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A COMPARISON OF STUDENT ACADEMIC POLICIES ACROSS UNIVERSITY
OF MISSISSIPPI MEDICAL CENTER (UMMC)

A Dissertation
Presented for the
Doctor of Education
Degree
The University of Mississippi

Farrah Banks

May 2022

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ABSTRACT

This project is a three-part Dissertation in Practice (DiP) that provides a comparison of academic student policies at the University of Mississippi Medical Center (UMMC). For the purpose of this study, the term “student academic policies” relates to rules and procedures for grievances, student dismissals, sanctions, and suspensions. At UMMC, potential violations on the part of students can occur based on failure to maintain required academic standards or lapses in professional conduct. An important goal of the manuscript is to reflect on ways to help ensure consistency and fairness in academic student policies based on a comparison of academic standards and policies across programs of UMMC. The examination of policies at the UMMC during the research period provided the framework for the project’s argument. The research sought to uncover, compare, and contrast the student academic policies among the seven schools on campus through public records.

Following the data analysis and collection, the researched obtained led to the development of a protocol checklist called the Three R’s for Safeguard, which is a recommendation to protect student rights and provide a means of protection against violations of fairness and equity on the part of higher education institutions.

DEDICATION

My first day entering into this program was the day of my sister's, Chivonda Clinton, funeral. I contemplated quitting this journey before I started; however, it is her unwavering love for education that has guided me to this point. I dedicate this project to her, and to my closest late cousin and one of my best friends, Bridget James. Thank you both for continuing to guide me every day with your spirit and love.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

As a first-generation student, I never imagined that I could get to this point; however, this journey has been an experience that I will treasure forever. I am an example that any degree is obtainable if only you believe in the power of your dreams. I am dedicating my experience to show others what I accomplished. I will strive to be an advocate for the underserved and underrepresented. I could not have completed this journey alone. The love and support from my family and friends has been the foundation of my success.

To my children, Addison and Sean Jr., you are my heart in human form. I strive to show you both that you can obtain your goals. I thank you for being on your best behavior when you saw that I was doing homework, writing a paper, or taking an exam. This degree is for you.

To Sean Banks, thank you so much for your understanding and support during this journey. I also want to acknowledge my mom, brothers, and sister. Thank you all for your love and encouragement.

To all of my friends, coworkers, peers, mentors, cousins, aunts, and uncles—you all are so special to me. Thank you for your concern, motivation, and love. To cohort three, thank you for being the best group of people to take this journey with over these years.

Finally, I would like to give an extraordinary thank you to my chair, Dr. Neal Hutchens. You have encouraged me and pushed me even when I could not find the motivation to continue. Thank for your guiding me throughout this process. Also, thank you to my committee members Dr. Whitney Webb, Dr. K.B. Melear, and Dr. Stacy Niemeyer for volunteering your time to my project. I truly appreciate you all.

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Manuscript 1

For colleges and universities, student academic policies provide expectations for expected levels of academic performance, such as course grades or proficiency in clinical settings, and also often establish requirements related to professionalism standards, such as treatment of student peers, instructors, or clients. It is important to distinguish the differences between general student conduct rules and academic standards. An example of a general student conduct violation would be one student stalking or harassing another student or instructor. Rather than conduct standards or rules, the focus of this study is on academic standards, such as satisfying academic requirements, avoiding plagiarism, and meeting professional standards (such as those in a clinical placements).

Conferment of an academic degree by an institution certifies that a student has effectively met the objectives of the curriculum and other institutional requirements, including professionalism requirements when applicable. A college or university's academic decisions should protect the honor of the degree or diploma offered, including for current and future clients, students, and patients, while also being equitable in the treatment of students. As such, academic policies and procedures must balance appropriate respect for institutional authority and faculty considerations with the legal and ethical obligations to treat students fairly in relation to academic and professionalism matters.

