

## STUDENT PHARMACIST AND GRADUATE STUDENT GRIEVANCES

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*Responsible administrator: Associate Dean for Academic Programs*

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### **Preamble**

As a professional school, the Harrison School of Pharmacy (HSOP) functions as a community of colleagues (faculty members, staff members, graduate students, and student pharmacists) who work together to advance the HSOP's mission, vision and goals. These collegial relationships are embodied in the Covenant between Faculty and Students of the Harrison School of Pharmacy (Appendix A), which describes the commitments that faculty members and student pharmacists make to each other in the context of a health professions school.

In the context of a professional school, it is important that all members take responsibility for holding their colleagues accountable for maintaining professional behavior and in treating one another appropriately. At times it becomes necessary for students to have appropriate channels and procedures for reporting perceived violations by faculty and staff members of Auburn University (AU) and HSOP policies and procedures, as well as violations of the School's Covenant. As professionals in training, student pharmacists must recognize that they have a responsibility to the HSOP and the profession of pharmacy to report violations that may be occurring. This same responsibility applies to graduate students who are pursuing education in the context of a health professions school. Students are often hesitant to report such matters, fearing retaliation from faculty and staff members. However, students are protected by University and HSOP policies, which prohibit retaliation towards those filing grievance reports. It is also important for students to understand that if student complaints and grievances are to be appropriately addressed by the HSOP's faculty and administration, it is often not possible to keep student identity anonymous.

This document summarizes the various AU and HSOP policies governing student grievances and complaints, including their reporting, handling and disposition. A brief summary related to each type of grievance/complaint is provided along with a reference to the relevant AU or HSOP policy.

### **I. Student Academic Grievances**

Student academic grievances are heard and resolved via the Auburn University Student Academic Grievances Policy which is available at:

<https://sites.auburn.edu/admin/universypolicies/Policies/StudentAcademicGrievancePolicy.pdf>

As indicated in the policy, student academic grievances are to be resolved at the lowest possible level. Student pharmacists with academic grievance issues should initially try to resolve such issues with the pertinent faculty member. If the student is not satisfied that a fair and equitable outcome has been obtained, he or she may subsequently take the grievance in the following order to the Executive Director of Experiential Programs (for practice experience courses), or Director of the Professional Program (for other courses in the Pharm.D. Program) or Director of Graduate Programs (in the case of MS or PhD courses), the faculty member's Department Head, Associate Dean for Academic Programs, Dean, and University Student Academic Grievance Committee.

## **II. Harassment and Discrimination against Students:**

As a unit within Auburn University, the HSOP complies with all regulations regarding unlawful discrimination against or harassment of its students. The Auburn University Student Anti-Harassment Policy is available at:

<https://sites.auburn.edu/admin/universypolicies/Policies/PolicyRegardingtheProhibitedHarassmentofStudents.pdf>

This policy describes prohibited forms of discrimination or harassment related to a student's race, color, sex, religion, national origin, age, sexual orientation, or disability (protected classes) by other students, employees, or university agents.

Students who believe they have been illegally harassed or discriminated against on the basis of their race, color, sex, religion, national origin, age, sexual orientation, or disability, should report incidents to the Office of Affirmative Action/Equal Employment Opportunity (AA/EEO), as outlined in the Anti-Harassment Policy. HSOP faculty, staff, and administrators should assist students in directing their harassment and/or discrimination complaints to the Office of AA/EEO. HSOP faculty and staff members who become knowledgeable of possible conduct directed against students that may violate the Anti-Harassment Policy are expected to report these incidents to AA/EEO.

## **III. Grievances and Complaints due to Violations of the Covenant between Faculty and Students of the Harrison School of Pharmacy**

As previously stated, the Covenant between Faculty and Students of the Harrison School of Pharmacy (Appendix A) describes the commitments that faculty members and students make to each other in the context of a health professions school. Situations may arise where faculty members' actions are contradictory to the Covenant, but do not violate specific Auburn University Policies. Examples include, but are not limited to, the following: 1) behavior that violates the HSOP's Tenets of Professionalism, 2) harassment or discrimination which is not of a sexual nature or related to members of a protected class, 3) failure to meet commitments to student pharmacists or respond to legitimate student requests, 4) academic misconduct, and 5) retaliation against students who have voiced legitimate complaints concerning faculty members.

Whenever possible, students should try to resolve issues they have with faculty members on an informal basis. If informal resolution is not possible, the student(s) should report complaints and grievances regarding a faculty member's violation of the Covenant to the faculty member's immediate supervisor (this will usually be a department head). If the student wishes to file a formal complaint or grievance, the report should be made in writing and include all pertinent facts surrounding the matter. The supervisor will investigate the matter and work in conjunction with the Dean and Associate Dean for Academic Programs to resolve the issue between the student pharmacist and the faculty member. In cases where students believe their grievance or complaint has not been sufficiently addressed, they may present their concerns (as appropriate) to the Associate Dean for Academic Programs, and subsequently to the Dean.

