

FROM THE STUDENTS OF  
VANDERBILT UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF MEDICINE

HONOR SYSTEM

The Honor System at Vanderbilt University School of Medicine is conducted by students for the benefit of students, faculty, staff, and patients. The Honor System, as delineated by the Honor Code, requires students to conduct themselves with honor in all aspects of their lives as physicians-in-training. By demanding great responsibility, the Honor System fosters an environment of freedom and trust that benefits the entire Medical School. In signing this statement upon enrollment, each student agrees to participate in the Honor System and abide by its code.

As representatives of the Vanderbilt University School of Medicine and the medical profession, students pledge to conduct themselves with honor and integrity at all times. Both the Promotions Committees and Honor Council serve to protect the environment of trust created by this Honor System. The Promotions Committees periodically evaluate each student's performance with special attention to work and conduct appropriate for the practice of medicine. The Honor Council serves to educate the student body about their responsibilities outlined in the written code; to conduct investigations and hearings regarding reported violations of the code; and to decide the nature of penalties deemed appropriate for such violations. Decisions reached by the Honor Council do not preclude the discussion of reported violations by the Promotions Committee, as the Committee may examine these incidents in the larger context of a student's general performance.

THE HONOR CODE

All students pledge to conduct themselves honorably, professionally, and respectfully in all realms of the medical center and in all aspects of medical education and patient care. Under the Honor System, the student pledges that he or she neither gives nor receives unauthorized aid nor leaves unreported any knowledge of such aid given or received by any other student. Unauthorized aid includes the use of any examinations from previous semesters that have not been pre-approved by the course director and made readily available to all other students taking the course. This pledge applies to all coursework, examinations, presentations, or any other activities required for the awarding of the M.D. degree. This pledge encompasses all clinical work involving patient care and representations of patient care information. Any student taking a course in the School of Medicine, regardless of where registered, is under the jurisdiction of the Honor Council of Vanderbilt University School of Medicine (VUSM) and subject to the penalties it may impose.

CONSTITUTION

Article I – Name

The name of the council shall be the Honor Council of Vanderbilt University School of Medicine.

Article II – Purpose

1. To receive and evaluate evidence of Honor Code violations and to assure against false accusations.
2. To determine guilt or innocence.
3. To forward to the Dean of the School of Medicine appropriate penalties for the guilty.

Article III – Membership and Officers

1. A faculty member shall be appointed by the Dean of the School of Medicine as the Honor Council advisor. His/her roles include ensuring that all the rules are followed. In the case of an accusation, he/she will decide with the chair of the Honor Council whether there is sufficient evidence to proceed with a trial.
2. The first, second, third, and fourth year classes shall elect two representatives to the Honor Council. These representatives may hold additional offices in the class.

3. The Vice President of the fourth year class shall be chair of the Honor Council. He/she will appoint the Secretary of the Honor Council from among the eight elected representatives.

#### Article IV – Duties of Officers

1. It shall be the duty of the chair to preside at all meetings of the honor council, to arrange for the hearing of any student accused, and to perform all duties common to his/her office.
2. The secretary shall keep full minutes of all meetings and full proceedings of all hearings, which must be kept in permanent files. The secretary shall notify all members of all hearings, meetings, and retreats and shall perform any other related duties.

#### Article V – Meetings

1. One regular meeting shall be held within four weeks of the start of the school year. At this meeting, the chair of the Honor Council and the faculty advisor will explain the duties and procedures of the Honor Council to the members.
2. Special meetings may be called by the chair at any time and must be called within ten working days when requested by two or more members of the Honor Council.
3. All meetings shall be conducted according to Roberts Rules of Order, Newly Revised.
4. A meeting by the Honor Council to re-evaluate and review the Honor Code should be convened a minimum of every four years.

#### Article VI – Quorum

Five members of the Council of nine shall constitute a quorum.

#### Article VII – Hearings

1. A hearing shall be called by the chair of the Honor Council, if appropriate.
2. The accuser and the accused must be present at all hearings during the presentation of evidence and the accused has a right to question the accuser and any witnesses and make a statement to the Council.
3. Legal counsel will not be allowed for any party at a hearing, but the accused may have present a character witness or non-legally trained faculty advisor if he or she so chooses.
4. Any member of the Honor Council related by birth or marriage to the accused or the accuser or has any other personal interest in the hearing shall relieve himself/herself from participation in that hearing.
5. The proceedings of the hearing are confidential and any member present at the hearing is not at liberty to discuss them with anyone other than the members of the Honor Council present at the hearing or other persons with a legitimate need to know, e.g. law enforcement agents.
6. Upon completion of the review of evidence, the Honor Council in closed executive session shall reach a decision of “guilty” or “not guilty” of violation of the Honor Code by simple majority vote. The chair has a vote in all decisions unless contraindicated by Roberts Rules of Order.
7. Written notice of the decision will be sent to the accused and to the Dean of the School of Medicine. The Dean will also receive the vote count, a written summary of the case, and an oral report of the case from the chair. The Promotions Committee will not be notified unless a verdict of “guilty” has been found. In the case of a “guilty” verdict, the Promotions Committee will receive a written summary of the proceedings. The written summary also will be kept in the permanent records of the Honor Council.
8. When the Honor Council reaches a decision of “guilty,” the penalty, representing the majority opinion of the Honor Council, shall be sent to the

Dean of the School of Medicine. The recommended penalties should conform to the severity of offenses and may include expulsion from the School of Medicine.