An important focus for the study is the principle that higher education institutions endeavor to craft "fair" student policies and practices. Alongside legal obligations that can be imposed on institutions concerning treatment of students, academic medical institutions should

be motivated by a desire to adopt academic and professionalism standards that align with general academic standards of fairness and the institution's educational mission and reflect the types of professionalism standards adhered to in the health professions. However, understandings of fairness for student academic policies in academic programs can vary, including at the same institution. Three common goals of student academic policies created in higher education are: (a) student academic policies should be educationally consistent with the educational mission of the institution, (b) student academic policies should be legally compliant, and (c) student academic policies should be fair (Kaplin et al., 2019). However, what constitutes a fair or equitable policy or process can differ among programs and professional areas represented in degree programs. For this study, the term *student fairness* refers to the specific mechanisms used by a university to ensure equal rights, especially in professional programs (Harman, 1994). More broadly, however, student fairness also considers the overall range of personal circumstances encountered by students, potential barriers to learning, such as having a disability, and differences in educational opportunities and prior learning, all of which ultimately may result in biases or hamper educational opportunities for some students (Bourdieu, 2002; Harman, 1994). In the wider sense, therefore, the factors that influence processes of student fairness in academic and professionalism matters are not easily delineated. Furthermore, among the varied and, at times, competing priorities related to academic programs and students, the concept of fairness represents a relatively recent arrival (Meyer et al., 2013).

Academic integrity and professionalism are expected requirements for students who enter graduate and professional programs, including those in the health professions. Based on an institution's standards, students may be presented with honor codes, handbooks, and professionalism guidelines that require them to abide by various standards and admit and/or

report any infractions that violate relevant academic and professionalism standards. Often, violations of academic integrity or professionalism standards can result in the issuing of academic sanctions, which, for more serious academic deficiencies or professionalism lapses, may include suspension or expulsion from a program. Research shows that sanction systems can increase compliance with rules and student academic policies (Eek et al., 2002; Fehr & Gächter, 2002; McCusker & Carnevale, 1995; Wit & Wilke, 1990; Yamagishi, 1986), although the effectiveness of such sanctioning systems can be limited and is subject to critique (Tyler, 1990; Varma & Doob, 1998). Three important factors should be considered when formulating sanctions for violations of student academic or professionalism policies. First, sanctions should be fair to all students and adhere to the institution's responsibilities in the ethical treatment of students. Second, sanctions need to safeguard professional standards and respect traditions of academic freedom in higher education. Third, derived sanctions developed by an institution must comply with legal obligations imposed by state and federal laws in the treatment of students.

The issue of sanctions and academic standards raises important questions regarding how institutions balance ethical, educational, and legal responsibilities to students with their responsibilities to maintain sound academic standards and, in the case of a medical center, to protect clients and patients. Some research suggests that sanctions can undermine compliance (De Dreu et al., 1998; Fehr & Rockenbach, 2003; Gneezy & Rustichini, 2000; Kirchler, 2007; Mulder et al., 2006; Tenbrunsel & Messick, 1999; van Prooijen et al., 2008). This three-part dissertation explores a comparison of student academic and professionalism policies at the University of Mississippi Medical Center (UMMC).

Overview of Student Academic and Conduct Policies in Higher Education

Academic Policy

For this study, *student academic policies* relate to rules and procedures for grievances, student dismissals, sanctions, and suspensions; however, it has varied meanings in higher education. The term *academic policy* includes rules, guidelines, and requirements for academic progression in a program and standards of professionalism, such as in interactions with clients or patients. *Academic policy* can also refer to the standards of grading and calculations for grades or assessment. Furthermore, the term includes the utilization of faculty grading process standards for instructors in higher education. In addition, academic policies encompass admission standards and registration. The additional categories that may fall under academic policy include:

- Class attendance
- Academic classification
- Academic integrity
- Faculty rights and responsibilities
- Student rights and responsibilities (including professionalism standards)
- Petition processes
- Grade review and grade changes
- Grade appeals
- Transcript audits
- Academic renewal
- Withdrawal and readmission
- Policies for course credit and exemption examinations
- Transfer credit

- Academic honors

Due Process Protections: Public Universities

Public institutions are extensions of the state; therefore, students are mandated to provide students the due process protections ensured by the Fourteenth Amendment. The basic parts of due process include: (a) notice regarding alleged wrongdoing, (b) the opportunity to respond to the allegations, and (c) conducted before an impartial decision maker.

