



U N I V E R S I T Y O F
**DETROIT
MERCY**

School of Optometry
Academic Policies Handbook
2025 – 2026

This handbook contains academic policies for students enrolled in all University of Detroit Mercy School of Optometry academic programs. Neither this Academic Policies Handbook nor any School of Optometry Catalog, admissions brochure, or course syllabus constitutes an express or implied contract with the student.

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INTRODUCTION

The University of Detroit Mercy School of Optometry Academic Policies Handbook provides students, residents, faculty and staff with a consolidated reference for policies, procedures and resources relevant to School of Optometry programs. School of Optometry policies are developed and published in the School of Optometry Academic Policies Handbook to support the Detroit Mercy Optometry programs and curriculum. The policies may be the same or similar to University policies published in the University of Detroit Mercy Graduate Catalog, but in many cases will be distinct from or more specific than University policies. Where there is a difference, School of Optometry policies in this Handbook supersede University policies. In the absence of a School of Optometry policy, University policy will apply. This Handbook does not constitute an “express or implied contract” with students or residents.

In this Handbook, the University of Detroit Mercy will be designated as the “University.” The University of Detroit Mercy School of Optometry will be referred to as the “School of Optometry” or “the School.” The School of Optometry Academic Policies Handbook is a reference for students containing guidelines, policies and procedures, and resources. School policies may supersede University policies, and in the absence of a specific School policy, University policy will apply.

Unless otherwise noted, School of Optometry policies are in effect at the time of publication of this Handbook. These policies are monitored on a continuous basis, and may be modified, amended, or deleted by School of Optometry Administration or the University at any time. Any changes to policies will become effective immediately after they are published on the School of Optometry website and notification is sent to students’ and faculty University email accounts. Policies printed in hard copy format should be cross-referenced with the electronic version published on the School of Optometry’s website to verify the most current policy in effect.

MISSION

The University of Detroit Mercy School of Optometry, in the Jesuit and Mercy tradition and through the integration of scholarly activity, evidence-based teaching, and service, fosters a forward thinking, inclusive learning environment committed to developing competent, socially and ethically sensitive eye and vision care professionals who are committed to patient care and community wellness.

VISION

The University of Detroit Mercy School of Optometry will be an internationally recognized leader for innovations in curriculum, clinical education, patient care, and community collaboration.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

- 1. Education** – Provide an innovative, integrated, science-based curriculum that produces ethical, culturally sensitive, competent eye care practitioners that are fully prepared for practice and licensure upon graduation
 - Recruit high quality faculty and staff, while focusing on retention and rewarding of merit.
 - Encourage and support continuous learning and professional development.
 - Foster critical thinking, self-directed learning and self-assessment utilizing active educational processes.
 - Lead in the development and adoption of relevant and appropriate educational models that enhance learning.
 - Implement and encourage the use of technology by faculty, staff and students to optimize teaching, learning and patient care.
 - Implement a clinical education model that fosters application and integration of biomedical, clinical and behavioral sciences.

- 2. Patient Care** – Provide high-quality, evidence-based, comprehensive care in an environment that promotes diversity and safety while emphasizing whole-body health.
 - Be a provider of eye care services and resources in the community.
 - Provide evidence-based, comprehensive patient care.
 - Provide a safe clinical environment that ensures safety and security for all patients, regardless of race or socioeconomic background.
 - Promote community-based eye care services.
 - Develop and implement protocols for the continued enhancement of clinical practice and skills.
 - Incorporate advances and innovations in technology to optimize patient care.
 - Provide a wide range of patient encounters.

- 3. Research** – Provide support for faculty and students to engage in research and scholarly activity.
 - Support faculty and student participation in internally and externally funded research and scholarly activity.
 - Establish interdisciplinary faculty and student collaborations to engage in research and scholarly activity.
 - Provide time, resources, and incentives for faculty to participate in research and scholarly activity.
 - Establish internal mentoring groups to aid faculty and students in all stages of the research process.

- 4. Service** – Promote service to the profession through local and global initiatives
 - Foster an environment that promotes leadership and service to others.
 - Encourage participation in professional and non-profit organizations.

- Emphasize the value of cultural diversity by maintaining a diverse student body.
- Instill a sense of responsibility to serve the community and the underserved.

University of Detroit Mercy School of Optometry Core Values:

Integrity: Live a life of integrity and act in good faith

Respect: Treat the earth, humans, and animals with dignity and respect

Inclusion: Actively strive for equity and belonging

Passion: Seek excellence in teaching, learning and performing service. Display joy and perseverance in acquiring and sharing knowledge. Seek lifelong learning and understanding. Use knowledge actively and apply skills for the betterment of all.

The Core Values of the School of Optometry will be celebrated by rewarding students and faculty, who display these core values, with awards that become embedded in the tradition of the School of Optometry.

SCHOOL OF OPTOMETRY ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICES

Office of the Dean

The Dean and Executive Associate Dean provide leadership for the School of Optometry in teaching, scholarly activity, service, and faculty development and ensure that the academic and patient-care missions of the School of Optometry are accomplished.

Dean of the School of Optometry

Maryke Neiberg, OD, FAAO
Office: 102
Phone: (248) 675-0821
Email: neibermn@udmercy.edu

Executive Associate Dean

Sulman Hans, OD, MS, FAAO, Dipl ABO
Office: 112
Phone: (248) 675-0820
Email: hanssu@udmercy.edu

Dean of Academic Administration

The Dean of Academic Administration provides leadership and guidance for faculty at the School of Optometry. In addition, the Dean of Academic Administration serves as a liaison between faculty and students.

Assistant Dean of Academic Administration

Naureen Haroon, OD, MPH, FAAO
Office: 111
Phone: (248) 675-0822
Email: haroonnm@udmercy.edu

The Director of Student Success and Achievement supports students, faculty, and staff at the School of Optometry by fostering professional growth, academic excellence, and clinical success through a collaborative approach with the Associate Dean of Academic Administration and other key administration and faculty at the School of Optometry.

Director of Student Success and Achievement

Amy Ferguson, OD., MS
Office: 117
Phone: (248) 675-0825
Email: afergus@udmercy.edu

Associate Vice President and University Registrar

Amy Wisniewski

Phone: (313) 993-3313

wisnieaj1@udmercy.edu

Office of Financial Aid

The centralized Office of Financial Aid coordinates financial aid administration including determining student eligibility, verifying information, awarding aid, and counseling. The Director of Financial Aid discusses financial aid programs with current and prospective students, audits files for completion, completes verification when required, packages/repackages financial aid for which students are eligible, and interfaces with outside organizations to facilitate the receipt of funds.

Emergency Loan: This loan fund is designated for students to meet emergency expenses only. Applications are available from the Office of Financial Aid. There is a \$1000 limit for the loan, and it must be repaid by the next academic semester. The Office of Student Services and Enrollment Management, the Office of Financial Aid, and the Office of the Bursar manage emergency loan applications.

Director of Financial Aid

Angela Orlando

Office: DC 460

Phone: (313) 494-6617

Email: orlandan@udmercy.edu

Office of Equal Opportunity

Disability and accessibility support services are available to students through the Office of Equal Opportunity located on the McNichols Campus. Students eligible for services may have, but are not limited to, the following types of disabilities: mobility, orthopedic, pregnancy-related, hearing, visual, learning, psychological, and attentional. The Office of Equal Opportunity arranges accommodations, adjustments, and special equipment for students with all types of disabilities. The student will be responsible for contacting the Access Specialist to start the accommodation process as soon as possible after being admitted or enrolling in coursework, and at any time during their enrollment that they feel their needs are not being met. An accommodation plan will be individualized based upon disability and needs, by the Access Specialist. Accommodations may include a quiet space for taking exams, and extra time for completing exams, quizzes, and other assessments.

Office of Health and Wellness

The centralized Office of Health and Wellness provides counseling for support with mental health issues, emotional wellness, relationship issues, and professional growth and development. Services include individual counseling, crisis intervention, workshops, educational activities, support

groups, therapy groups, and self-care information. Sessions are free of charge, confidential, and generally follow a short-term, solution-focused model. Any needs that cannot be met within the Office of Health and Wellness will be addressed via a referral to an outside clinic, community mental health agency, or private practitioner.

Wellness Coordinator and Personal Counselor

Office: DC 425
Phone: (313) 494-6938

Office of Student Engagement and Belonging

The centralized Office of Student Engagement and Belonging provides advising, programming, and intercultural competence training to support the unique needs of students and to meaningfully engage across diverse backgrounds.

Director of Student Engagement and Belonging

Bethsave Lozano, M.A.
Novi Office: 125 Phone: (248) 675-0828
Corktown Office: DC 455 Phone: (313) 494-6653
Email: lozanobs@udmercy.edu

Office of Educational Technology

The centralized Office of Educational Technology supports the use of technology for the advancement of education. This would include technology used in the classroom and online. Some of the technology supported by the office includes personal audience response systems (clickers), digital media design, poster design, and our learning management system (Blackboard).

ADMISSIONS REQUIREMENTS FOR OPTOMETRY

Prerequisites

All applicants must have successfully completed at least the equivalent of three academic years of postsecondary education. The undergraduate course prerequisites for all applicants is listed below and published on the School of Optometry website. Completion of all course prerequisites is

verified by official transcripts to the Office of Admissions for all colleges and universities that were attended in advance of matriculation to the School of Optometry.

- Courses must be taken from an accredited US or Canadian college or university.
- One year of Biology with lab (8 credit hours), General Chemistry with lab (8 credit hours), Organic Chemistry with lab (4 credit hours), General Physics with lab (8 credit hours), Microbiology with lab (3 credit hours), General Anatomy (3 credit hours) or Physiology (3 credit hours) or a combined Anatomy/Physiology course or a Biochemistry course (3 credit hours), and English (6 credit hours), must be completed with a final course grade of “C” or better.
- The following course(s) are strongly recommended: General Anatomy (3 credit hours), Physiology (3 credit hours) or a combined Anatomy/Physiology course or Biochemistry (3 credit hours), Statistics (3 credit hours), and Psychology (3 credit hours) with a final course grade of “C” or better.
- Pass/Fail grading will generally not be accepted for prerequisite courses. Prerequisite courses taken after Spring 2020 in a Pass/Fail format will be reviewed by the Director of Admissions and may not be counted toward admissions requirements.
- Credits must have been earned within 10 years of application for admission into the Optometry Program.

Admissions Tests, Including Minimum Acceptable Scores

The OAT is the preferred admissions test for the School of Optometry. To be considered competitive, applicants should aim for at least 300 for the academic average and each section of the examination. Applicants are required to send scores from the Optometry Admission Test (OAT) directly to the Office of Admissions. The School also accepts scores from the MCAT, DAT, PCAT, and GRE (on a case-by-case basis), with scores below the mean for each examination considered less competitive. Scores from any of the aforementioned examinations should be from within three years of the date of application.

Grade Point Averages (GPA)

The minimum acceptable undergraduate cumulative and science GPA to be considered competitive for acceptance into the School of Optometry is 3.00 from an accredited college or university.

Interview

Applicants that meet GPA and OAT thresholds, or through holistic review have earned an interview, are required to complete a Kira Talent pre-interview assessment prior to their in-person interview. Kira Talent operates a cloud-based holistic admissions assessment platform designed for use by academic admissions departments to assess and enroll students. <https://www.kiratalent.com/>. Video recorded questions are shown to applicants and their timed responses will be captured and transmitted to the Office of Admissions. Questions are based on

competencies from the Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC) Anatomy of an Applicant document.

The applicant is subsequently assigned to two trained interviewers. These interviewers are full- or part-time faculty of the School of Optometry and Integrated Biological Sciences. Interviewers employ a whole-file pre-review and are asked to independently score applicants using a standardized Candidate Review Sheet with a five-point Likert scale to assess multiple competency areas. Scores are submitted electronically to the Office of Admissions. To ensure fairness to candidates, all interviewers use a set of standardized questions that have been prepared and approved by the Optometry Admissions Committee. Following the interview, candidates are independently evaluated and scored using a standardized Interviewer Recommendation Sheet using a 10-point Likert scale to evaluate non-cognitive competencies. Interviewed candidates are presented to the Committee at regular meetings scheduled throughout the application cycle. All voting members of the Committee cast a vote on every candidate to determine a final Committee recommendation. Committee decisions are: Admit, Waitlist, or Do Not Admit.

