

## The Honor Code

Students embarking on careers in medicine and dental medicine are expected to maintain high standards of personal and professional integrity. These standards involve such basic concepts as total intellectual honesty and respect for the rights and well-being of others. Matriculation in the School of Medicine or Dental Medicine constitutes an obligation for students to act in a manner consistent with Honor Code standards. The Honor Board is primarily responsible for the application and enforcement of these standards.

The Honor Code of the University of Connecticut Schools of Medicine and Dental Medicine prohibits any act of intellectual dishonesty, such as cheating; plagiarism, copying, or any misrepresentation of work other than their own; fraud in research; and willful failure to comply with examination and evaluation policies. The Honor Code also prohibits violations of the rights or well-being of patients, research subjects, or members of the UConn Health community. Examples of such violations include the willful mistreatment of patients or colleagues; stealing; failure to comply with library regulations or intentional interference that deny other students access to educational materials; false entries in charts; and violations of patient confidentiality. The Honor Code also requires students, staff, and faculty to take action when a breach of the Honor Code is suspected.

All medical and dental students are required to sign a written affirmation of the Honor Code principles in their first and third years.

### Implementing the Honor Code: The Honor Board Policy Committee

The Honor Code involves general principles that occasionally must be interpreted and applied to specific situations. A faculty-student Honor Board Policy Committee is responsible for developing guidelines for applying the general principles of the Honor Code and provide interpretations when necessary. The committee shall review the primary areas of concern that include examination policies, conduct of clinical care and research, the library, the multidisciplinary laboratory, and issue room procedures and policies, and prepare guidelines for the interpretation and application of the Honor Code, as needed. These guidelines shall be available for members of the UConn Health academic community. The committee shall consist of all current members and alternates of the Honor Board, six faculty members selected by the Deans of the Schools of Medicine and Dental Medicine, three faculty members who teach in the preclinical program, and three faculty members who teach in the clinical program. The Deans shall designate one faculty member to serve as chairperson of the Committee and as faculty advisor to the Honor Board.

Any member of the UConn Health community may submit a written request for information about, or clarification of, the Honor Code.

## The Honor Board

### A. Membership

The membership of the Honor Board shall consist of eight voting members, one medical student and one dental student from each class, and six alternate members who shall attend each meeting and who may be designated by the chairperson to vote in the place of an absent voting member. Each student and alternate shall serve a two-year term as long as they remain members in good standing of the electing class. The Honor Board is responsible for conducting the election of Honor Board members according to the following schedule.

1. The first-year class shall elect two students and one alternate during October. These students shall serve until June 30 of their second year. The protocol for this election is as follows:
  - a. Each student may cast one vote. The medical and dental student receiving the highest number of votes will be the voting Honor Board members.
  - b. The medical or dental student receiving the next highest number of votes will serve as the alternate for the class.
  - c. Supplemental elections will be held if necessary.
2. During April of the second year, the medical and dental school classes shall elect Honor Board members to begin serving on July 1 of their third year. They shall complete their term upon graduation. The protocol for this election is as follows:

- a. Students may cast one vote for a nominee in their respective school. The students from each school who receive the highest number of votes will be voting Honor Board members.
- b. The medical and dental student receiving the second highest number of votes will serve as alternates for the third and fourth years.

B. Chairperson

The Honor Board shall elect a chairperson annually. At the discretion of the Board, co-chairpersons may be selected.

C. Secretary

The chairperson shall designate a secretary at each meeting to write a synopsis of that meeting.

D. Meetings

The Honor Board, including alternates, shall meet as often as necessary to conduct the business of the Board. In the event of the absence of a voting member, the alternate from the same class shall serve as a voting member at the meeting. If the alternate from the same class is unavailable, the chairperson of the Board shall designate one of the alternates available to serve as a voting member for the meeting. A quorum to conduct business shall be eight members when the Board consists of fourteen members and alternates, and six members when the Board consists of ten members and alternates.

## Honor Board Procedures

A. Reporting Process

Any member of the UConn Health community who has reason to believe that a breach of the Honor Code has taken place has a duty to take positive action such as:

1. direct confrontation with the person whose conduct is questioned;
2. an informal complaint to the Honor Board via consultation with an Honor Board member;
3. formal referral of the case to the Honor Board.