As stated by, public universities are required to provide a fair and thorough process for all students that are enrolled, “although the United States Supreme Court has never ruled directly that students enrolled at public universities have a constitutionally protected property interest in continuing their education, the Court has assumed this is so(Fossey, 2015, p.363). further explains how “[n]umerous federal courts have ruled that student at public institutions of higher education are entitled to some level of procedural due process before they can be suspended or expelled for a disciplinary offense” (2015, p.363).

Contract Standards: Private and Public Universities

In providing students the constitutional safeguard of due process, the judicial system has commonly distinguished between students who enroll at public colleges and universities and those who enroll in private institutions. The legal shield offered to students by the judicial system at private colleges or universities is more limited than at public institutions. As private, rather than governmental actors, private colleges and universities are not required to adhere to constitutional protections in the treatment of students. However, private colleges and universities, as well as public institutions, are obligated under contract law principles to adhere to the promises made to students, such as in student handbooks. As Fossey (2015) noted, courts

have also held that, apart from contract standards, private universities must provide basic fairness in the treatment of students:

Private colleges and universities are not constrained by the Fourteenth Amendment, and they have no constitutional obligation to provide student with procedural due process prior to suspending or expelling them. Nevertheless, the courts have consistently ruled that students at private colleges and universities are entitled to some sort of fair process before they can be ousted from their studies. Often the courts have found that private college has a contractual obligation to provide student with procedural due process (2015, p. 363)

In general, courts require a private college to follow its own rules when conducting disciplinary proceedings and to conduct those proceeding in a way that is fundamentally fair (Fossey, 2015, p.363).

The University of Mississippi Medical Center Student Academic Policies Structure

Several factors should be considered in regard to student academic polices at UMMC. The structure and processes for student academic policies at UMMC vary among the seven schools on campus. The institution allows the schools autonomy in creating student academic policies based on the needs of the individual school. The following questions guide the comparison and analysis of student academic policies at UMMC in this DIP.

- What is the process of making a grievance under student academic policies?
- Who gets to make a grievance?
- Who are the decision makers involved in addressing a grievance?

Student Legal Cases Challenging Student Academic Policies

In their education in the health professions, some students encounter difficulty in meeting academic or professionalism standards, which can lead to remediation or dismissal. Dismissal of a student without due process or following the contractual obligations owed to the student may lead to litigation based on claims of deprivation of a student's legal rights. Determination of the amount and type of due process owed is based, broadly, on whether the dismissal is academic or nonacademic. In general, courts provide more legal discretion in sanctioning students on conduct grounds as opposed to on academic standards (Fossey, 2015). Courts have reasoned that the judiciary has less expertise to intrude on educators' judgments related to a student's academic proficiency. In some instances, the issue at stake can blur the line between academic and conduct; this can happen with professionalism standards that may not be tied directly to classroom or clinical performance. However, courts continue to show legal deference when an institution, with appropriate justification such as nationally-based professionalism and ethical standards, makes academic judgements based on professionalism standards. The decision to dismiss a student when the entire student record has been reviewed, sufficient process has been provided, and the institution has complied with its own policies is usually upheld by courts in litigation (Conran et al., 2018).