Letters of Reference

A minimum of three letters of reference is required, including at least one letter from science faculty from the applicant's undergraduate institution who are familiar with the applicant and one letter from a practicing, non-relative optometrist. An additional letter from any of the following is required: non-relative optometrist, science faculty, non-science faculty, pre-health advisor, faculty advisor, healthcare professional, or employer. Letters of reference should attest to the intelligence, integrity, and maturity of the applicant, as well as other attributes that indicate the student will be successful in the program.

Shadowing

To ensure applicants are familiar with the duties and scope of practice within optometry, applicants are required to complete at least 10 hours of observation with a practicing, non-relative optometrist.

Deadlines for Submission

The deadline for submission of application materials to OptomCAS is May 22

<https://www.optomcas.org/information-about-schools-colleges/deadlines-and-other-information/>

Application Fees

Applicants are responsible for payment of application fees through OptomCAS, which varies depending on the number of schools applied to.

Pre-matriculation Health Standards

Following acceptance to the optometry program, students are required to submit a completed physical exam form signed by a physician that indicates the student is medically cleared for enrollment and participation in the program. Additionally, the student will be required to submit documented laboratory evidence of the absence of tuberculosis (updated yearly) and proof of immunization against measles, mumps, rubella, varicella (chicken pox), diphtheria/tetanus/pertussis, and hepatitis B through blood titers of circulating antibodies. Forms and documentation will be submitted to *CastleBranch* by **August 1** of the year entering the program. *CastleBranch* is an electronic database that will be used to track student compliance with health standards throughout the four-year program. *CastleBranch* will be managed by the Office of the Dean. Students failing to meet the deadline will be prohibited from beginning the program until appropriate documentation is provided.

The School is committed to the principle of diversity in all areas. Consistent with that commitment, admission to the School is open to all qualified individuals and complies with section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act (1993). Technical standards have been developed by ASCO and adopted by the School to reflect performance abilities and characteristics necessary to successfully complete the didactic and clinical requirements of the program. The Optometry Technical Standards describe the essential functions that students must demonstrate admittance to, advancement through, and graduation from, the program. Students must be able to meet the technical standards with or without a reasonable accommodation. Reasonable accommodations do not require a change in fundamental program requirements of the curriculum, create a direct threat to the health or safety of others, or create an undue burden on the university. Students are encouraged to seek assistance of the Office of Disabilities if they may be concerned that they do not meet any of these requirements.

ASCO FUNCTIONAL GUIDELINES

Admission to the School of Optometry is open to all qualified individuals and complies with section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act, 1993. The following functional guidelines describe the essential functions that all students must demonstrate in order to graduate from the optometry program.

Students must be able to meet the following technical standards with or without a reasonable create an undue burden on the School or University.

These functional guidelines are not comprehensive and may be updated, revised, or withdrawn at the discretion of the Administration without notice. The functional guidelines are as follows:

1. Observation Abilities

The student must be able to acquire a defined level of required knowledge as presented through lectures, laboratories, demonstrations, patient interaction and self-study. Acquiring this body of information necessitates the functional use of visual, auditory and somatic sensation enhanced by the functional use of other sensory modalities. Examples of these observational skills in which accurate information needs to be extracted in an efficient manner include:

a. Audio/Visual:

- Reading and interpreting information from presentations, papers, slides, video and live demonstrations.
- Discriminating numbers, images and patterns associated with diagnostic tests and instruments, including microscopic images of tissue in order to discern three-dimensional relationships, depth and color changes.

b. Tactile Abilities:

- Palpating the eye and related areas to determine the integrity of the underlying structures.

2. Communication Abilities

The student must be able to communicate effectively, efficiently and sensitively with patients and their families, peers, staff, instructors and other members of the health care team. The student must be able to demonstrate established communication skills using traditional and alternative means. Examples of required communications skills include:

- Relating effectively and sensitively to patients, conveying compassion and empathy
- Perceiving verbal and non-verbal communication such as sadness, worry, agitation and lack of comprehension from patients
- Eliciting information from patients and observing changes in mood and activity
- Communicating quickly, effectively and efficiently in English in person and in writing with patients and other members of the health care team
- Reading and recording observations, test results and management plans accurately, in addition to completing assignments, patient records and correspondence accurately and in a timely manner

3. Sensory and Motor Coordination Abilities

The student must possess the sensory and motor skills necessary to perform an eye examination, including emergency care. In general, this requires sufficient exteroception sense (touch, pain, temperature), proprioceptive sense (position, pressure, movement,

stereognosis and vibratory) and fine motor function (significant coordination and manual dexterity using arms, wrists, hands and fingers).

Examples of skill required include but are not limited to:

- Instillation of ocular pharmaceutical agents
- Insertion, removal and manipulation of contact lenses
- Assessment of blood pressure and pulse
- Perform minor surgical procedures such as the removal of foreign objects from the cornea
- Simultaneous manipulation of lenses, instruments and therapeutic agents and devices
- Reasonable facility of movement
- Injections into the eye, lids or limbs

4. Intellectual-Conceptual, Integrative and Quantitative Abilities

Problem solving, a most critical skill, is essential for optometric students and must be performed quickly, especially in emergency situations. In order to be an effective problem solver, the student must be able to accurately and efficiently utilize such abilities as measurement, calculation, reasoning, analysis, judgment, investigation, memory, numerical recognition and synthesis. Examples of these abilities include being able to:

- Determine appropriate questions to be asked and clinical tests to be performed
- Identify and analyze significant findings from history, examination and other test data
- Demonstrate good judgment and provide a reasonable assessment, diagnosis and management of patients
- Retain, recall and obtain information in an efficient manner
- Identify and communicate the limits of one's knowledge and skill

5. Behavioral and Social Attributes

The student must possess the necessary behavioral and social attributes for the study and practice of optometry. Examples of such attributes include:

- Satisfactory emotional health required for full utilization of one's intellectual ability
- High ethical standards and integrity
- An empathy with patients and concern for their welfare
- Commitment to the optometric profession and its standards
- Effective interpersonal relationships with patients, peers and instructors
- Professional demeanor
- Effective functioning under varying degrees of stress and workload

- Adaptability to changing environments and uncertainties such as being considered an essential worker
- Positive acceptance of suggestions and constructive criticism

Length of the Program

The School of Optometry program consists of a total of 11 semesters over 4 years. Year 1 consists of a Fall and Winter semester. Years 2, 3, and 4 consist of a Summer, Fall, and Winter semester. Fall and Winter semesters are 16 weeks long with an additional finals week. The Summer semester for Year 2 and 3 is 12 weeks long with an additional finals week. The summer semester for Year 4 is 14 weeks long.

Breaks include a Spring Break (Years 1, 2, and 4), a break for NBEO part one in Year 3, a break in May between Winter and Summer semesters (Years 1 and 2), and a break in December between Fall and Winter semesters.

Optometry Competencies

Competency is a complex behavior or ability essential for the optometrist to begin independent, unsupervised practice. Competency includes knowledge, experience, critical thinking and problem-solving skills, professionalism, ethical values, and technical and procedural skills. Competency assumes that all behaviors are performed with a degree of quality consistent with patient well-being. All behaviors and abilities are developed and supported by foundation knowledge and psychomotor skills. Competencies serve as a framework for the curriculum, and learning experiences and competency statements guide assessment tools.

Curricular Competencies

1. The graduate must be able to identify, record, and analyze pertinent history and problems presented by the patient.
2. The graduate must be able to demonstrate the necessary skills to examine and evaluate the patient to arrive at an appropriate diagnosis.
3. The graduate must be able to formulate a treatment and management plan and understand the implications of various treatment and management options.
4. The graduate must be able to provide preventive care, patient education and counseling.
5. The graduate must be able to use the knowledge of optometry's role and the roles of other health professions to appropriately assess and address the health care needs of the patients and populations being served.
6. The graduate must be able to apply knowledge of professional, ethical, legal, and public health issues applicable to the delivery of optometric care.

7. The graduate must be able to demonstrate understanding of research principles and conduct in order to critically assess the literature.
8. The graduate must be able to effectively communicate orally and in writing with other professionals and patients.
9. The graduate must be able to demonstrate basic life support skills for emergencies encountered in optometric practice.
10. The graduate must be able to demonstrate an understanding of the basic principles and philosophy of optometric practice management.

GENERAL SCHOOL INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

School of Optometry Academic Calendar 2025-2026

	2025-2026
FALL	<i>2025</i>
Semester Begins	August 26
Labor Day Holiday (University Closed)	Sept 1
Thanksgiving Recess (University Closed)	November 26-30
Last day of classes	December 12
Final Exams	December 15-19

Grades due by 6 pm	December 19
Semester Break	December 22-Jan 5
WINTER	<i>2026</i>
Semester Begins	January 6
MLK Holiday (University Closed)	January 19
Spring Break	March 21-29
Easter Recess (University Closed)	April 3-April 5
Last day of classes	May 1
Final Exams	May 4-May 8
Grades due by 6 pm	May 8
Semester Break	May 11-May 18
SUMMER	<i>2026</i>
Semester Begins (2 nd Year Students)	May 19
Memorial Day (University Closed)	May 25
Juneteenth (University Closed)	June 19
Independence Day Recess (University Break)	July 3-5
Last day of classes	August 7
Final Exams	August 10-14
Grades due by 6 pm	August 14
Semester Break	August 17-24

Accessing Online Services: My Portal

My Portal is the website to access online services including Office 365 email and our learning management system, Blackboard. My Portal is accessed using <https://my.udmercy.edu>.

Log on with your University username and password. Blackboard can be accessed at blackboard.udmercy.edu. Multi-factor authentication is required for email and Blackboard.

Use of Email Addresses

Redirecting University email to a non-University email address such as gmail is strongly discouraged. The University is not responsible for handling email by outside service providers. Having University email redirected to another account does not absolve a student from the responsibilities associated with timely reading of communications from administration and faculty. Students must use their University email to communicate with faculty, administration, and staff.

Registration: Semester Course Enrollment

The University Registrar will automatically enroll students in good academic and financial standing in the appropriate courses for each year and term in the Optometry curriculum.

Registration: Account Holds

Some types of holds on student accounts can prevent registration. Students are informed by email from the University Registrar when holds are placed on their accounts. Students with holds should contact the office that has placed the hold for information on clearing the hold, or contact the University Registrar.

Voluntary Withdrawal from the Optometry Program

Students wishing to withdraw voluntarily from the Optometry Program should present a letter to the Dean's Office outlining the reasons for withdrawal and the effective date of withdrawal. Fees will be assessed by the University Registrar and are determined based on the date of withdrawal. Students who voluntarily withdraw must complete a check-out process overseen by the University Registrar.

Student Health Insurance

All students must have health insurance coverage, either through individual policies or through the UnitedHealthcare Student Health Policy. Proof of insurance must be provided to CastleBranch. Registered students will be assessed the health insurance fee annually in the Fall semester. Contact the University Registrar for information regarding student health insurance.

Student Health Services

Students in need of medical attention can access health services at the University Student Health Center located on the McNichols Campus. Professional outpatient counseling and psychotherapeutic treatment are available to students at no charge. Any student who is unable to secure transportation to the Student Health Center can request assistance from Public Safety. In addition, Public Safety is available to arrange for EMS transportation to a local hospital for any student in need of urgent medical attention.

Academic Support Services: Tutors

The Office of the Dean and the Office of Student Services and Enrollment Management have established a resource of tutors available to students. Once a student is assigned a tutor, the students will coordinate meetings or tutoring sessions according to a mutually agreed upon schedule. Students interested in receiving support from a tutor should contact the Associate Dean of Student Services and Enrollment Management.

Faculty-Student Mentoring Program

Each first-year student is assigned a faculty mentor and is expected to meet with their assigned mentor twice per semester for the first two years of the program. Faculty mentors may provide

support to students regarding the transition and adjustment to a professional school, as well as help students navigate personal, professional, and academic challenges. Any questions regarding the Faculty-Student Mentoring Program can be directed to the Office of Student Services and Enrollment Management.

Student Government Policies

Student Government will be composed of an Executive Board, representatives of student organizations, and class officers. The Executive Board (e-board) consists of a president, vice-president, secretary, treasurer, and class representatives. Student Government will meet monthly. First-year optometry students will elect their class officers in September, while upper-level class elections will be held in the spring. Class Officer responsibilities will include representing their class at Student Government meetings, planning events for the class, serving as a point of contact for administration, attending Dean's meetings, working with the Assistant Dean of Academic Administration on exam schedules, serving as student members on committees, and collaborating with course directors to address class concerns. Specific responsibilities of Class Officers will include:

- **President:** Conduct the meetings, approve budgets, form committees, and organize school functions.
- **Vice President:** Support the President in duties.
- **Treasurer:** Maintain a checking account, organize the yearly budget and disperse funds to approved student groups. Provide current account balance at each meeting.
- **Secretary:** Take accurate minutes for each meeting, ensure that all the necessities for the meeting are accounted for, and inform all organizations of the time, date, and location of meetings.