A. Failure to take positive action may itself be a violation of the Honor Code.

B. Discussion of Reporting Options

1. Direct confrontation with the person whose conduct is questioned.

2. Any member of the UConn Health Community who believes that a violation of the Honor Code may have occurred, but does not yet wish to file a formal complaint, may bring the matter to the attention of any individual member or alternate of the Honor Board in the form of an informal complaint within one month of their discovery. Such an informal complaint in no way prevents the matter from later being the subject of a formal complaint. An informal complaint may be verbal or in writing. The identity of the complainant must be made known to the Honor Board member. Upon receiving an informal complaint, an Honor Board member must consult with the Chair of the Honor Board before making a recommendation or taking any action in relation to the informal complaint. Having consulted with the Chair, the recipient of the informal complaint may take one or more of the following actions:

- a. If all members or alternates who were consulted agree that the complaint does not relate to the Honor Code, the Honor Board member who received the informal complaint may inform the complainant.
- b. The board member may recommend that the complainant take some sort of action, including without limitation:
  - (1) that the complainant speak to the person who may have violated the code and, if the complainant wishes, mention that the Honor Board has been consulted on the matter;
  - (2) that a member of Honor Board be delegated at the discretion of the Chair (with or without consulting other Honor Board members) to speak to the person or persons who are alleged to have violated the Code without revealing the identity of the complainant. The Honor Board may also recommend what is to be said. Both the identity of the complainant and the fact that such an informal complaint has been presented are strictly confidential to members of the Honor Board. In any informal complaint, the Honor Board will take no position as to the

veracity of the complaint. Once the alleged violator has spoken to the member or alternate, no further action may be taken unless a formal complaint is filed.

(a) the complainant may elect to accompany the Honor Board member to speak with the alleged violator.

(b) the complainant may elect to keep his or her identity anonymous to the alleged violator. (Identity will only be revealed if the complainant decides to make a formal complaint.)

C. (3) that a formal complaint be filed with the Honor Board.

3. A formal allegation of a breach of the Honor Code shall be made in writing and delivered in a sealed envelope to any member or alternate of the Honor Board within one month of the discovery of the alleged violation or the filing of the informal complaint, whichever is later. The fact that an allegation has been made shall be treated as confidential by the complainant and by members and alternate members of the Honor Board. The letter must include, without limitation:

- a. name of complainant,
- b. name(s) of alleged violators,
- c. date and location of the alleged violation,
- d. explanation of circumstances surrounding the alleged violation,
- e. any other relevant information.

D. Assignment of Cases

1. Case Officer – When a case is formally referred to the Honor Board, a case officer shall be selected at the next scheduled meeting who will be responsible for moving of the case through to final disposition. The procedure for selecting the case officer is as follows:

- a. A member or alternate may volunteer to be the case officer on a particular case. If more than one member or alternate volunteers, a selection will be made by a drawing.
- b. If no member or alternate volunteers to be the case officer, a selection shall be made by the chairperson.

E. 2. Duties of the Case Officer

- a. Receive all correspondence, statements, evidence and other materials related to the case, and maintain file and evidence folders.
- b. Solicit and collect all relevant evidence for a case presentation to the Board to determine probable cause.
- c. Present the case to the Board at the preliminary hearing to determine probable cause where the case officer may recommend findings and express opinions to the Board regarding the case. The case officer shall be counted as present for purposes of establishing a quorum, but must abstain from the actual vote of the Board on the issue of probable cause.
- d. If probable cause is found, contact witnesses and the respondent and schedule an evidentiary hearing on the case.
- e. Be primarily responsible for the conduct of the hearing before the Board, including the scheduling of witnesses, the questioning of witnesses and the handling of evidence and exhibits. At this hearing, the case officer is free to express opinions and recommend findings, as is any other member of the Board, and will be considered present for purposes of establishing a quorum, but must abstain from the actual vote of the Board on the ultimate issue of guilt or innocence.
- f. If the respondent is found guilty of a violation of the Honor Code, take part in all discussions and votes regarding the appropriate steps to take following a guilty finding.
- g. If the respondent is found guilty of a violation of the Honor Code, the case officer, in conjunction with the chairperson, is responsible for composing and forwarding the letter to the appropriate Dean regarding the findings of the Honor Board.

E. Preliminary Hearings

1. Once a case has been formally referred to the Honor Board, and a case officer assigned, a preliminary hearing

shall be held. The Board determines whether there is probable cause of an Honor Code breach and that the respondent committed that breach. At this or any stage of the proceeding, the case officer or any member or alternate member of the Honor Board may consult with the faculty advisor to the Honor Board. However, the identities of the involved parties shall not be disclosed.