Academic Policies

The focus of this DiP is academic policies at a medical campus, including those related to professionalism standards that help to govern and administer how students are taught, what they are taught, and how schools manage students and school personnel. As mentioned, academic policies are rules and expectation that are outlined for students to follow while enrolled at a higher education institution. Academic policies are developed to inform students what is

acceptable and unacceptable in terms of maintaining satisfactory academic standing. These policies can outline the expectations of conduct, academic performance, professional behavior, dismissals, and admissions. Thus, academic standards can go beyond classroom performance and include matters such as ethical and professional treatment of peers, members of the health profession, clients, and patients. An important role for educators is to judge the suitability of a student to enter a health profession area, with such judgment often informed by nationally recognized standards, such as those for physicians or nurses. Students in professional training schools, such as in the health professions, may also have to adhere to academic standards set forth by affiliated academic facilities; an affiliated school or affiliated college is one that operates independently but has a formal collaborative agreement with another, usually larger, institution that may have some level of control or influence over its academic policies, standards, or programs (“Affiliated School,” 2020). Academic policies can also be influenced by legal standards and the need for institutions to abide by federal due process standards—in the case of public institutions—or to adhere to the contractual promises made to students, including in the academic realm.

The University of Mississippi Medical Center

The University of Mississippi Medical Center (UMMC) is comprised of seven schools:

- School of Nursing, which offers multiple undergraduate, masters, and doctoral programs
- School of Dentistry, which offers one undergraduate program and one doctoral program
- School of Health-Related Professions, which offers multiple undergraduate, masters, and doctoral programs
- School of Graduate Studies, which offers masters and graduate programs
- School of Medicine, which offers one doctoral program and multiple residency programs

- School of Population Health, which offers multiple graduate programs doctoral program
- School of Pharmacy, which offers one doctoral program

As an administrator at the University of Mississippi Medical Center, I am interested in reviewing UMMC's policies because I am at the forefront of assisting students with student academic policies. Numerous students have come to me for help, but uncertainty over or ambiguity found in the student academic policies can cause students to be reluctant to file a formal grievance in an attempt to redress perceived unfair treatment in relation to their academic or professional performance. I am interested in comparing UMMC academic policies for students to gain a better understanding of the similarities and differences in particular policies. Based on this comparison, I also hope to generate suggestions enhancing the fair treatment of students in the enforcement of academic standards and rules.

At UMMC, there are several policies, applicable to all student that are derived from the centralized Office of Academic Affairs. These overarching policies include:

- Student academic accommodations
- Policy on diversity and inclusion
- Student complaints
- Notification of rights under FERPA
- Alcohol and drug-free campus policy

All other student academic policies are individual to each specific school. Each school has the autonomy to create its own student academic policies and conduct policies based on the standards of the profession and school. UMMC provides a searchable intranet page for all school policies. A discrepancy in this process, however, is that not all schools provide the documents to the Document Center for disclosure.

This DiP is focused on comparing student academic policies (as opposed to conduct policies) at the seven schools that comprise UMMC, with a focus on considering ways to help make policies fair and consistent for all students.

Problem of Practice

Student fairness, as defined for this research, is equality in student treatment based on standardized institutional policies and deriving from ethical and legal obligations imposed on institutions. Higher education institutions have some legal responsibilities, such as due process. Colleges and universities that do not provide fairness and consistency to students when exercising academic judgement over them expose the institution to legal vulnerability. The three common goals of student academic policies created in higher education are: (a) to provide student academic policies that are consistent with the educational mission of the institution for which they are written (b) to craft student academic policies that are legally compliant and, beyond legal considerations, (c) to create student academic policies that are fair and ethical.

The problem of practice is focused on improving understanding of the student academic policies across the academic schools and programs at the UMMC medical center. Therefore, I seek to explore a comparison of academic student policies at UMMC. Specifically, I would like to learn if the policies from the seven schools on campus pose any form of inconsistencies that may violate a student's rights to fairness and due process under the law or otherwise fail to represent the best treatment of students in terms of sound and equitable educational practice. In comparing the policies, I seek to learn who has the right to file a grievance or claim, who the decision makers are when a grievance is filed, how the policies are constructed, and whether all seven schools at UMMC have some form of student academic policies.