The responsibilities of Student Government members include:

1. Remain in good academic standing. The Student Government Executive Board must be comprised of students in good standing. Should a student not be in good academic standing, the board shall convene to elect an alternative.
2. Form resolutions, propose legislation, and initiate recommendations on matters concerning the welfare of the student body.
3. Manage all student organizations and activities that fall under the authority of the student government.
4. Review annually the organization membership in Student Government
5. Determine and review all funds allocated by the Student Government to organizations that are recognized by the student government.
6. Act as a spokesperson for the student body by issuing position statements on behalf of the student body.
7. Make recommendations to the administration and the faculty on matters affecting student welfare and interests.

8. Appoint committees, and to designate chairpersons thereof for any purpose concerning the interest and/or welfare of the Student Body.

List of Faculty Committees with Student Appointments

- The Optometry **Curriculum Committee** will have representation from one third-year and one fourth-year student; each student will be selected by their respective class and will be voting members.
- The **Research Committee** will have one student representative that is selected from active members of the Student Research Group who will be a non-voting member.

Student Organizations

Students will be encouraged to establish a Detroit Mercy Chapter of the American Optometric Student Association (AOSA) and the Student Chapter of the American Academy of Optometry (SAAO). These organizations represent students attending the schools and colleges of optometry throughout the US, Canada, and Puerto Rico. The functions of these organizations will include improving the visual welfare of the public, promoting the profession of optometry, and promoting the education and welfare of optometry students.

Locker Policy

Students will be assigned a locker during their first week of class. Students are required to purchase a combination lock to maintain adequate security of their instruments and equipment. To ensure the security of student equipment, students must keep lockers locked at all times. If concerns for safety or security arise, Public Safety has the authority to access student lockers. If a student forgets their locker combination, public safety may be available to assist so that students can gain access to their locker, however students are responsible for the replacement of combination locks if they are damaged in this process. Students who repeatedly require assistance to access their lockers may be charged a fee.

Stolen Instruments and Equipment

Students are expected to maintain adequate security of instruments and equipment. Students are encouraged to always place equipment in their designated lockers on campus. Many pieces of equipment have serial numbers; these should be recorded and kept in a safe place. Student purchases should be marked clearly. Engraving an identification symbol is an excellent way to protect your property. Equipment vendors will engrave equipment upon request. Alleged property thefts must be reported to Public Safety.

STUDENT APPEARANCE GUIDELINES, POLICIES, AND PROCEDURES

Student Appearance in Non-Patient Care Settings

Non-patient care settings include offices, classrooms, and student lounges. Clean and pressed scrubs are required in these areas. Scrub tops and bottoms must be of the same color, which will be determined by the Office of the Dean. Students will be provided with a website where they will be required to purchase approved scrubs. Sweaters, fleeces, sweatshirts, or coats can be worn in the classroom to maintain comfort. No profanity, inappropriate images, or politically driven messages should be printed on any clothing or accessories worn by students. The dress code may be modified by the administration for special events. Students are required to follow the recommendations for wearing scrubs outlined in this document. Headwear and coverings are only allowed for religious reasons. Headwear, coverings, and long-sleeve shirts worn under scrubs should be limited to the following colors: black, white, or gray. Open-toed shoes and shoes with holes, like crocs, are not acceptable. Neutral-colored shoes are acceptable (black, gray, brown, blue, etc.). No bright-colored shoes should be worn.

Student Appearance in Pre-Clinical and Clinical Patient Care Settings

The following dress code guidelines apply to patient-care settings and preclinical simulation areas. Clean and pressed scrubs must be worn in the simulation laboratory during school sessions. Scrub tops and bottoms must be of the same color, which will be determined by the Office of the Dean. Scrubs must be covered with a clinic coat in all patient care activities. Students will be provided with a website where they will be required to purchase clinic approved scrubs. Students are responsible for the purchase of scrubs and clinic coats meeting the approved criteria. Students must not wear scrubs that are the property of another health care organization while at the School of Optometry. Clinic coats are not to be worn outside patient treatment areas. Students who, for religious reasons, must have their arms covered to the wrist, may wear long-sleeved shirts under their scrubs. Beards must be neatly trimmed and long hair secured. Headwear and coverings are only allowed for religious reasons. Headwear, coverings and long-sleeve shirts worn under scrubs should be limited to the following colors: black, white, or gray.

In patient care areas footwear should be consistent with shoes worn by professionals in a hospital environment. Open-toed shoes and shoes with holes, like crocs, are not acceptable in any clinic or lab setting. Neutral-colored shoes are acceptable (black, gray, brown, blue, etc.). No bright-colored shoes should be worn. Visible tattoos, bracelets, rings with stones or gems, and body piercings other than ears are not allowed. No more than two earrings per ear are allowed and earrings should be either studs or short in length. Bars and gauges are not allowed. Fingernails are to be clean and trimmed so that when viewing the palm side of the hand the nails cannot be seen. The wearing of artificial nails or extenders is not acceptable, but nail polish is allowed. Students are required to wear their University-issued identification cards. Consistent noncompliance with appearance guidelines will be reported to the Office of Academic Administration as unprofessional behavior.

Any student failing to comply with these guidelines may be asked to leave the campus until compliance is met, or be subject to disciplinary action for unprofessional behavior.

COURSE AND CLASSROOM INFORMATION, POLICIES, AND PROCEDURES

General Classroom Guidelines

The option to allow food in the classroom is left to the discretion of the course director. If food and drink are permitted in the classroom, students will take responsibility for the classroom environment by disposing of all garbage. Students will use their own good judgment to determine whether food is appropriate for class. Students will respect housekeeping staff by taking all due care to avoid spills and stains. Food and drinks are not permitted in any lab or clinical setting. Chewing gum is not allowed in clinics and any lab.

Blackboard

The University uses Blackboard as the Learning Management System. At a minimum, course directors are required to post the syllabus on their course Blackboard site by the first meeting of the course. You will also find assignments, tests, recorded lectures, PowerPoints, reading materials, and grades on the course Blackboard site. Access to Blackboard is through <https://my.udmercy.edu> or <blackboard.udmercy.edu>. Students are expected to view the course Blackboard sites frequently to stay current with course schedules and announcements. A lack of use of Blackboard will not be an acceptable reason for missing assignment deadlines or assessment dates.

“Assessments” are defined in this Handbook as online or in-class quizzes, examinations, assignments, essays, and other graded exercises.

Course Delivery

In-person lectures will be presented along with simultaneous livestream online delivery via Blackboard Collaborate. Lectures may also be recorded and posted to Blackboard. **In-person attendance is required for all optometry lectures, laboratory sessions, clinical patient care, and any course work or learning exercise that the course director deems appropriate.** It is the student’s responsibility to master all knowledge and skills and demonstrate the same level of expected competency regardless of delivery format. Failure to attend classes in any delivery format, laboratory sessions, or clinical assignments may jeopardize student progress and delay graduation.

Course Syllabus

Course directors are required to distribute syllabi utilizing a standardized format no later than the first class meeting. Digital syllabi will be posted to Blackboard. It is the responsibility of the course director to inform students no later than the first class meeting of course policy concerning attendance, examinations, quizzes, papers, absences, arriving late, dress, expected classroom behaviors, and other policies. Incorporation of these policies into the course syllabus is considered an appropriate method for informing students.

Course Copyright Policy

Copyright laws protect all course materials that students receive, or to which students have online access. Students may use course materials and make copies for their own use as needed, but unauthorized distribution and/or uploading of materials without the instructor's permission is prohibited. Students who engage in the unauthorized distribution of copyrighted materials may be liable under Federal and State laws. Distributing essays, labs, homework, or other assignments created for a course without permission or knowledge of the course director may constitute unprofessional behavior. In instances where audio or video recordings of lectures are made available, recordings are the intellectual property of the faculty and should not be distributed by students outside of Blackboard.

Student Recording of Class Sessions

Students may video and/or audio record class sessions only with course director approval. No video or audio may be uploaded or distributed to anyone other than the person for whom it was intended.

Scheduling of Assessments

Assessments are defined in this Handbook as online or in-class quizzes, examinations, assignments, and other exercises. Students may request changes from the course director in the assessment schedule for any course within the first two weeks of the semester. It is the prerogative of the course director to approve or not approve the student requests for changes. Once the course director agrees with the requests, the Office of Academic Administration must be made aware of the change(s) in the syllabus.

Examination Policies

Students may bring writing implements to their seat or bench as determined by the course director. The use of a scrap piece of paper during the exam is at the discretion of the course director. Books, laptops, phones, backpacks, etc. will be placed in an area separate from the testing area. Proctors will provide directions regarding start and finish time, submission of completed examinations, and whether students can leave when finished or must remain in the classroom/lab for the length of the examination. For written exams, answers will be written only on the examination booklet. It is the course director's decision to determine whether a student who arrives late may take the examination. For examinations of two hours or less, students will not normally be expected to leave the examination room. For examinations greater than two hours, provisions must be made to accommodate a fifteen-minute break. The break will be designed so no breach of examination

security can occur. In case of a student illness during the examination, the student will be permitted to leave the room and a new examination date and time will be established. No questions will be answered during the examination unless so specified by the course director or proctor. If clarification is given it must be provided to all students with an announcement to the class. Neither the examination itself, nor any notes or materials derived from the examination, may be copied by students or removed from the examination room.

Final Examination Policies

The last week of each term is designated as the Final Exam week. The Office of Academic Administration is responsible for preparing the final examination schedule that includes days, times, and room assignments. Student input from class officers concerning the final exam schedule will be considered by the Office of Academic Administration. Exam schedules are finalized during the first 3 weeks for the Fall and Winter Terms, and during the first 2 weeks for the Summer Term. Final schedules will be published on Blackboard and emailed to the class officers. No more than two didactic examinations and one laboratory examination per class will be scheduled on one day.

Student Identity Verification

Students are responsible for ensuring that required coursework and assessment submissions are their own work. Students may collaborate with peers only **when explicitly allowed** by the course director. For in-class assessments, students are to identify their examination materials by using their School examination ID Numbers. If remote proctored examinations are utilized, identity will be verified with Blackboard Respondus Lockdown Browser and Respondus Monitor. Safe Assign, a feature of Blackboard, will be used to review submitted written assignments to determine potential plagiarism. Alleged acts of academic misconduct based on student inability to adhere to these guidelines will be reported to the Office of Academic Administration using the protocol outlined in this Handbook.

Testing Accommodations

Course directors will be notified by the Office of Academic Administration if student(s) have been approved by the Office of Equal Opportunity for testing accommodations for in-class or online assessments. The list of students with approved accommodations and the conditions will be emailed to the Office of Academic Administration by the Access Specialist at the beginning of each semester. Course directors will coordinate with the designated staff member to schedule and oversee assessments with the approved accommodations.

The student will be responsible for making contact with the Access Specialist to start the accommodation process as soon as possible after being admitted or enrolling in coursework, and at any time during their enrollment that they feel their needs are not being met. An accommodation plan will be individualized based upon disability and needs, by the Access Specialist. Accommodations may include a quiet space for taking exams, and extra time for completing exams, quizzes, and other assessments.

Post-Examination Policies

The results of online assessments are generally available to the student immediately. It is the responsibility of the course director to provide the results of written assessments within two weeks. If a written examination is not to be returned to the student, the course director must make arrangements for the student to review all test documents upon request. Blackboard online assessments can be made available to the student for review. Compiled statistical results of assessment grades which do not identify students by name may be released by hard copy or made available on Blackboard at the discretion of the course director. Hard copy examinations that are not returned to the student must be retained on file for one year after the Associate Registrar has recorded the student's final course grade.

School Closure/Cancellation of Class

If faculty must cancel their individual class they must relay that information to the student using Announcements in Blackboard as soon as possible. The University uses the RAVE Mobile Safety system to provide communication alerts regarding school-wide closures, cancellations, or other emergencies. Students must register to confirm contact information and choose notification preferences at <https://www.getrave.com/login/udmercy>. When the University or the Novi campus needs to begin classes late or to cancel classes, the information will be posted on the home page of the University website and through Detroit TV channels 2, 4, 7, 50 and 62 and radio stations WWJ-950 AM and WJR-760 AM. This is in addition to the notice that will be sent to all subscribers of the RAVE Mobile Safety system.