All complaints and grievances will be handled in a confidential manner, which means that information reported will only be shared with others on a need to know basis. Students must understand that complaints and grievances can seldom be effectively addressed if they remain anonymous. Furthermore, professionals have the responsibility to hold others in their profession accountable in cases where professional standards are violated.

Faculty members will be provided sufficient opportunity to respond to student complaints and grievances at each step in the process.

Written documentation related to each student complaint or grievance will be maintained in the Office of the Associate Dean for Academic Programs. Such documentation will include a copy of the written complaint or grievance, supporting documentation surrounding the complaint or grievance, and a response as to how the grievance has been addressed and/or resolved. Written communication will be provided to the student(s) filing a complaint/grievance describing how the grievance has been addressed and/or resolved.

#### **IV. Grievances Related to Violations of ACPE Standards**

Student Pharmacists with grievances alleging that the HSOP is violating the Standards of the Accreditation Council for Pharmacy Education (ACPE) should report them in writing to the Associate Dean for Academic Programs. The Associate Dean will investigate the violations alleged and manage them in accordance with the HSOP's approved policy (Appendix B).

#### **APPENDIX A**

#### **A Covenant between Faculty and Students of the Harrison School of Pharmacy**

##### **FACULTY**

- We pledge our best effort to ensure a high quality educational program for our students.
- As mentors, we will maintain high professional standards in our interactions with students, our colleagues, and staff.
- We respect all students regardless of gender, race, national origin, religion, or sexual orientation; we will not tolerate anyone who disrespects students because of biased attitudes or beliefs and will take appropriate actions against such individuals.
- We pledge to be cognizant when students are having personal or academic problems and seek appropriate resources to provide help.
- In encouraging and nurturing the intellectual, personal, and professional growth of our students, we celebrate expressions of professional attitudes and behaviors, as well as academic achievement.
- We do not tolerate any abuse or exploitation of our students (or faculty).
- We encourage any student who experiences mistreatment or who witnesses mistreatment or unprofessional behavior to report the facts (preferably in writing) immediately to appropriate faculty or staff; we treat all such reports as confidential and do not tolerate reprisals or retaliations of any kind.

##### **STUDENTS**

- We pledge our utmost effort to acquire the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behaviors required to fulfill all educational objectives established by the faculty AND our obligations to patients.
- We hold the professional virtues of honesty, compassion, integrity, fidelity, and dependability as standards to conduct in a profession.
- We respect all faculty members, staff, and fellow students regardless of gender, race, national origin, religion, or sexual orientation; we will not tolerate anyone who disrespects faculty, students, or staff because of biased attitudes or beliefs and will take appropriate actions against such individuals.
- We pledge to conduct ourselves as professionals, demonstrating respect for faculty, colleagues, and staff
- In meeting our professional obligations, we pledge to assist our fellow students in meeting their professional obligations as well.

\* Adapted from, Cohen, JJ. Our compact with tomorrow's doctors. *Academic Medicine*. 77;6: 475-480.

## **Appendix B**

### **Auburn University Harrison School of Pharmacy Policy on Reporting Grievances Related to Violations of ACPE Standards**

The Accreditation Council for Pharmacy Education (ACPE) is the accrediting body for schools and colleges of pharmacy. The ACPE requires each college/school of pharmacy to have a policy for handling student complaints in cases where such schools or colleges are alleged to be in violation of ACPE Accreditation Standards. This policy governs only those instances where students allege that one or more ACPE Standards have been violated; the standards are available at <https://www.acpe-accredit.org/pharmacists/standards.asp>. Students with academic grievances may have such grievances addressed according to established Auburn University policies maintained on the website of the Auburn University's General Council at <https://sites.auburn.edu/admin/universypolicies/default.aspx>.

#### **Policy:**

The faculty, staff, and administration of the HSOP are committed to maintaining a pharmacy education program that meets and exceeds accreditation standards. The School is committed to correcting those areas where standards are not being met and encourages student participation in this process. Students are encouraged to voice and discuss concerns they have about the School's adherence to accreditation standards. In cases where a formal complaint is deemed necessary, the following procedure will be followed.

#### **Procedure:**

1. Students with complaints alleging that the HSOP is not adhering to ACPE Standards must present their complaints in writing. Complaints must identify the specific standards that are not being adhered to and include evidence to support the complaint.
2. Written complaints should be submitted to the HSOP's Associate Dean for Academic Programs.
3. The HSOP's Associate Dean for Academic Programs will investigate the complaint and provide a report to the HSOP's Dean and Executive Committee. The Dean and Executive Committee will make a determination on the validity of the complaint and provide a written response to the student or students making the complaint.

4. Complaints and responses that are determined to be of a substantive nature with regard to accreditation matters will be shared with the HSOP's faculty and the student body.
5. The Associate Dean for Academic Programs will maintain a complete file of all complaints received and their disposition. ACPE has access to this information as part of the routine accreditation review process.