Positionality

Assumptions

I entered this project with the view that some shortcomings exist with UMMC student academic policies, based on my professional experiences at the institutions; however, I endeavored to be fair in how I evaluated the policies.

Several personal and professional assumptions have shaped and informed my scholar-practitioner viewpoint regarding student academic policies. As a professional student affairs administrator in a higher education institution, I do this work, and I do see inconsistency in the student academic policies, which can result in a lack of fairness. My assumption is that the institution does not purposefully do this to negatively affect the students, but students are being impacted by the inconsistencies in student academic policies.

In January 2016, I transitioned into the role of Director of Student Affairs and Service Learning for the School of Nursing at the University of Mississippi Medical Center. By May 2016, I encountered a student who requested a formal grievance. Although I was still in the training stages of my new role, I was required to assist the student through this process. In my mind, I assumed that I could call one of my new colleagues and consult with him or her regarding the matter. After a quick review of the school's student academic policies versus other schools on campus, I learned that that was not an option.

As a new administrator in the student affairs arena on campus, I wondered how the differences in policies could be possible. My curiosity immediately took over, and I turned to one of my new colleagues that I felt comfortable to ask about the policies. I think the issue of being fair to students and making sure that we do not show differences in our student academic policies is incredibly important.

My scholar-practitioner viewpoint started well before I realized the issue. I started my college career as a first-generation student at a small private community college in Mathiston, Mississippi, called Wood College. Navigating through student academic policies proved to be an overwhelming and difficult process to go through alone. I felt totally lost in the shuffle as a new student in college. As a first-generation student, I was inadequately prepared for this transition in my life. I solely relied on the faculty and staff to guide me through the process. I felt utterly helpless and reliant on their leadership; however, I was ashamed to seek assistance for every question. I eventually struggled to read the advanced written student academic policies in hopes of gaining more knowledge. I faced many difficulties and suffered from anxiety at the mere possibility of doing something wrong and not understanding the steps I needed to take to resolve my issue. As a first-generation college student, I felt as if I was undergoing an out-of-body experience. Since my family was not familiar with anything related to college, and especially student academic policies, all that I could hope for was that my institution would provide me with fairness and a chance to prove myself if something happened; I now understand this to be due process. After several years of college, I realized that my incoming college experience was not a unique phenomenon to me.

My challenges as a new college student trying to understand the language of student academic policies have molded my thoughts, actions, and approaches toward this topic as I have progressed in my education and career. The challenges and intimidation that I faced during my educational process is my motivation to help with this problem in higher education. I understand that many of my students at UMMC face the same challenge that I experienced—that of deciphering student academic policies. Now that I am in the position to help other students, this challenge of consistency and understanding how to navigate through student academic policies

has become my mission. I want to help students better understand their rights to fairness and due process.

Additionally, personnel at higher education institutions should feel obligated to provide fairness in their student academic policies. My experiences continuously solidify my resolve to challenge the obstacles that can often be encountered by students with institutional academic policies.

As noted, the problem of fairness in academic sanctions is personally relevant to me. As a professional in higher education employed at a professional institution, it is my responsibility to ensure that all students receive due process and fairness. In my role, I have worked with students while reviewing student academic policies. From my perspective, I have witnessed an unevenness in student academic policies. The current process has brought confusion and uncertainty to me as an administrator and to the students. Inconsistent student academic policies are unfair. Students have rights and deserve fairness and due process in regard to student academic policies. Consistent student academic policies are necessary for higher education institutions to ensure fairness to students and to help prevent the possibility of litigation against an institution based on unfair treatment of students.