STUDENT ATTENDANCE AND ABSENCE GUIDELINES, POLICIES, AND PROCEDURES

Attendance Policies

Attendance at scheduled classes, laboratory sessions, clinics, internships, and externships are mandatory. Failure to attend sessions will jeopardize student progress. Students who are unable to attend sessions are required to report their absence and the reason for the absence before the missed session. Absences are to be reported to the course director, Dean of Academic Administration, and the designated staff person (Mrs. Krysta Martoia for clinic absences and Mrs. Leah Faraj for all others). Forms are available on Blackboard to document absences. Absences are determined to be excused or unexcused by the Dean of Academic Administration. Regardless of whether the absence is deemed to be excused or unexcused, the student is responsible for all missed course content, activities, and assessments.

Excused Absences

Illness, religious observances, family emergency, jury duty, illness or medical emergency of a dependent, emergency closure of childcare facility or school for a dependent, auto accident, and/or bereavement are examples a family emergency, accidents, and bereavement are examples of absences that will be excused. Excused absences must be reported before the class session begins; documentation must be provided. Absences are reported to the course director, Dean of Academic Administration, Dean of Clinic Administration if appropriate, and the designated staff person via email and/or absence form Absences that extend more than 2 weeks (10 academic days) qualify for a mandatory Leave of Absence.

Other Excused Absences

Professional Meetings: Students in the 1-3 years of the OD program may request an excused absence for one professional meeting per academic year. 4th year students may be allowed to attend one professional meeting during the fourth year depending upon approval from their educational rotation site. All students must be in good academic standing to attend these meetings.

Research Presentations: Students may request an excused absence to attend a research conference to present their sponsored research project on behalf of the School of Optometry. Students must be in good academic standing and will be approved for one meeting per academic year.

Residency Interviews: OD4 students may request an excused absence to attend a residency interview on a case-by-case basis

Unexcused Absences

Absences that are not excused include, but are not limited to, early departures at the end of a semester or break, or late arrivals at the beginning of a semester or break due to travel

arrangements, weddings, humanitarian service missions, and outside employment, other conferences or professional association events not outlined above.

Protocols for Missing Assessments Due to an Absence

It is the student's responsibility to inform course directors and the Office of Academic Administration prior to the assessment that they will be absent. The student will be required to present documentation to the Dean of Academic Administration within 24 hours of returning to school in order to receive an excused absence. Following the student's return to classes, the course director will determine the appropriate method and timeframe for making up the missed assessment. The course director may choose to create a new assessment for the student. If the absence is excused, the student has the right to be given the same number of numerical points, or percentage, as the rest of the class. If the absence is unexcused, the course director may award a score of zero (0) for the assessment. In the event the course director allows the student with an unexcused absence to retake the assessment, the final score awarded may be reduced by 20%.

Arriving Late to an Assessment

It is at the discretion of the course director to permit a student who arrives late for any scheduled assessment to complete the assessment. The student will not be given any additional time beyond the end of the designated assessment period for the rest of the students.

Leave of Absence Protocol

Absences of up to 10 academic days will be assessed as excused or unexcused using stated guidelines. Absences that are 11 days and longer will be considered as a leave of absence. Upon approval by the Dean of Academic Administration, or based on a recommendation of the Academic Performance Committee, a student may be granted a leave of absence. A request for a leave of absence must be submitted in writing and must state the reason(s). Prior to making a decision concerning the requested leave, the Dean of Academic Administration will consult with the Assistant Dean of Student Services and Enrollment Management to evaluate the impact of the leave of absence on the student's academic program; to determine the student's academic status at the time the request is made; and to evaluate the leave on the impact of patient care if applicable. Documentation from a health care professional may be required to support the request. If the leave is approved, a letter stating the effective date of the leave and any conditions the student must fulfill prior to re-entry will be sent to the student by email. The Dean of Academic Administration will be notified of the leave of absence. The student must complete a check-out process with the University Registrar.

A leave of absence can generally be no longer than one academic year. Prior to returning from a leave of absence a written request must be submitted by the student to the Office of Academic Administration. The student's request for re-entry will be based on the student's academic record prior to the leave; evidence that the circumstances that initiated the leave of absence have been resolved; an assessment of the student's potential to successfully complete the curriculum, and the availability of facilities to accommodate the student upon return. There is no guarantee that a

request to return from a leave of absence will be granted, and that the student will be reinstated. A student returning from a leave of absence returns at an appropriate place in the curriculum based on where they were at the time of the leave. The student is required to meet all grading and curricular requirements of all courses. No assurance is made or implied that a student will follow the same curriculum as the class in which they began their academic program. Individual course waivers for students repeating the year may only be granted by the APC at its discretion, not by course directors, and only for courses in which a grade of “B” or higher was earned. Exceptions will be reviewed on a case by case basis.

Physical and Mental Health Leave or Separation

On occasion, student physical and/or mental health needs are beyond that which the University can be reasonably expected to provide. If a student’s physical or mental health threatens their welfare, disrupts or threatens the campus community, or makes excessive demands on staff and/or resources, the student may be requested to undergo an examination by a medical doctor and/or a psychiatrist at their own expense. The Assistant Dean of Academic Administration may, if necessary, call for the separation of the student on medical or mental health grounds.

COURSE GRADING INFORMATION, PROCEDURES, AND POLICIES

Grading Scale

Letter Grade	Percentage Range	Grade Point Average
A	≥ 94%	4.0
A-	≥ 90% – < 94%	3.7
B+	≥ 87% – < 90%	3.3
B	≥ 83% – < 87%	3.0
B-	≥ 80% – < 83%	2.7
C+	≥ 77% – < 80%	2.3
C	≥ 73% – < 77%	2.0
D	≥ 70% – < 73%	1.0
F	< 70%	0
W	Withdraw, no credit	
I	Incomplete, a temporary grade not of record	
P/F	Pass/Fail	

Progress Grades

“U” (unsatisfactory), “M” (marginal), and “S” (satisfactory) progress grades are reported for students at the Fall and Winter Mid-term Academic Performance Committee meetings.

Progress Grade	Percentage and Letter grade equivalent for courses	Percentage and Letter grade equivalent for clinic
S (satisfactory)	≥ 83% - 100% (B to A letter grade)	≥ 87% (B+ or higher)
M (marginal)	≥ 73% - < 83% (C to B- letter grade)	≥ 83% – < 87% (B letter grade)
U (unsatisfactory)	< 73% (D or F letter grade)	< 83% (B- or lower)

A “U” or “M” grade in any course will result in a letter from the Office of Academic Administration sent to the student by email. Upon receiving the letter, the student must:

1. Meet with the course director(s) to talk about performance in the course(s)
2. Meet with the Director of Student Success to discuss performance in the course(s).

The letter must be signed by the course director(s), Director of Student Success and Achievement, and the student. The letter must be returned to the Office of Academic Administration within two weeks of receipt. Students without a “U” or “M” grade may also be required to meet with course directors to discuss concerns with professional behavior. Progress grades are not reflected on student transcripts.

Incomplete Grade

If a student does not complete all the course requirements by the end of the semester due to an approved excused absence, the course director may submit an incomplete (“I”) grade for the student. The student has until the end of the second (2nd) week into the following semester to complete the work to the satisfaction of the course director. Once all work has been completed and submitted, the “I” grade will be changed. If the student does not complete the required course work by week 2, the “I” grade becomes a final course grade of “F.” The deadline for completing an “I” grade may be extended at the discretion of the Assistant Dean of Academic Administration and recommendation of the Academic Performance Committee on a case-by-case basis. Students with an incomplete grade(s) are not eligible for the Dean’s List.

Retake Examinations

Students will be allowed 1 retake examination per academic year. If a student earns a final course grade of “F,” they may be permitted to take a retake examination. The retake applies after the

course grade has been finalized (including if an appeals process is followed). Students can only be permitted to retake an exam if they have failed a course (D final grades do not allow for a retake exam). The highest grade possible for the exam is a 100% but the highest grade the student can get in the course is a C. The retake will be comprehensive and representative of the entire course.

The student is responsible for keeping track of their available retake(s) and responsible for the scheduling of their retake examination(s). If a student meets the criteria to take a retake exam, they must complete the Retake Exam Eligibility Form and submit it to the Assistant Dean of Academic Administration. The Assistant Dean of Academic Administration will confirm a student can sit for a retake exam by signing the form and returning it to the student and course director via email. Only then can the student sit for a retake exam.

The retake exam must be taken by the end of the first week of the next semester. Students will have an “Incomplete” grade on their transcript until the retake examination has been taken. Once all students have taken retake examinations, each course director must submit a list of all students to the Assistant Dean of Academic Administration by the end of first week of the next semester.

Failing Grades

If a student earns a failing grade, the failing grade for the course remains on their transcript. If the student is permitted to retake the course, and a passing grade is subsequently earned, it too will be reflected on the transcript. Only the subsequently earned grade will be calculated into the student’s GPA, even if it is a failing grade.

If a student is repeating a term and is taking one or more courses that they had not previously failed, the final course grade for those courses will be Pass (P) or Fail (F) during the repeating term. The initial passing grade will remain on their transcript. If a student earns an F during the repeating term, this will be reflected on their transcript and any consequences of that F, including but not limited to: academic warning or probation will hold.

Dean’s List Recognition

Dean’s List recognition is granted to those students who achieve a term GPA of 3.5 or higher. Students with an incomplete grade(s) are not eligible for the Dean’s List.

Student Evaluation of Courses (CoursEval)

The School of Optometry uses an online course evaluation program called CoursEval. Information provided by students is used to aid individual faculty in course and teaching improvement efforts, and to contribute to curriculum assessment, revision, and the accreditation process. Course evaluations are mandatory to be completed by all students. Students evaluate each course at the end of each term using both Likert scale-type and open-ended response questions. Only constructive, professional evaluations will be accepted. Responses are reported to faculty and administration as aggregate data only, students are not identified. CoursEval is opened two (2)

weeks before the end of a term and closes before final grades are submitted. Unprofessional comments will lead to the omission of the entire evaluation.

National Boards

Students are required to attempt all three national board exams during their designated times while they are enrolled at the School of Optometry. Students will be required to pass all three national board exams in order to receive their diploma or graduate. Students cannot graduate until they have passed all three board exams.

Repetition of a Term or Year

Upon recommendation of the Academic Performance Committee and approval of the Assistant Dean of Academic Administration, a student may be required to repeat an academic term or year. Circumstances that result in repetition of the curriculum may include academic and/or professionalism issues, or a leave of absence.

Students are responsible for applicable tuition and fees associated with repetition of a term or year. Courses may vary from the course previously offered in material or delivery. If a student repeats one or more courses that they had not previously failed, the final course grade for those courses will be Pass (P) or Fail (F) during the repeating term.

Individual course waivers for students repeating the year may only be granted by the APC at its discretion, not by Course Directors, and only for courses which students had not previously failed.

Guidelines for Appeal of a Final Course Grade

There may be some circumstances in which students will have questions regarding their final grades. These questions may be about understanding the grading scheme; about the grade awarded for a specific piece of work, including work that has not been returned; or about the determination of the final grade. These questions may involve error or potential bias in the calculation of the grade(s) in question. An appeal of a final course grade is limited to miscalculation of grade or an error.

Informal Resolution

Students who wish to make a complaint regarding a specific course are encouraged to resolve the issue directly with the course director. This is considered an informal resolution. An informal resolution must happen within three business days of the final grade being posted. If the student is not able to resolve the issue, the complaint should then be forwarded to the Assistant Dean of Academic Administration.

Formal Resolution

If the informal resolution process does not resolve the issue, the student may request a formal resolution in writing directly to the Academic Administration within five (5) academic days of the failure of the informal resolution. The letter must clearly state the course in question, the reason for the appeal, and describe the attempts made to resolve the matter informally.

The request will be reviewed by the Assistant Dean of Academic Administration to determine if the grade appeal request is supported with documentation. The Assistant Dean of Academic Administration will meet with the Course Director and student, separately, to discuss the Students' Grade Appeal. At the meeting, the student will present information to show why the grade should be changed. If the grade appeal request is approved within five (5) academic days of the grade appeal request, the Assistant Dean of Academic Administration will notify the course director and student of the grade appeal request approval. All efforts should be made to conduct all meetings and gather all pertinent information within two (2) weeks of beginning the grade appeals process.

