

VANDERBILT UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF MEDICINE COMPACT BETWEEN TEACHERS AND LEARNERS IN VUSM PROGRAMS

Preamble

As a community of teachers and learners, we acknowledge the fundamental importance of our professional values in creating and maintaining an environment that promotes the highest standard of learning and the highest quality of research, service and patient care. The following principles characterize this environment and guide us in making daily decisions: Respect, Service, Integrity, Accountability, Scholarship, and Compassion. Recognizing that in an academic community we are teachers and learners simultaneously, we make the following commitments with the understanding that each applies to all of us, regardless of our status, whether faculty, resident, clinical staff, or student.

Commitments of Teachers

- We will respect students, colleagues, staff and patients as individuals. ‡
- We will strive to provide the highest quality instruction, by preparing adequately for all teaching sessions, using evidence-based content, arriving on time, and admitting any gaps in knowledge. We will strive for continuous improvement in our teaching efforts by responding to feedback and evaluation.
- We will demonstrate respect for our learners by turning off cell phones and silencing pagers during sessions we teach, unless they are required for service responsibilities.
- We will clearly express learning objectives for all courses and teaching sessions, and understand how these promote the learning objectives of the school. We will clearly define any specific academic and behavioral expectations for our classes.
- We will be aware of institutional and national policies, such as duty hours, and make sure that our expectations are consistent with those policies.
- We will assign tasks that are appropriate for the stage of learning, level of responsibility, and status as students. If an assigned clinical task conflicts with the personal ethics of a learner, we will discuss this with the learner and attempt to resolve the conflict in a manner that respects the learner while placing priority on the interests and well-being of the patient. We will seek not to require our learners to take actions inconsistent with their personal values.
- We will recognize the responsibilities implicit in our roles as mentors and coaches, and in the spirit of cultivating excellence in our learners, provide timely and constructive feedback.
- We will recognize our status as role models, and in our interactions with patients, staff, students, and colleagues, we will exhibit the same standard of professional behavior that we expect from others.

- We acknowledge that the teacher-learner relationship is a model for the clinician-patient relationship, and will strive to know our students as individuals, answer their correspondences promptly, exercise concern for their well-being, and treat them with compassion.
- We will respect the intellectual property of others and will use online resources, such as VSTAR and Brightspace, in a manner that is consistent with that respect.
- We will demonstrate honesty and integrity in all academic endeavors, including examinations, research efforts, and patient care entries.
- We will strive to create a culture of safety. This culture includes evaluation for disclosure, event analysis, and process change when a safety concern is identified.

Commitments of Learners

- We will respect students, colleagues, staff, and patients as individuals‡
- We will strive for excellence in attaining the knowledge, attitudes, and skills needed for the highest standards of practice.
- We will attend all learning sessions designated as required by our programs' teachers. We will demonstrate respect towards teachers and peers by arriving on time, turning off cell phones, silencing pagers, and complying with other specific expectations defined by the faculty.
- We will wear appropriate attire. In the classroom setting, our attire should not cause distraction. In practice settings, it should comply with the standards published by the institution.* We will adhere to any additional attire requirements of our programs and courses.
- We will work effectively in teams, respecting the contributions of all members, assuming a fair share of responsibility, and performing leadership tasks with a sense of service to others.
- In practice settings we will acknowledge and seek help if assigned a task that is beyond our level of skill. If an assigned task conflicts with personal ethics, we will discuss this with the supervising faculty or staff member and strive to reach a resolution that places priority on the interests of the patient.
- We will recognize our obligations as a collegial community, sharing knowledge and assisting peers in their quest to achieve professional and personal goals. We will assist our colleagues in distress.
- We will establish the habit of critical reflection, acknowledge gaps in our knowledge, recognize our limitations, and strive for constant self-improvement.
- We will respect the intellectual property of others and will use online resources, such as VSTAR and Brightspace, in a manner that is consistent with that respect.
- We will demonstrate honesty and integrity in all academic endeavors, including examinations, research efforts and patient care entries.
- We will strive to create a culture of safety. We will accept responsibility for errors and near-errors by disclosing them, analyzing them and implementing changes that would prevent similar events in the future.

MEDICAL CENTER

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Page 3 of 3

- In the spirit of continuous quality improvement, we will accept the responsibility of constructive evaluation of our courses and teachers.

Acknowledgements

This document draws heavily from the following sources:

1. Association of American Medical Colleges, Compact Between Teachers and Learners of Medicine.
2. National Board of Medical Examiners, Center for Innovation, The Behaviors of Professionalism.
3. ABIM Foundation, ACP-ASIM Foundation, and European Federation of Internal Medicine, Medical Professionalism in the New Millennium: A Physician Charter, *Annals of Internal Medicine*, 136:3, 243-6, 2002.

‡In compliance with federal law, including the provisions of Title VI and Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Title IX of the Education Amendment of 1972, Sections 503 and 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990, the ADA Amendments Act of 2008, Executive Order 11246, the Vietnam Era Veterans Readjustment Assistance Act of 1974 as amended by the Jobs for Veterans Act, and the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act, as amended, and the Genetic Information Nondiscrimination Act of 2008, Vanderbilt University does not discriminate against individuals on the basis of their race, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, color, national or ethnic origin, age, disability, military service, covered veterans status, or genetic information in its administration of educational policies, programs, or activities; admissions policies; scholarship and loan programs; athletic or other university-administered programs; or employment. In addition, the university does not discriminate against individuals on the basis of their gender expression. Requests for information, inquiries or complaints should be directed to these offices: Faculty and staff – Office of Equal Opportunity and Access, EOA@vanderbilt.edu, telephone (615) 343-9336; Students – Title IX Office, Title IX Coordinator, titleix@vanderbilt.edu, telephone (615) 343-9004, 2100 West End Avenue, Suite 700, Nashville TN 37203; Students – Student Access Services, studentaccess@vanderbilt.edu; telephone (615) 343-9727.

**Vanderbilt University Medical Center dress code may be found at [2025.07-VUMC-Dress-Code.pdf](#).*

The VUSM Compact Between Teachers and Learners in VUSM Programs policy was reviewed and approved by the Executive Faculty of the Vanderbilt University School of Medicine Committee on June 17, 2020.