

Revised: May 8, 2025

PROFESSIONALISM CODE OF CONDUCT

This Code of Conduct is intended to reflect standards of professional behavior that are consistent with the law, University of Colorado policies, and accreditation requirements. It does not create new legal obligations or infringe upon academic freedom or freedom of expression as protected by law.

A climate of respect, civility and cooperation is essential to achieving excellence in clinical care, education, research, and university and community service. Therefore, the School of Medicine (SOM) places a high priority on professionalism.

Expected Faculty Conduct

In all educational, clinical, research, and administrative activities, faculty are expected to demonstrate the core attitudes and behaviors that reflect a commitment to the shared values and guiding principles that underpin professionalism. Under the umbrella of professionalism lies an extended set of responsibilities, including civil and courteous behavior and respect for all members of the SOM community, including students, residents, fellows, supporting staff, and colleagues. Professionalism also includes open and honest communication, respectful dissent, support for the School's missions and active and timely participation in education, mentoring and service activities.

At all times, faculty will demonstrate professionalism, respect, and sensitivity toward individuals of all backgrounds, in accordance with institutional values and applicable laws.

In all interactions with patients and their families, faculty members are expected to demonstrate the core attitudes and behaviors that reflect the traditions of the profession of medicine and society's trust. These include: compassion; respect for patients' privacy and dignity; altruism in patient care and in the pursuit and application of knowledge; empathy; accountability; punctuality; sensitivity and responsiveness to patients' backgrounds and individual characteristics; and responsiveness to society's needs. In all educational, research and clinical care settings, faculty members will welcome and respect all individuals and their diverse experiences, in accordance with institutional values and applicable laws.

Teaching and mentoring are special privileges, and it is implicit that being a good teacher includes being a model of professional conduct for all learners, staff, colleagues, and patients and their families. Core values and guiding principles of professionalism in this setting include: respect for all learners, including students, residents, and clinical and post-doctoral fellows; humility; effective listening; active engagement in the teaching and mentoring process; supporting learners by modeling professionalism and addressing concerns appropriately; and providing respectful and timely feedback.

Faculty members are also expected to exhibit the characteristics of good academic and institutional citizenship by contributing to the teaching, service, and administrative activities of their department and the School. Faculty members are expected to maintain a high level of scientific or clinical competence, as judged by their peers, and to demonstrate a dedication to life-long learning. Faculty members are expected to critically analyze, and avoid, activities that suggest a conflict of interest with their role as a clinician, scientist, or educator. Faculty must also adhere to the highest standards of academic honesty and integrity. For example, truthfulness, completeness and accuracy are essential in medical and scientific writings, in representations of effort, and in medical record documentation.

Consistent with the principles outlined above, all SOM faculty members are expected to:

Professional Responsibilities and Accountability

- Demonstrate behaviors that convey compassion, respect, empathy, caring, and tolerance in all interactions with learners, patients and families, professional colleagues, and staff.
- For health care professionals, uphold the primacy of patient welfare, always having the patient's best interests at heart.
- Demonstrate accountability to patients, families, learners, professional colleagues, and society by maintaining scientific, clinical, and educational competence appropriate to one's role as a faculty member.
- Provide, accept, and respond appropriately to constructive feedback and evaluations.
- Recognize and respond appropriately to behavior by others that is disrespectful, disruptive, or unprofessional.
- Demonstrate sensitivity to, and respect for individual identity and background, consistent with professional standards and in alignment with institutional values and applicable law.
- Dress in professional attire that is clean, in good condition, and suitable for a professional setting.
- Maintain appropriate confidentiality.

Additional Professional Responsibilities as a Teacher

- Appropriately prepare for, and actively engage in, all assigned teaching and mentoring responsibilities.
- Treat all learners with understanding, dignity, respect, and tolerance.
- Evaluate learners equitably and fairly, using only criteria that reflect the learner's performance, as measured by standards applied uniformly to all learners in the course or other learning activity, except where differentiation is required or permitted in the case of students with disabilities.

Additional Professional Responsibilities as a Member of the Academic Community

- Evaluate the performance of others equitably and fairly, and without prejudice, harassment, or intimidation, ensuring that such evaluations are based solely on criteria that reflect professional competence.
- Uphold the principles of academic honesty, including truthfulness and accuracy in medical and scientific research and writing.
- Understand and comply with University, SOM, hospital, and other policies governing conflicts-of-interest, performance reviews, credentialing, and other matters.
- Recognize and manage conflicts-of-interest.

Unacceptable Faculty Conduct

Unprofessional behaviors are not acceptable in educational, research, administrative, or patient care settings. Within the healthcare environment, unprofessional and disruptive behaviors interfere not only with learning, but also with communication and trust among health care team members; thus, such behaviors threaten healthcare quality and patient safety.

Unprofessional behaviors include: disruptive conduct; actions, words or behaviors that a learner, colleague, co-worker or patient could reasonably perceive as humiliating or demeaning; passive disrespect (such as dismissive treatment of others); academic dishonesty (including falsification or fabrication of data or misappropriation of the writings, research, or findings of others); and discrimination against any individual based on protected characteristics as defined under the law. Examples of unprofessional behaviors and conduct include, but are not limited to: verbal attacks or outbursts; the use of profane or abusive language; bullying or intimidation; throwing or breaking objects; violations of professional boundaries; and comments or actions that are rude, disrespectful, threatening or belittling.

Unprofessional conduct also includes insulting, insensitive, or derogatory comments, jokes, or behaviors directed toward an individual based on characteristics protected under the

law.

Faculty members may not assign a lower grade, write a poor evaluation, threaten, harass, or otherwise retaliate against any learner because he or she has reported, in good faith, a violation of this faculty professionalism code.

Violations of this Professionalism Code

Although these qualities and behaviors may be more difficult to evaluate than research, scholarship, teaching, and other traditional measures of academic performance, they are critical to the missions of the SOM and will be considered during annual performance, promotion, tenure and post-tenure reviews. Serious or repeated violations of these professionalism standards will be considered by department chairs and evaluation committees during performance reviews and at the time promotion or tenure decisions are made. Faculty members whose conduct departs from these precepts may also be expected to undergo professional development training as an opportunity to recommit to the shared values and guiding principles of professionalism, prescribed by the faculty member's department chair, the President or Director of a hospital medical staff, or the Dean of the SOM. Additionally, unprofessional conduct, especially if it is repeated, may lead to an assessment and evaluation by the Office of Faculty Relations (OFR), the entity designated for this purpose by the SOM. Serious or repeated violations of these professionalism standards may give rise to other disciplinary actions, which may include removal from patient care or teaching environments, suspension or termination of employment, in accordance with university procedures and due process requirements.