The Assistant Dean of Academic Administration will decide to uphold the original course grade or recommend a change in the final course grade. If any party to the complaint is not satisfied with the decision of the Assistant Dean of Academic Administration, they may submit a letter to the Dean within four (4) academic days asking that for a review of the decision. No change in the basic issues and facts which led to the original written complaint may be introduced at this level unless all parties concerned mutually agree that such changes are pertinent to a just resolution of the original complaint. The Dean will provide a written statement to all the involved parties with the final decision. This does not apply if the student is dismissed from the school or is no longer enrolled. The Dean's decision in the matter will be final and the appeal will be considered closed.

PROFESSIONAL BEHAVIOR, PROFESSIONALISM AND FITNESS FOR THE PRACTICE OF THE PROFESSION GUIDELINES, POLICIES, AND PROCEDURES

Professional behavior, or professionalism, involves actions, behavior, and interactions with others that is consistent with participation in healthcare education programs. It is your adherence to a defined set of acceptable behaviors. Students who engage in professional misconduct or who are deemed unfit for the practice of optometry may be subject to discipline. The University has the right, at its discretion, to impose any penalty or combination of penalties in any order, depending on the severity of the misconduct or violation that has occurred. It is recognized that "progressive discipline" is not required, and that immediate dismissal is an appropriate discipline for certain misconduct, regardless of whether there has been previous discipline. Definitions and examples of professional misconduct follow. This list is illustrative and is not exhaustive, and is not to be read as a limitation of the general disciplinary powers of the School or the University, nor does it limit the right of the School or University to discipline for infractions that are not listed. Discipline up to and including dismissal may be imposed for any of the following behaviors, which is intended to serve as examples of unprofessional behavior or professional misconduct.

Discrimination, Harassment, or Retaliation

Any discriminatory, harassing, or retaliatory action that one student make take against another student, faculty, staff member, or patient which is based upon race, color, ethnicity, gender, national origin, physical or mental disability, sexual preference, or other category is protected by Federal, State or local law. The University Nondiscrimination, Harassment and Sexual Misconduct Policy is found at https://www.udmercy.edu/academics/academic-affairs/oeo/_files/Nondiscrimination_Policy-1.13.25.pdf

Disrespectful Behavior or Intimidation

Disrespectful or verbally or physically abusive behavior or vulgar language directed toward, or in the presence of, any student, faculty, staff member, or patient, including coercive language or overt or implied threats to the personal or physical well-being of the individual, constitutes professional misconduct. Instances of professional misconduct may arise from ill-conceived attempts at humor. Malicious or inappropriate intent is not a necessary element of professional misconduct. Humorous intent will not be considered with students who are faced with allegations of unprofessional behavior. If there is any question as to whether a remark, joke, or other reference intended to be humorous might be insulting, degrading, or offensive, the student should refrain from making the remark or reference.

Stalking, Flaming, Trolling and Bullying

Abusive language, behavior, and content is not appropriate in any context. Do not insult, attack, threaten, or otherwise harass others. Remember that how a message is intended is less important than how it is perceived. If another individual indicates they find behavior threatening, cease this behavior immediately. Reports of any such behavior to the Office of Academic Administration will result in accusations of unprofessional behavior.

Inappropriate Off-Campus Activity

Any off-campus activity, which would be considered unprofessional behavior by a licensing board, can constitute professional misconduct and may subject the student to discipline.

Substance Abuse

Students present on the campus in an apparently impaired state as determined by subjective or other evaluation may be requested to submit to tests. The possession, use, sale of, or being under the influence of, alcohol, marijuana, or any controlled substance , while on campus will subject the student to allegations of professional misconduct. Follow the link for additional information regarding the University Drug and Alcohol policy: https://udmercy0-my.sharepoint.com/:b:/g/personal/sochacr_udmercy_edu/EaFtQf8_00ZApuTFMdf-LwoB1N_D6FJCZrpjSLyGw_GfVw?e=QcVD1f

Lying with Regard to Any Professional or Academic Issue

Any statement of an untruth or partial statement that although truthful omits material facts, made with the intent to mislead patients, administrative officials, faculty, staff, or students is considered a form of lying. Lying also includes forgery or falsifying, altering, or counterfeiting of any academic, University or patient record, document or form.

Illegal Acts

Any act that violates local, state, or federal law is considered professional misconduct. Theft of any University, student, faculty, staff, or patient property is a violation of this policy and will subject the student to allegations of professional misconduct. Criminal activity that occurs while a student is in attendance at the university may result in disciplinary action including dismissal, and will be addressed through the university's academic or disciplinary policies.

Cheating and Plagiarism

Cheating: Several actions taken by students are considered cheating. For example, any giving or receiving of academic aid without the consent or knowledge of the instructor before, during, or after a scheduled assessment, whether online or in class, is considered cheating. The submission of any laboratory project, paper or assignment by a student, which was completed in whole or in part by any other individual is an instance of cheating. Failure to comply with directions given by a course director or proctor involving the testing environment and exam security (including removing a quiz or examination material from classrooms) is considered cheating.

Plagiarism: Failure to acknowledge assistance from a fellow student, books, or other written materials will be regarded as plagiarism, which is a form of cheating. Plagiarism occurs when specific phrases or entire passages, are incorporated into one's own writing without quotation marks or documentation. Students are advised always to set off another writer's exact words by quotation marks, with appropriate references. Students avoid plagiarism by using their own words and ideas and by fully crediting other's words and ideas when they find their way into the writing.

Clinical Misconduct

Actions taken by students in the clinic setting that will be considered professional misconduct include:

- a. Removal of records from school premises or incorrect storage of patient records
- b. Failure to demonstrate concern for the welfare of patients, real or simulated
- c. Failure to demonstrate concern for the rights of faculty, fellow students, and staff
- d. Failure to meet one's duties, including notification of responsible persons, punctual attendance, notifying appropriate individuals of absences, or inability to carry out responsibilities
- e. Failure to maintain a professional demeanor
- f. Failure to adhere to infection control, and federal, state, or local regulations

- g. Fraudulent record keeping
- h. Breach of patient confidentiality, including but not limited to conduct which violates HIPAA
- i. Abandonment of the patient or otherwise failing to provide appropriate patient care
- j. Failure to provide patient treatment appointments at appropriate time intervals
- k. Failure to provide sufficient information for the patient to give informed consent for treatment
- l. Failure to maintain confidentiality of patient records

Damage to or Theft of University, Student, Faculty, Employee, or Patient Property

Damage or theft of equipment, furniture, laboratory, classroom, or clinical supplies, uniforms, and other materials, whether owned by the University, other students, faculty, employees, or patients will subject the student to allegations of professional misconduct.

Computer or Technology Abuse or Tampering

Physical damage to any computer or other equipment as the result of anything other than excusable accident or normal wear and tear is not permitted and constitutes professional misconduct. Prohibited behavior also includes use of computer or other technology to send any inappropriate e-mail or message or to alter any academic, patient, or University record or document.

Fitness for the Practice of the Profession

Fitness to practice is the ability to meet professional standards; it is about character, professional competence and health. A student is fit to practice if they have the skills, knowledge, character and health to practice their profession safely and effectively. A student may be determined to be lacking in fitness for the practice of the profession as a result of observed and reported failings to meet professional standards involving personal functioning and/or interactions with others. This determination may be the result of the deliberation of an Academic Performance Committee *or* the judgment of the Assistant Dean of Academic Administration.

Lack of Fitness: Personal Standards

1. An inability or unwillingness to acquire and integrate professional standards into one's repertoire of professional behavior
2. An inability to recognize and prevent personal factors such as personal stress or interpersonal skills from interfering with professional functioning
3. An inability or refusal to acknowledge, understand, or address a personal problem when it is identified by others
4. An inability or refusal to change behavior(s) as a function of remediation efforts and offers of help
5. An inability to interact appropriately with peers, colleagues, faculty, staff, and patients

Lack of Fitness: Academic and Clinical Standards

1. An inability to acquire professional skills in order to reach an acceptable level of competency that cannot be rectified by additional academic, preclinical, or clinical training
2. Consistent failure to follow faculty or administrative directives resulting in a negative effect on academic and clinical performance
3. A disproportionate amount of attention by faculty and/or clinical supervisors is required to ensure safe patient care

Reporting Potential Misconduct

Faculty, students, or staff who believe they have witnessed behavior which constitutes academic or professional misconduct must report the incident to the Dean of Academic Administration no later than two (2) academic days after the incident. The Dean of Academic Administration will proceed with an investigation initially using the informal resolution process.

Informal Resolution Process

Within ten academic days of receiving a report of potential misconduct, the Dean of Academic Administration will attempt to reach an informal resolution if feasible and appropriate. All parties involved in the report will be notified by email that the informal resolution is in progress. As part of his process, information will be gathered through interviews with the student and others who witnessed the alleged misconduct. The Dean of Academic Administration will inform the student, by letter, of the informal resolution and any sanctions imposed. This letter will be placed in the student's records. Within five (5) academic days of receiving the proposed resolution, any involved party will have the right to reject the proposed resolution and to request a formal disciplinary hearing. Such request for a formal disciplinary hearing must be in writing and delivered to the Dean of Academic Administration. If no such request is timely received, the matter is considered to be closed.

Formal Disciplinary Hearing Process

If the allegation(s) is not resolved through the informal resolution process, or if the Dean of Academic Administration elects not to attempt to resolve the matter through an informal resolution due to the severity of the allegation(s), a formal disciplinary hearing will be implemented.

Within ten (10) academic days of receiving the complaint or request for a disciplinary hearing, the Dean of Academic Administration will name to a Hearing Panel two full-time faculty members. Panel faculty members shall not have been involved in any previous allegations regarding the student who is the subject of the complaint, or in any efforts for an informal resolution of the current allegation. The Assistant Dean of Academic Administration will serve as voting Chairperson of the Hearing Panel.

The Chair will schedule a Hearing, giving at least five (5) academic days written notice to the student of the date, time, and location of the hearing, and the names of the Hearing Panel members. The Chair will also inform the student and the Panel members, in writing, of the details of the charges against the student, and provide copies of the Protocol for Disciplinary Hearings. The student must inform the Dean of Academic Administration of any objections to the members of the Hearing Panel, or the date, time, or location of the hearing in writing, at least four (4) academic days prior to the scheduled hearing date. The student must specify the basis of any such objection. If the student demonstrates a reasonable basis for any such objection, the Assistant Dean of Academic Administration can take appropriate action such as replacing a Hearing Panel member or changing the date, time, or location of the hearing.

The student may have an advisor present during the hearing, but neither the student nor the University may be represented by an attorney. If a student declines to invite an advisor, the student will be asked to sign a waiver form indicating their decision. Other than an advisor, no other individual may attend the hearing on behalf of the student. The hearing will be closed to the public. No audio or video, or professional stenography recordings may be made. The Chair will make an accurate written record of the hearing. The student has the right to also make a written record of the hearing.

The student will be made aware of the allegation(s) of professional misconduct/lack of fitness for the profession, and of all evidence against them. The members of the Hearing Panel will have the opportunity to question the witness(s) and the student. The student will be afforded an opportunity to refute any witness testimony where there are facts in dispute. Admissions of responsibility by the student may obviate the need for witness testimony. Any witnesses will be informed that knowingly furnishing false, misleading, or incomplete information will cause them to be subject to disciplinary action.

The Hearing Panel has the right to recess the hearing, to recall any witness, call additional witnesses, or collect additional information as needed. When the Hearing Panel is satisfied with the testimony and evidence, they will vote to decide the issue. The burden of proof used by the University is the preponderance of evidence standard. The preponderance of evidence standard is met when the Hearing Panel finds there is greater than a 50% chance that, based on all the reasonable evidence shown, the student committed the alleged professional or academic misconduct. The Hearing Panel recommendation will be decided by a majority vote. All reports, proceedings and decisions of the Hearing Panel are confidential and all records will be kept in the Office of Academic Administration.

The Hearing Panel will make a written recommendation to the Dean of Academic Administration, which will include a synopsis of the basis for the recommendation, and suggested sanction(s), if appropriate. The Dean of Academic Administration will review and act on the recommendation(s) within ten (10) academic days following the date of receipt of the Hearing Panel recommendation. The Dean of Academic Administration will inform the student and the panel of the decision in

writing. If the Assistant Dean of Academic Administration determines the student will be disciplined, a letter so stating will be placed in the student's academic file. If the Dean of Academic Administration determines no action should be taken, then no documentation will be placed in the academic file.

