phases (Foundations of Medical Knowledge, Foundations of Clinical Care, Immersion) in medical school, as well as representatives of the Student Curriculum Committee and staff members working with the curriculum. The Senior Associate Dean for Undergraduate Medical Education and the chair of the Undergraduate Medical Education Executive Committee coordinate the work of the Phase Teams to support the curricular quality improvement process.

### **Medical Scientist Training Program (MSTP) Senior Oversight Committee**

The MSTP SOC meets annually and provides guidance to the MSTP leadership on program evaluation, student progress, strategic planning, and alignment with institutional initiatives.

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