Professional Background

My philosophy of learning is that obtaining knowledge through teaching is the purpose of education. For learning to happen, students must know that the curriculum content is vital and that everyone should have the opportunity to achieve and succeed in higher education. Their life experiences, gender identity, socio-economic backgrounds, or any other factors should not categorize students. I show students from diverse backgrounds the opportunities that education has afforded me. Through education, I have learned that organizational and public speaking

skills are two of my assets. My educational journey has provided me with the self-confidence to succeed as a professional among my colleagues. The practical application of life lessons and education makes me a solidified voice in higher education. I have a purpose of promoting diversity and inclusion in colleges and universities. I can motivate the motionless, encourage the defeated, and shine a light in the darkness to the students that I encounter by being an example. I share my experiences and journey to show that I progressed despite oppression, objections, and adversity. My passion for higher education is confirmed. My notable experiences have established my understanding of the importance of academic and co-curricular programs, which are essential for students to be successful in college. I am committed to staying informed about the disparities that prevent students from being successful in higher education. I vow to continue to remain an advocate and always be a resource of knowledge for my students.

Future Plans

My future professional aspiration is to become the directing administrator of student affairs at a higher education institution, and because this is my ultimate career goal, it also shapes how I think about this subject. I desire to be an expert in this subject matter, and the research collected during this project provides an extensive review that offers possible solutions and recommendations for improvements in developing student academic policies.

Carnegie Project on the Educational Doctorate

This project is being done to fulfill the requirements of a Carnegie Project on the Educational Doctorate (CPED) affiliated Doctor of Education program in Higher Education at the University of Mississippi. According to the CPED, “the Vision of the Carnegie Project on the Education Doctorate (CPED) is to inspire all schools of education to apply the CPED framework to the preparation of educational leaders to become well-equipped scholarly

practitioners who provide stewardship of the profession and meet the educational challenges of the 21st century” (Duquesne University, n.d., ¶1).

This project focuses on the extent to which the student academic policies are consistent at the University of Mississippi Medical Center, which aligns within the CPED principles of equity, ethics, and social justice. The three common goals for institutions when writing student academic policies are for student academic policies to be educationally consistent with the educational mission of the institution for which they are written, for student academic policies to be legally compliant, and for student academic policies to be fair to students. The second CPED principle with which my topic aligns is ethics. According to Merriam-Webster (n.d.), the definition of ethics is the “moral principles that govern a person's behavior or the conducting of an activity.” Students desire to feel a sense of security and protection in the student academic policies at the institutions at which they are enrolled. Ensuring fair and consistent student academic policies should be a priority for higher education administrators who create student academic policies.

The third CPED principle of social justice is also relevant to this study. In my professional role as the Director of Student Affairs for the School of Nursing at the University of Mississippi Medical Center, I am responsible for guiding students through the proper process if a student needs to take action with a student academic policy. I am also responsible for advising them of their rights as students and advocating for their needs. I am required to help all students regardless of their wealth or privileges within society.

Conceptual Framing

The focus of this study, along with the problem of practice for this research, is to study the extent to which the student academic policies are consistent at the University of Mississippi Medical Center. The study is guided by the following concepts.

Fairness

Sound educational policy, including at the institutional level, depends on assumptions about fairness in education, whether they are made explicit or kept implicit. Without a view of fairness, one would be unaware as to what should be done about the reproduction of social inequality through education, or whether anything should be done at all (Boyum, 2014). This normative problem is debated within political philosophy, for instance, by Rawls (1971). Much of this debate has centered on the notion of equality of opportunity, which, in various forms, figures prominently in theories ranging from traditional meritocratic views to more recent “luck-egalitarian” views (Mason, 2001). Regrettably, this philosophical debate has largely proceeded in splendid isolation from actual education policy. This is unfortunate since education policy depends (among many other things) on assumptions about fairness. Apart from legal obligations, the concept of fairness is foundational to the study, with the researcher operating from the position that higher education institutions, even in the absence of a specific legal duty, have an ethical obligation to be fair and consistent in the treatment of students in relation to academic policies.