Duties of the Advisor

If a faculty member is asked and agrees to serve as the Advisor for a Formal Disciplinary Hearing, they should familiarize themselves with the facts as presented by the student. However, the advisor should not question or otherwise interview the witnesses. Their duties will include:

1. Assist the student with any questions related to procedures and protocol as stated in the Academic Policies Handbook.
2. Assist the student in preparing for the hearing.
3. Attend the hearing with the student and advise them during the hearing in matters related to clarity of presentation, recollection of facts, and questions to ask of witness(es).
4. The Faculty Advisor may speak to the Hearing Panel on request of the Chair but is not otherwise permitted to address the Hearing Panel.

Disciplinary Actions

The University has the right, at its discretion, to impose any sanction or combination of sanctions depending on the severity of the alleged misconduct that has occurred. Progressive discipline is not required, and immediate dismissal is an appropriate sanction for certain conduct, regardless of whether there has been previous discipline. Sanctions that may be imposed include but are not limited to dismissal from the School of Optometry and the University, probation, failure of an academic year, failure of a course, failure of an assessment, reduction of letter grades for a course, examination, practical test, or written test, written reprimand recorded in the student's official file, official notation on the University transcript, verbal reprimands, requirement to take specific action or to refrain from specific action, requirement that the student receive professional counseling, anger management courses, or a medical, psychiatric or psychological examination, and/or recommendation for withdrawal of a previously granted degree.

Interim Suspension

The Dean of Academic Administration may at their discretion remove a student from one or more classes or from clinic during the formal Disciplinary Hearing if there is reasonable cause to believe that the continued presence of the student poses a threat or risk to him/herself, to patients or to others, or to the stability of normal University classes, clinic, or functions.

Guidelines for Appeals

The decision of the Dean of Academic Administration may be appealed by the student. The student must submit a letter to the Dean within five (5) academic days of the written decision. The letter of appeal must contain supportive documentation stating the reason(s) for the appeal based on 1) substantial evidence not previously considered, 2) clear evidence of bias by a Hearing Panel member, 3) significant procedural errors of the Hearing Panel, 4) significant finding of inequity and bias in disciplinary sanctions.

Within five (5) academic days following receipt of the written appeal, the Dean will appoint an Appeals Review Committee composed of three faculty members who did not participate in the decision being appealed, and shall notify the student of the names of the individuals. Any objections to the composition of the Appeals Review Committee must be made by the student, in writing, to the Dean within five (5) academic days. If a reasonable rationale has been made for the objection, Committee members may be replaced. Within seven (7) academic days of the Appeals Review Committee being finalized, it will meet to review the request. The review will include examination of the original allegation, the written record of the original hearing, the appeal request, and evidence. Based on that review, the Appeals Review Committee will determine, by a majority vote, whether to grant the request, and will notify the student in writing of the decision. The Committee decision as to whether or not to grant an appeal is final.


Appeal Hearing

If the Appeals Review Committee grants the request for an appeal, they will become the Appeals Committee, and, within seven (7) academic days after granting the request, will convene an appeals hearing. The student will be notified in writing of the date, time, and location of the Appeal Hearing. The student may invite a faculty advocate. The Chair of the Appeals Committee will limit discussion to only those issues contained in the appeal request. The Appeals Committee will hear any new evidence, interview witness(es). The Appeals Committee may call other witnesses, seek other information, or may recess and reconvene as necessary. The student and Faculty Advisor must be present at all times when new evidence is presented.

The Appeals Committee will review the decision of the Dean of Academic Administration in light of the appeals hearing, and has the authority to take any action it deems necessary, including the authority to uphold the decision of the Assistant Dean of Academic Administration, or modify/overturn the original decision. The Appeals Committee's decision will be provided to the Dean, in writing, within seven academic days after it is reached, and no more than 14 academic days from the Appeals Committee last meeting. The Dean will review the Appeals Committee decision and will provide the written decision to the student within seven academic days. The Appeal Committee decision is final and will be implemented immediately.

Continuation in School During Appeals

Students who decide to appeal a decision which requires repetition of a year, part of a year, or dismissal, may be allowed to continue attending classes, laboratory sessions and/or clinic during



the appeal process; however the Assistant Dean of Academic Administration and/or the Dean need not allow such continued attendance if they determine that there is reasonable cause to believe that the continued presence of a student in class, clinic, or on the University campus poses a threat or risk to him/herself, to patients, or to others, or to the stability of normal University classes or functions.

If the student is permitted to continue attending classes, laboratory sessions and/or clinic during the appeal process, the School can require that attendance be subject to specified conditions, such as suspension from patient care, receiving professional counseling, anger management courses, or a medical, psychiatric or psychological examination, meeting with designated faculty on a scheduled basis, etc. If the appeal occurs during the final examination period or during the period in the academic calendar in which final grades would be reported, the Assistant Dean of Academic Administration may hold final grades in abeyance until a decision is made. No remedial instruction will be provided until the outcome of the appeal is known.

ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE GUIDELINES, POLICIES, AND PROCEDURES

Student Assurances

Academic performance involves successful progress in didactic, preclinical, and clinical courses. In evaluating academic performance and progress, students are assured that 1) academic evaluation will be honest, fair, and unbiased; 2) records and communications from faculty, staff, and administration to students are private, confidential, and protected; and 3) disputes involving academic progress and professionalism behaviors are subject to due process as outlined in this Handbook.

Academic Performance Committee (APC)

The APC is a standing committee of the School of Optometry.

Functions of the APC

The APC reviews the academic performance of all optometry students. Upon review, the APC identifies students in academic difficulty, students who have shown outstanding academic performance and progress, and students with observed professionalism issues and potential lack of fitness for the profession. The APC makes recommendations to the Dean of Academic Administration and the Dean regarding conditions under which students who have current or potential academic deficiencies or who may lack fitness for the profession, professional conduct may/may not continue to progress in the program.

APC Meetings

Midterm APC meetings will be scheduled for Fall and Winter Terms for business meetings. Final Term APC meetings will be scheduled at the end of Fall, Winter, and Summer terms, and as necessary. The day and time for APC meetings will be determined by the Office of Academic Administration. A majority of voting members will constitute a quorum. When a quorum is present, a simple majority of those present will vote on motions. The APC chairperson votes only in the case of a tie. By majority vote, the APC will make recommendations to the Office of Academic Administration and the Dean for individual students. Meetings minutes will be taken. APC minutes will be reviewed and approved by the Committee members, and will be kept in the Office of Academic Administration. All proceedings are confidential and not part of the student's academic record.

Progression in the Program

Students who have satisfactorily completed all course work and have attained GPAs of 2.0 or higher will proceed to the next term or year. Students who have satisfactorily completed all didactic courses and clinical requirements will be recommended for graduation at the end of the program. Dean's List recognition is granted to those students who achieve a term GPA of 3.5 or higher.

Students cannot progress in the program if they have a B- or lower in any clinical course, including the Clinical Internship and Externship series.

Recommendations for repetition of a failed course will be decided by the APC. A student will not be recommended for graduation if the cumulative GPA is below 2.0 or if there is any concern with their professional conduct.

Academic Warning

A student will be placed on academic warning at the end of a term if the student fails to obtain a GPA of 2.5 for any single term, or fails to maintain a cumulative GPA of 2.5. The student will be notified of this status from the APC by a letter from the Office of Academic Administration. Academic warning is in effect until the GPA is raised above 2.5. A student on academic warning is considered in good academic standing for purposes of scholarship eligibility and graduation. Academic warning is not recorded in the student's academic record.

Upon receiving the letter, the student must:

1. Meet with the Director of Student Success and Achievement to discuss performance in the program.
2. Meet with the Associate Dean of Student Services and Enrollment Management to discuss and implement academic performance plan and explore if additional resources are necessary.(University resources, Counseling, etc)

The letter must be signed by the Director of Student Success and the student. The letter must be returned to the Office of Academic Administration within two weeks of receipt.

Academic Probation

A student will be placed on academic probation at the end of a term for the following reasons:

1. the student fails to obtain a GPA of 2.0 for any single term or fails to maintain a cumulative GPA of 2.0, or
2. fails one or more courses, or
3. earns two or more final course grades of "D" , or
4. earns a B- or lower in a clinic course.

The student will be notified of this status from the APC by a letter. Students on academic probation must meet with the APC.

A student on academic probation is not considered in good academic standing and will not be endorsed for graduation by the APC. Academic probation is not recorded in the student's

academic record. Students on academic probation cannot hold any leadership position or be a member of any of the school's committees.

Repetition of a Failed Course

The final decision regarding repetition of any course is made by the APC in consultation with the course director(s). Repetition of a course may involve retaking the course in its entirety when next offered. Both the final grade of "F" for the original course and the final grade for the repeated course are reported on the transcript. Only the subsequently earned grade will be calculated into the student's GPA, even if it is a failing grade and class rank calculations. Students in their third or fourth year of the curriculum may have clinical privileges modified or disallowed. Students who successfully appeal dismissal from the program based on a course failure will be allowed to repeat the course.

Repetition of All or Part of a Year

The APC may recommend that a student repeat a semester or academic year for reasons including but not limited to any of the following:

- a. One or more final course grades of "F" in any one academic semester or academic year
- b. A GPA below 2.0 for two consecutive terms or 2 terms within any academic year
- c. Two or more final course grades of "D" in one academic semester
- d. Deficient clinical judgment in year 3 and/or 4

Whether to require a student to repeat a semester or academic year is within the discretion of the APC; the reasons listed above may also warrant dismissal from the program.

A student remains on academic probation while repeating a term, until they successfully resolve their reason for probation.

Academic Dismissal

The APC may recommend that a student be dismissed from the program for reasons including but not limited to any of the following:

- a. a second probation at any time in their academic career

- b. Two or more final course grades of “F” in any one term
- c. One final course grade of “F” and two or more final course grades of “D” in any one term
- d. Failure of a repeated course resulting in two final grades of “F” for the same course
- e. Two consecutive terms below 2.0 GPA, or a total of three terms below a 2.0 GPA
- f. A term GPA below 2.0 if he/she is repeating the term
- g. Deficient clinical performance or clinical misconduct in years 3 and/or 4
- h. Failure to demonstrate fitness for the profession
- i. violations of the student code of conduct

The option of withdrawal from the School of Optometry in lieu of dismissal may be considered at any time, including prior to the submission of final grades with approval of the APC. If a student is offered withdrawal by the Assistant Dean of Academic Administration but rejects the offer, they will be dismissed, and the transcript will be duly annotated with the notation of “Dismissed.”

Process for Dismissal

When a student is dismissed, a checklist will be completed as they complete the process; each step will be confirmed by the Registrar as part of the dismissal process.

Personal Counseling

A student may be directed to seek counseling when the APC believes that current or potential academic or fitness concerns exist and may be mitigated by counseling. If counseling is required by the APC, it is the student’s responsibility to make an appointment with the designated counselor. The counselor will be informed by the APC chair as to the nature of the referral. The student may be referred to Course Directors, the Faculty Advisor, the Associate Dean of Student Services and Enrollment Management, the Assistant Dean of Clinical Administration, the Assistant Dean of Academic Administration, the Office of Health and Wellness, or to professional outside counselors, depending on the nature of the issue involved.

The Special APC

If the APC is recommending that a student seek counseling, repeat a semester or academic year, take a leave of absence, withdraw from the program, or be dismissed from the program, the Dean of Academic Administration will notify the student by letter sent by email that a Special APC Meeting will be held. In addition, if the APC has concerns regarding the professional behavior or fitness of the profession or a student, a Special APC may be held. Special APCs can be held for a student who has both academic and fitness for the profession's deficiencies. The purpose of the Special APC Meeting is to allow the student to present information relative to the recommendation which the APC may not possess. The meeting is not to appeal to any decisions regarding the fate of the student since they have not been made, nor is it intended to be the forum for an appeal of a grade. The Special APC will be held not earlier than five (5) academic days from the day the letter is received by the student. The letter will inform the student of the date, time, and place of the meeting. The student is permitted to have a faculty advocate present. APC members will also be informed of the meeting.

The student is advised to prepare a written opening statement providing significant information they determine is important relative to the recommendation. The committee members may ask questions of the student. At the end of the opening statement and questions, the student and advocate will leave the meeting. The meeting will not be audio or video recorded, but notes will be taken by the Chair of the APC.

Following the meeting, the Special APC will deliberate. A majority of APC members or their designees will constitute a quorum. When a quorum is present, a simple majority of those present will approve decisions. Each member of the Committee will be entitled to one vote. The chairperson votes only in the case of a tie. The student is informed of the recommendation informally immediately after the meeting. A formal notice of the recommendation is provided to the student by letter within one day of the meeting.