- F. 2. For a preliminary hearing to be held, a quorum must be present, and for the Board to find the existence of probable cause, at least three-fourths of a quorum must vote in favor of such a finding.
- G. 3. At such a hearing, the respondent shall not have the right to be present, nor shall the Board hear live testimony from any witnesses. The nature and extent of the evidence to be presented to the Honor Board shall be within the discretion of the case officer and the chairperson of the Honor Board.
- H. 4. It shall be a matter of strict confidentiality that a preliminary hearing is being held, and such information shall not be divulged to any person who is not a member or alternate of the Honor Board; specifically, neither the respondent nor any witnesses.
- I. 5. If probable cause is found not to exist, the case shall be dismissed and the entire file destroyed. Such destruction shall be the personal responsibility of the case officer. The case officer shall also be responsible for informing the complaining witness that the case has been dismissed, and that the referral to the Honor Board and actions are to be considered confidential.
- J. 6. If probable cause is found, the case officer informs the respondent in the manner prescribed by the chairperson, conducts further investigation as necessary, and schedules an evidentiary hearing to be held before the Board.
- F. Evidentiary Hearings
  - 1. Probable Cause. Upon a finding of probable cause, an evidentiary hearing shall be convened at which a quorum of the Honor Board must be present.
- K. 2. Burden of Proof. At all evidentiary hearings before the Board, in order for there to be a finding of guilty on a breach of Honor Code, the case against the respondent must be proved by clear and convincing evidence: facts asserted are highly probable, or that the probability that the facts are true is substantially greater than the probability that they are false or do not exist.
- L. 3. Conduct of the Hearing
  - a. A personal representative may represent the respondent's interest at the hearing with prior approval from the Chair, provided the representative agrees to maintain strict confidentiality of the proceedings. Video or audio tape recordings or simultaneous transcripts may be made of the proceedings, provided that the requesting party bear the financial burden. The opposing party is given reasonable opportunity to obtain a copy at their own expense. Such recordings must be held strictly confidential and limited to those at the proceedings.
  - b. At the hearing, the evidence and witnesses against the respondent shall be presented by the case officer, with the respondent or respondent's representative being given the opportunity to examine all exhibits and evidence and ask questions of all witnesses presented. Members of the Board are free to question all witnesses.
  - c. Following the witnesses presented by the Board, the respondent is free to present witnesses (excluding his/her personal representative), testify and present evidence, or refrain from presenting testimony, witnesses or evidence. If the respondent decides not to testify, no questions may be asked of him/her by the case officer or any board members, and no adverse inference may be drawn from such a decision.
  - d. A recess may be called at any time during the proceedings at the Board's discretion. The recess may be brief for the members to consult, or the meeting may continue at a later date to allow for further investigation.
  - e. Upon the close of evidence, the Board will meet outside the presence of all parties and witnesses to make its decision by secret ballot.
  - f. In order to find that the respondent is guilty of a breach of the Honor Code, at least three fourths of the quorum must cast votes in favor of such a finding.

- g. The respondent will be notified of the findings by the chairperson or designate. All recorded information concerning the case will be destroyed if the finding is that no breach has been committed. The respondent will have seven days to appeal a guilty finding, after which time, the decision of the Honor Board and the supporting evidence will be forwarded to the appropriate Dean(s). A recommendation of disciplinary action by the Honor Board may also be included.

#### G. The Appeal Process

An appeal consists of a complete review of the evidence by an Appeal Board. The appropriate Dean is informed of an appeal by the Honor Board Chair but is given no information regarding the case. The Dean appoints an Appeal Board consisting of two students and three faculty members, one of which is appointed as Appeal Board Chair. (Members of the Honor Board are not eligible to serve on the Appeal Board.) The Honor Board Chair shall brief the Appeal Board Chair regarding Honor Code procedures and set an appeal date. At the appeal hearing, the evidence and findings of the Honor Board will be presented by its chairperson. Persons found guilty by the Honor Board have the right to present their own case, the right to have another individual assist in their defense, and the right to object to any Appeal Board Member(s) who may show bias. If such an objection is found valid by a majority vote of the other members of the Appeal Board, the appeal will be postponed until a replacement member(s) is appointed.

- M. The standard of evidence for the Appeal will also be clear and convincing evidence. If the Appeal Board overturns the decision of the Honor Board, in whole or in part, the reason for that decision will be conveyed to the Honor Board by the Appeal Board Chairperson. The person(s) involved will be notified immediately. All recorded information of overturned charges will be destroyed. The Dean of the appropriate school will be notified within one business day and in the case of upheld charges, given the evidence and results from both the Honor and Appeal Boards. The Dean may engage in such inquiry as deemed necessary, including but not limited to, the review of existing evidence, the gathering of additional evidence, or the conduct of a hearing de novo.

#### H. Confidentiality

All specific charges, names, evidence, and testimony are treated as strictly confidential. The integrity of an Honor System depends on this, and the divulgence of names or other confidential information concerning an allegation by any person shall itself be considered an Honor Code breach.

#### I. Disciplinary Action

The Honor Board is concerned only with judging a person(s) as guilty or not guilty and is not responsible for taking disciplinary action against the person(s) who has breached the Honor Code. Such actions shall be taken by the appropriate Dean. However, the Honor Board may make appropriate recommendations to the Dean.

#### J. Reports to the Academic Community

At least once each academic year, the Honor Board shall report on its activities to the Medical and Dental Councils and to the medical and dental classes. These reports shall discuss in general terms the activities of the Board during the year.

### Faculty Advisor

Roger S. Thrall, Ph.D.

Professor of Medicine

Work phone: 860-679-4118

Home phone: 860-693-4861

Email: [thrall@nso2.uhc.edu](mailto:thrall@nso2.uhc.edu)

Department of Immunology

UConn Health

263 Farmington Avenue

Farmington, CT 06030-1319

Room L3071

MC1319