#### Article VIII – Publicity

1. Each new student entering the School of Medicine will be informed by the Honor Council as to the functions of the Honor System and his or her obligations to the Honor Code. Each student will be provided a copy of the Constitution and Bylaws of the Honor System and the Honor Code.
2. At the commencement of each academic year, all students shall reaffirm their commitment to the honor system by signing the Honor Code.
3. Names of the members of the Honor Council will be made known to all students upon commencement of each academic year. The Honor Council members will be accessible to any student to address concerns or questions regarding protocol, violations, or other Honor Council issues.
4. All written examinations will include a blank space where students will be required to freehand write the statement, “I continue to abide by the Honor Code.” The student must sign below the statement. All written examinations must contain the student’s written statement and signature to be considered complete.

#### Article IX- Miscellaneous

In case a student withdraws from the School after a charge has been made against him/her and before the hearing, the Honor Council shall record the facts and the accused shall not be allowed to re-enter until he or she has had a hearing before the Honor Council.

#### Article X – Amendments

Amendments to this Constitution shall require for their adoption the approval of a majority of the total membership of the Honor Council and ratification by a majority of the voting student body. These amendments must be approved by the Dean of the School of Medicine and the faculty advisor before becoming final.

### BYLAWS

#### Article I – Reporting an Incident

1. If a student or instructor has reason to believe that a breach of the Honor Code has been committed he/ she must, within seven class days, report the incident in signed written form in one of the following ways:
  - A. Directly to the chair of the Honor Council, or
  - B. By way of the faculty advisor who will notify the chair of the Honor Council, or
  - C. To any member of the Honor Council, who will report directly and only to either the chair or the faculty advisor.
2. Failure to take action on an incident is a breach of the Honor Code. Students are required to report in writing any suspected violations of the Honor Code.
3. Once an incident is reported, it shall be the responsibility of the Honor Council, not the student or instructor, to investigate the incident and determine the next course of action. The student or instructor who reports a violation is charged with maintaining confidence of his or her accusation; the accused is also required to maintain the confidence of the accusation and the hearing. Such confidence can be broken only as required in response to law enforcement agencies and to assure access to appropriate advice.
4. Perjury before the Dean or any Honor Council member regarding the reporting of or investigation of an incident is a breach of the Honor Code and is subject to punishment.
5. Once an incident has been reported, the chair and the faculty advisor will meet

to discuss the incident. The chair may appoint a committee of two members from the Honor Council to investigate the case and report its findings to the faculty advisor and the chair. These two members shall be ineligible to vote. With the advice of the faculty advisor, the chair will then decide whether to convene the Honor Council. If the decision is made to convene the Honor Council, the student in question will be notified that he/she has been formally accused of a violation of the Honor Code. The Honor Council should be convened within ten class days from the initial reporting of the incident. Both the accuser and the accused will be notified of the nature of the charge as well as the time and place of the assembly of the Honor Council.

6. Once the Honor Council is assembled, the accusation will be presented by the chair, and a hearing will be held by the Honor Council.
7. A student who reports a personal Honor Code violation will be given consideration for his/her initiative in reporting his/her own transgression. The chair, with advice of the faculty advisor, will decide if an investigation is warranted.

#### Article II – Penalties

1. Penalties given to those declared “guilty” will be recommended by the Honor Council and enforced by the Dean of the School of Medicine as he/she sees fit. The final decision and penalty will be reported by the Dean to the student involved, to the reporting individual, and to the Honor Council.
2. Penalties may range from the minimum of failure of the assignment to the maximum of expulsion from the Vanderbilt University School of Medicine.
3. If the violation was committed under extenuating circumstances, the Honor Council may, by a majority vote, recommend a suspension of the sentence. However, suspension of the sentence shall in no way alter the findings of “guilt” under the Code.

#### Article IV – Appeals

Appeals to any final actions that result from Honor Council hearings can be made with a petition to the Vanderbilt University Appellate Review Board as follows:

- A. The appeals petition must be in writing.
- B. It must specify the grounds for appeal.
- C. It must be filed within seven class days of the original notification of the verdict or within two weeks if school is not in session for seven days following the notification.

#### Article V – Summer Honor Council

1. The Summer Council will have official functions from the day following University Commencement exercises until the day class registration begins for the fall semester.
2. The Summer Council will be composed of the representatives of the rising second through fourth year classes as designated. The eighth and ninth members will be appointed by the faculty advisor from the rising student body.
3. In the event that a designated member will not be in Nashville during the summer, the respective class president should appoint a member of his/her class, who will be in Nashville, to be approved by the Honor Council.
4. In the event that the designated chair will not be in Nashville during the summer, then the faculty advisor should recommend a chair from the members of the Summer Council subject to council approval.