The Chair of the APC forwards the recommendation to the Assistant Dean of Academic Administration or designee. The Assistant Dean of Academic Administration may agree with the recommendation of the Special APC or may modify the recommendation. Reasons for any decision that is different from the Special APC recommendation will be provided by letter by the Assistant Dean of Academic Administration to the student and Office of Academic Administration within five (5) academic days after the Special APC recommendation. The APC members will be informed of any decision that is different from the Special APC recommendation.

Guidelines for Appeal by the Student

The student may appeal the decision of the Dean of Academic Administration. The student must submit a letter containing supportive documentation to the Dean stating the reason(s) for the appeal no later than five (5) academic days after the Dean provides the decision. The request for appeal must specify the basis for the appeal, including any of the following which the student believes apply: 1) Substantial evidence not previously considered, 2) Evidence of bias by a Special APC

member, 3) Significant errors in procedures by the Special APC, and 4) Significant findings of inequity in the actions/sanctions related to findings. Within five (5) academic days following receipt of the written appeal, the Dean will appoint an Appeals Review Committee composed of three faculty members who did not participate in the decision being appealed. The Dean will name the Chairperson of the Appeals Review Committee.

The Appeals Review Committee will meet within five (5) academic days to review the request and make a determination as to whether or not an appeal hearing will be granted. The review will include examination of the appeal request and the minutes of the Special APC Meeting. The Appeals Review Committee will determine whether to grant the request for an appeal hearing. The decision of this Committee as to whether to grant a request for an appeal hearing is final.

Should the Appeals Review Committee grant the request for an appeal hearing, they will become the Appeals Committee, and within five (5) academic days after granting the request will convene an appeals hearing. The student may invite an advocate or the Assistant Dean of Student Services and Enrollment Management to attend the Appeals meeting. The Chair of the Appeals Committee will limit discussion to only those issues contained in the appeal request. The Appeals Committee will hear any new information presented by the student, and may seek other information or may recess and reconvene as it deems necessary. The student, advocate, and Assistant Dean of Student Services and Enrollment Management may be present at times when new information is presented.

The Appeals Committee will deliberate the decision of the Assistant Dean of Academic Administration in light of the appeals hearing and will decide to uphold the decision, reverse the decision, or modify the decision.

The decision of the Appeals Committee will be transmitted to the Dean in writing within five (5) academic days of reaching its decision. The Dean will review the Appeals Committee decision and will convey the decision by letter to the student and to the Special APC within seven (7) academic days upon receipt. If there is a reversal or modification of the original decision of the Assistant Dean of Academic Administration, steps necessary to satisfy the reversal or modified decision in a reasonable and timely manner will be made. The Appeals Committee decision in the matter shall be final and will be implemented immediately.

Continuation in School During Appeals

Students who decide to appeal Special APC decisions of repetition of a semester or academic year, withdrawal, or dismissal may continue attending classes and laboratories during the appeal process. However the Office of Academic Administration and the Assistant Dean of Academic Administration may deny attendance if they determine that there is reasonable cause to believe that the continued presence of a student in class, clinic or on the University campus poses a threat or risk to patients or to others, or to the stability of normal University classes or functions. If the student is permitted to continue attending classes, laboratory sessions and/or clinic during the appeal process, the School can require that attendance is subject to specified conditions, such as

suspension from patient care, receiving professional counseling, anger management courses, or a medical, psychiatric or psychological examination, meeting with designated faculty on a scheduled basis, etc. If the appeal occurs during the final examination period or during the period in the academic calendar in which final grades would be reported, the Assistant Dean of Academic Administration may hold final grades in abeyance until a decision is made. No remedial instruction will be provided until the outcome of the appeal is known.

NOTE: A student may be required to attend a Special APC to address issues of both academic and professionalism/fitness for the profession. A report of professional misconduct may be subject to an informal or formal review process without a Special APC.

Student Background Check

I. Applicability

This policy applies to applicants to, or students enrolled in, an educational program that includes or may include at a future date, assignment to a clinical health care facility. Visiting students who enroll in courses with such an assignment are also subject to the policy.

II. Policy

All applicants must submit to and satisfactorily complete a background check review as a condition to admission into all programs designated as requiring a background check. An offer of admission will not be final until the completion of the background check(s) with results is deemed favorable. Admission may be denied or rescinded based on a review of the background check. Additionally, students who are currently enrolled and who do not have a valid background check must submit to and satisfactorily complete a background check review as a condition to enrolling or participating in education experiences at affiliated sites that require a background check. Students who refuse to submit to a background check or do not pass the background check review may be dismissed from the program. Applicants or students who are denied admission to, or are dismissed, may seek admission into another educational program that does not have a clinical component requirement in its curriculum.

III. Rationale

- A. Health care providers are entrusted with the health, safety, and welfare of patients, have access to controlled substances and confidential information, and operate in settings that require the exercise of good judgment and ethical behavior. Thus, an assessment of a student or applicant's suitability to function in such a setting is imperative to promote the highest level of integrity in health care services.
- B. Clinical facilities are increasingly required by accreditation agencies such as Joint Commission of Healthcare Organization (JCAHO), to conduct background checks for security purposes on individuals who provide services within the facility and especially those who supervise care and render treatment. To facilitate this requirement

educational institutions have agreed to conduct these background checks for students and faculty.

- C. Clinical rotations are an essential element in certain curriculum programs. Students who cannot participate in clinical rotations due to criminal or other adverse activities that are revealed in a background check are unable to fulfill the requirements of the program.

Additionally, many healthcare licensing agencies require individuals to pass a criminal background check as a condition of licensure or employment. Therefore, it is in everyone's interest to resolve these issues prior to a commitment of resources by the University of Detroit Mercy School of Optometry, the student, or applicant.

- D. The University of Detroit Mercy School of Optometry is obligated to meet the contractual requirements contained in affiliation agreements between the university and the various healthcare facilities.

IV. Background Check Report

- A. Obtaining a Background Check Report. The School of Optometry utilizes CastleBranch to conduct the background checks and issue reports directly to the School of Optometry. Students and applicants must utilize CastleBranch and comply with its instructions in authorizing and obtaining a background check. Students and applicants are responsible for payment of any fees charged by a designated company to provide the background check service.

- B. Scope. All background checks conducted at the School of Optometry will include the following:

- i. Criminal history search, including convictions, deferred adjudications or judgments, expunged criminal records, and pending criminal charges involving felonies, Class A, Class B, and Class C violations
- ii. Violent Sexual Offender and Predator Registry Rights. Students and applicants have the right to review the information reported by the designated company for accuracy and completeness and to request that the designated company verify that the background information provided is correct. Prior to making a final determination that will adversely affect the applicant or student, the School of Optometry will provide applicants or students a copy of, or access to, the background check report issued by the designated company, and inform them of their rights, how to contact the designated company to challenge the accuracy of the report, and that the designated company was not involved in any decisions made by the School of Optometry.

V. Procedure

A. APPLICANTS

- i. Applicants must complete the required background check screening following the offer of admission but prior to enrollment.

- ii. The Office of Admissions will have access to the background check report for its review. If the report contains negative findings, the Office of Admissions may request that the applicant submit additional information relating to the negative finding, such as a written explanation, court documents, and police reports. The Office of Admissions will review all information available to it and determine whether the offer of admission should be withdrawn.
- iii. Decisions are final and may not be appealed.

B. CURRENT STUDENTS

- i. Background check reports will be submitted to the Office of Academic Administration and Office of Clinical Administration for review. If the report does not contain any negative findings as determined by the Office of Academic Administration or its designee, the student will be allowed to participate in clinical rotations. If the report contains negative findings, the Office of Academic Administration or its designee may request that the student submit additional information relating to the negative finding, such as a written explanation, court documents, and police reports. The Office of Academic Administration or its designee will review all information available to it and determine whether the student should be permitted to participate in clinical rotations or be dismissed from the program.
- ii. If the Office of Academic Administration or its designee determines that dismissal from the program is warranted, a student may appeal that decision in accordance with the university grievance procedure for academic matters found in the School of Optometry Academic Policies Handbook.
- iii. The student is informed also that several states have rules governing background checks and that negative findings may also make the individual ineligible to sit for a particular licensure exam and/or receive licensure. The decision of the particular licensing board will be governed by its rules and policies.

C. REVIEW STANDARDS

In reviewing the background check reports and any information submitted, the Office of Academic Administration or its designee may consider the following factors in making its determinations: the nature and seriousness of the offense or event, the circumstances surrounding the offense or event, the relationship between the duties to be performed as part of the educational program and the offense committed, the age of the person when the offense or event occurred, whether the offense or event was an isolated or repeated incident, the length of time that has passed since the offense or event, past employment and history of academic or disciplinary misconduct, evidence of successful rehabilitation, and the accuracy of the information provided by the applicant or student in the application materials, disclosure forms, or other materials. The safety interests of the patient and the workplace, as well as the educational interest of the student will be considered. In reviewing background checks and supplementary information, advice may be obtained from university counsel, or other appropriate advisors.

VI. Confidentiality and Recordkeeping

- A. Background check reports and other submitted information are confidential and may only be reviewed by university officials and affiliated clinical facilities in accordance with the Family Educational Records and Privacy Act (FERPA).
- B. Students. Background check reports and other submitted information of students will be maintained on CastleBranch which is monitored by the Office of the Dean and will be kept in confidential files This is kept separate from the student's academic file and will be destroyed once the student is no longer in the School of Optometry in accordance with the university's record retention policy for student records.
- C. Applicants Denied Admission. Background check reports and other submitted information of applicants denied admission into the program will be maintained in accordance with the university's record retention policy.

VII. Other Provisions

- A. The School of Optometry shall inform students who have negative findings in their background check report and are nonetheless permitted to enroll that the School of Optometry's decision is not a guarantee that every clinical facility will permit the student to participate in the educational program at its facility, or that any state will accept the individual as a candidate for registration, permit, or licensure.
- B. A background check will be honored for the duration of enrollment if the student is continuously enrolled, until the student enters clinic in their third year. At this point, the students will be required to pass another background check. A student who has a break or disruption in enrollment is required to complete a new background check. A break or disruption in enrollment is defined as non-enrollment of at least one academic term in the approved curriculum of the certificate or degree program. An officially approved leave of absence is not considered a break or disruption in enrollment, if the approved leave of absence is for 12 months or less.
- C. Falsification of information, including omission of relevant information, may result in denial of admission or dismissal from the educational program.
- D. Criminal activity that occurs while a student is in attendance at the university may result in disciplinary action including dismissal, and will be addressed through the university's academic or disciplinary policies.

VIII. Drug Testing

Drug testing may be required prior to rotations by certain health care facilities. The tests are administered through CastleBranch, a vendor we use for background checks. Positive results are addressed by the Office of Academic Administration.

NOVI CAMPUS POLICIES AND RESOURCES

Campus Study Spaces

In addition to the designated study spaces on campus, all students are welcome to study in any classroom when classes are not in session. Students are also welcome to utilize all conference rooms as study spaces when they are not in use for meetings or events.

Tobacco Policy

The School of Optometry buildings, including offices, classrooms, hallways, reception areas, restrooms, lunch rooms, elevators, meeting rooms, and all community gathering areas are smoke-free. All students, faculty, staff, patients, contractors, and visitors are expected to comply with the provisions of the University Tobacco Policy.

https://www.udmercy.edu/faculty-staff/hr/files/Smoking_Policy_From_Steve_June_2017.pdf.

If necessary to smoke on campus premises, use of smoking receptacles located outside of campus buildings are required, observing the posted distance of at least 25 feet away from the entrances to any campus building

Public Safety

The Novi Campus Public Safety Office is located at the main entrance of the School of Optometry. Requests for public safety services should be directed to the (313) 993-1234. Public Safety services include battery starts and vehicle lockouts, campus escort service to the vehicle, emergency services, operation and parking identification, and personal identification.

Emergency Response Plan

The University of Detroit Mercy Department of Public Safety maintains all information related to Emergency Preparedness.

Please visit <https://www.udmercy.edu/life/public-safety/files/Detroit-Mercy-Emergency-Response-Plan-KD-Rev-03-14-24.pdf> for the current Emergency Response Plan.

Student Travel Policies

Travel for any participation in a professional meeting must be approved by the Office of Academic Administration. Students are required to sign a University-Sponsored Travel Release and Waiver of Liability available from the Office of Academic Administration. While attending such conferences, students are expected to uphold standards of professional behavior as representatives of the School of Optometry.

UNIVERSITY OF DETROIT MERCY GUIDELINES, POLICIES, AND RESOURCES

All University of Detroit Mercy Student Policies apply to all students enrolled in the University. This section is not intended to be an all-inclusive resource of University policies for School of Optometry students. A comprehensive resource is found online at www.udmercy.edu and through TitanPass (<https://tc.udmercy.edu>).

Use of Logos and Branding

University logos and branding should only be used on pages maintained by the University. The University has established guidelines for the appropriate use of university logos and branding. Please refer to the Visual Identity Standards page https://www.udmercy.edu/faculty-staff/marcom/_files/Detroit_Mercy_Brand_Guide.pdf for University branding.

Intellectual Property

Intellectual property rights must be respected when utilizing social media, electronic methods, or print for personal or professional purposes. When posting materials owned by others, an individual bears the responsibility of compliance with licensing and copyright requirements. For example, some materials may allow posting under Creative Commons Licensing that may have more liberal use terms in contrast to a book publisher that may have more restrictive use terms. When in doubt, one should request permission from the publisher, content creator, or owner of the materials. These same considerations should be applied to institutional materials and your colleagues' materials.

International Student Services

The International Services Office on the McNichols Campus (313) 993-1205 assists students with questions regarding visas along with other issues vital to study, residency, and post-graduation plans. Anyone planning to work in the U.S. while either in school or after graduation must contact the International Services Office prior to accepting a position.

Student Fitness Center

Students may use the facilities at the Student Fitness Center at the University of Detroit Mercy McNichols campus. Students must use their ID card to access the facility. All University of Detroit Mercy students receive free admission to home athletic events for all Titan sports.

Clery Reports

The *Jeanne Clery Disclosure of Campus Security Policy and Campus Crime Statistics Act (20 USC § 1092(f))* is federal law that requires colleges and universities to disclose information about crime on and around their campuses. The United States Department of Education enforces the Clery Act. In compliance with the U.S. Department of Education regulations, University of Detroit Mercy maintains, enforces, and annually discloses crime statistics for incidents occurring on and around the University's campuses. The annual disclosure informs the University community of criminal activity regardless of the severity of the incident. <http://udmercy.edu/life/public-safety/clery/index.php>.

Student Complaint Guidelines

Consistent with its mission, the University welcomes feedback from students about our policies, programs and services in an effort to promote a successful learning environment. To that end, the University is committed to providing prompt and fair resolution of all student complaints. We are accountable to our students, constituents, and accrediting agencies to provide a process by which students may lodge complaints in a non-threatening manner free from retaliation. A student complaint ranges from an experience with, or treatment by, a University employee to a matter relating to academic or non-academic areas not addressed in college and school handbooks or University policies and procedures. The student complaint site is not intended to address student academic grievance and appeal issues. Students interested in submitting a grievance or appeal should follow the procedures in the applicable catalog or student handbook for such issues. This site is also not intended for sexual harassment, Title IX, sexual misconduct or violence, or any other type of discrimination. For matters where an informal resolution is not feasible, a Student Complaint Form can be submitted online. The Office of Academic Administration will assist you in completing and submitting the complaint form.

Social Media Policy

There are substantial differences between students representing themselves on social media, students representing the University on social media, and students using University-hosted social media. University social media policy is not intended to regulate how students conduct themselves in their personal social media interactions. However, it is clear that even a single instance of improper or ill-considered use can do long-term damage to a student's reputation, career, and to the University. Never forget that as a student you are perceived as a representative of the University. The University social media policy is found at <https://www.udmercy.edu/faculty-staff/marcom/policies/social-media-policy.php>.

When posting to social media, please: 1) be respectful; 2) assume anything you post is public, regardless of privacy settings; and 3) assume anything you post is permanent. Be respectful and keep a cool head when discussing and debating online. Be passionate on matters about which you are passionate, but always be constructive, exercise discretion, and be respectful of those with whom you disagree. Students who violate the social media policy are subject to complaint or grievance processes. Failure to follow University policies and the terms of service of social media platforms could expose you to personal legal liability and the University to legal action from third parties. A social media site can be used for instructional purposes. Student content created and/or posted to fulfill a course assignment using social media does not violate students' privacy rights.

FERPA

The University maintains the confidentiality of student records in accordance with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) of 1974 as amended. <https://www.udmercy.edu/current-students/registrar/ferpa.php>. FERPA ensures the privacy of "the educational records" of students. All legal privacy laws and policies regarding student and patient records must be followed without exception. The Registrar coordinates the inspection and review procedures for student records, which includes admissions, personal, academic, and financial files

as well as cooperative education and placement records. No one outside of the University may have access to, nor will the institution disclose any information from, students' educational records without the written consent of the student. Exceptions to this are access to personnel within the institution, to officials of other institutions in which the student seeks to enroll, to persons or organizations providing student financial aid, to accrediting agencies carrying out their accreditation function, to persons in compliance with a judicial order or subpoena; and to persons in an emergency in order to protect the health or safety of students or other persons. Personnel within the institution include administrative, supervisory, academic, research, or support staff, a person or company with whom the institution has contracted (such as an attorney, auditor, or collection agent), a person serving on the Board of Trustees, or a student serving on an official committee, such as a disciplinary or grievance committee, or assisting personnel within the institution in performing a task. All of these exceptions are permitted under the act.

Educational records or components thereof may be made available without the student's written consent to personnel within the University who are determined by the institution to have a legitimate educational interest. The University will maintain a record of all requests and disclosures of personally identifiable information except those made to University of Detroit Mercy officials. Legitimate recipients of all such records will be informed that they are not permitted to disclose the information to others. Students may review their education records by making a written request to the Registrar. Students may not inspect financial information submitted by their parents; confidential letters and recommendations associated with admissions, employment or job placement or honors to which they have waived their right of inspection or review; or educational records containing information about more than one student. The University is not required to permit students to inspect and review confidential letters and recommendations placed in their files prior to January 1, 1975.

The University may disclose the following categories of public or "directory" information for any purpose, at its discretion: student name, address, telephone numbers, dates of attendance, class, date and place of birth, major field of study, previous institutions attended, awards, honors (includes Dean's List), degrees conferred (including dates), photographs, past and present participation in officially recognized activities and sports, and physical factors (e.g. weight and height of athletes). Currently enrolled students may withhold disclosure of any such information under the Family Rights and Privacy Act of 1974, as amended. To withhold disclosure, written notification must be received by the Registrar prior to the first Friday following final registration for each semester of period of study. Requests for non-disclosure will be honored by the institution until such time that the student requests that the non-disclosure be lifted.

The law provides students with the right to inspect and review information contained in their education records, to challenge the contents of their educational records, to have a hearing if the outcome of the challenge is unsatisfactory, and to submit explanatory statements for inclusion in their files if they feel the decisions of the hearing panels are unacceptable. The Registrar has been

designated by the institution to coordinate the inspection and review procedures for student educational records.

Students wishing to review their educational records must make written requests to the Registrar listing the item or items of interest. Only records covered by the Act will be made available within forty-five (45) days of the request. Students may have copies made of their records with certain exceptions, (e.g., a copy of the academic record for which a financial hold exists, or a transcript of an original or source document which exists elsewhere). These copies would be made at the student's expense. Educational records do not include records of instructional, administrative, and educational personnel, which are the sole possession of the maker and are not accessible or revealed to any individual, records of a law enforcement unit, student health records, employment records or alumni records.

Students who believe that their educational records contain information which is inaccurate or misleading, or is otherwise in violation of their privacy or other rights, may discuss their problems informally with the Registrar. If the decisions are in agreement with the student's request, the appropriate records will be amended. If not, the student will be notified within a reasonable period of time that the records will not be amended, and they will be informed by the Registrar of their right to a formal hearing. Students' requests for a formal hearing must be made in writing to the Registrar who within a reasonable period of time after receiving such requests, will inform students of the date, place, and time of the hearing.

Students may present evidence relevant to the issues raised and may be assisted or represented at the hearings by one or more persons of their choice, including attorneys, at the student's expense. The hearing panels to adjudicate such challenges will consist of the University Registrar, Associate Dean for Student Services and Enrollment Management, the Assistant Dean of Academic Administration, and two students. Decisions of the hearing panel will be final, will be based solely on the evidence presented at the hearing, will consist of written statements summarizing the evidence and stating the reasons for the decisions, and will be delivered to all parties concerned. The education records will be corrected or amended in accordance with the decision of the hearing panel if the decision is in favor of the student. If the decision is unsatisfactory to the student, the student may place within the educational record statements commenting on the information in the records, or statements setting forth any reasons for disagreeing with the decision of the hearing panel. The statements will be placed in the educational record, maintained as part of the student's record, and released whenever the records in question are disclosed.

Students who believe that the adjudications of their challenges were unfair, or not in keeping with the provisions of the Act, may request, in writing, assistance from the president of the University. Further, students who believe that their rights have been abridged may file complaints with the Family Policy Compliance Office, U.S. Department of Education, Washington, DC 20202 or 202-260-3887 concerning the alleged failures of University of Detroit Mercy to comply with the Act.

HIPAA

The Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA; Pub.L. 104-191, 110 Stat. 1936, enacted August 21, 1996), intended to provide the portability of health records, must be adhered to at all times. This act contains a Privacy Rule that establishes a provision for the use and disclosure of Protected Health Information. Under no circumstances should patient privacy be violated through the use of social media or other public means.

Policy Prohibiting Sexual and Gender-Based Harassment

The University of Detroit Mercy adheres to all federal, state, and local civil rights laws and regulations prohibiting discrimination in private institutions of higher education. The core purpose of this policy is the prohibition of all forms of sex and gender-based discrimination. Discrimination may involve exclusion from, or different treatment in, activities such as admission, athletics, or employment. It may also take the form of harassment or, in the case of sex or gender-based discrimination, it can encompass sexual harassment, sexual assault, stalking, dating violence or domestic violence. The Title IX Coordinator and Equity and Compliance Specialist serves as the Title IX Coordinator for the University and has the primary responsibility for coordinating the University's efforts related to the intake, investigation, resolution, and implementation of supportive measures to stop, remediate, and prevent sex and gender-based discrimination as well as retaliation for sex or gender-based discrimination.

For more information and to initiate a Title IX complaint refer to:
<https://www.udmercy.edu/academics/academic-affairs/oeo/>

Megan Novell

Executive Director, Office of Equal Opportunity

Title IX Coordinator

285 Student Union

Phone: 313.993.1802

Email: novellme@udmercy.edu

Preferred First Name Policy

Except when an individual's legal first name is required by law, policy, or business needs, students may choose to be identified in some university systems by a preferred first name. Preferred first names will be used where reasonably possible in the course of University business and education. Some examples of where preferred first names may be used include but are not limited to: 1) class and grade rosters in Banner and Blackboard, 2) My Profile, 3) Office 365, and 4) University ID card. Students can enter a preferred first name in your My Profile - Personal Information tab at my.udmercy.edu. Preferred first name changes are subject to review. There are also options in the Self-Service profile to update Personal Pronoun and Gender Identification. For assistance in entering preferred first name in Banner please work with the Associate Registrar.

Pregnant and Parenting Policy

This policy seeks to ensure the protection and equal treatment of pregnant individuals, persons with pregnancy-related conditions, and new parents. This policy is inclusive of birth, foster, and adoptive parents of all genders and applies to all aspects of University programs, including, but not limited to, admissions, educational programs and activities, extracurricular activities, hiring, leave policies, employment, and health insurance coverage. Students are encouraged to work with their faculty members and administration to devise a plan for how best to address the conditions as pregnancy progresses, anticipate the need for leaves, minimize the academic impact of their absence, and get back on track as efficiently as possible. The Title IX Coordinator will assist with plan development and implementation as needed. In general, pregnant and parenting students should be treated in the same manner as students experiencing a temporary disability. Any member of the Detroit Mercy community with questions or concerns about policies affecting pregnant or parenting students may contact the Title IX Coordinator, Megan Novell, at (313) 993-1802 or novellme@udmercy.edu.

Alcohol and Drug Use Policy

In compliance with the Drug-Free Schools and Communities Act (DFSCA), the University has drafted a Detroit Mercy Alcohol and Other Drugs Policy (Detroit Mercy AOD Policy), which includes references to other University policies concerning alcohol and other drug use and summarizes certain legal penalties under Federal law for the illegal possession or distribution of drugs and alcohol. The following information is critical and should be read carefully by all members of the University community. Students needing help in dealing with drug or alcohol abuse problems are encouraged to consult with the Dean of Students and for referral to the appropriate office and/or agency. The University also offers various drug and alcohol abuse education programs on its campuses that students are encouraged to take advantage of while enrolled. All events on university property must comply with the Detroit Mercy AOD Policy, all other applicable university policies, and all applicable laws.