Due Process

Due process of law refers to safeguards and procedures that are in place to protect a person’s rights from state government (Fourteenth Amendment) or federal government (Fifth Amendment) action. Due process has two components, *procedural due process* and *substantive*

due process. Procedural due process provides that an individual being deprived of a liberty or property interest receive notice and be presented with the opportunity to be heard by an impartial decision maker. Substantive due process provides that the state's (or institution's) decision is not arbitrary or capricious (Conran et al., 2018). Higher education has been characterized as "one of the greatest hopes for intellectual and civic progress in this country. Yet for many Americans, it has been seen as part of the problem rather than the solution" (Boyer, 1997, p. 85). In *Contemporary Issues in Higher Education Law*, Fossey (2015) stated, "under the Fourteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution, no state may "deprive any person of life, liberty, or property without due process of law" (p.363). In regard to student due process in higher education, Grindle (2009) stated:

College students have a property and liberty interest in the public education that they receive and the courts require notice and hearing before a deprivation of one of these interests. As administrators in higher education face the challenges involved in properly deciding disputes with students, they can find guidance in a line of U.S. Supreme Court cases that describe due process in terms of the proper relationship between American citizens and their government. By understanding the process that state governments are required by the Fourteenth Amendment to provide, administrators can determine a method of fair inquiry.

Literature on Professional Student Codes

Student academic policies are vital because they aid higher education institutions in establishing guidelines and processes that are fair and that establish expectations for professional responsibility for students. Professional student codes are important because they clearly lay out the rules for behavior and provide the groundwork for preemptive warning. Regardless of the

higher education institution, colleges and institutions count on their student academic policies to set a standard of ethical conduct for their enrolled student to follow. A professional student code and student academic policies are essential to the success of a university and its students. The code provides an ethical starting point for the faculty, staff, and students, as well as others outside the institution. Professional student codes also ensure quality in treatment of students who may utilize the codes to define or protect their rights. Rubin (2010) stated:

The ethical conduct of information professionals is an affirmation of the critical values of service, respect for others, and the need to improve society. Ethics provide a framework for conducting essential information functions, instituting policies, and developing strategies for service. Without them, we are, as Foskett observes above, merely “lurching” about—stumbling in the dark. (p. 324)

At the end of the day, professional student codes and student academic policies work to uphold the standards of the institution over the individual, communal, and organizational morals. The codes function as a guide for behavior and expectation. All professional student codes and student academic policies should be clear and concise. Professional student codes and student academic policies should set standards to which a student must abide. The intent is to provide an explanation of the values of the institution, which students must remember to behave in a consistent and professional manner.

Research Questions

This research project strives to explore a comparison of academic student policies at the University of Mississippi Medical Center (UMMC). All seven schools at UMMC—Nursing, Health Related Professions, Pharmacy, Population Health, Graduate Studies, Dentistry, and Medicine—have developed student academic policies to fit the needs of each individual school

and its students. Understanding the foundational reasons why UMMC has this structure is vital to ensuring that due process and fairness remains in all the varying policies. Understanding the reasons why UMMC's student academic policies are defined in its current structure may reveal potential opportunities for modifications or enhancements for students. With consideration of information presented in this paper, the following research questions explore the student academic policies at UMMC:

1. What are the differences and similarities in policies among the UMMC schools, and do they affect the students differently?
2. How are student academic policies and professional conduct designed?
3. Who are the decision makers in cases involving student academic policies versus conduct policies?

Manuscript 2

Writing almost 45 years ago, Dessem (1976) stated that education is perhaps the most important function of state and federal government. This sentiment still holds true. The U.S. Supreme Court has upheld a student's right to continued education, especially at the K-12 level (e.g., *Goss v. Lopez*, 1975). However, the Court has been less clear to what extent that a right exists regarding pursuing a postsecondary education at a public college or university (*Board of Curators v. Horowitz*, 1978; Fossey, 2015). The U.S. Supreme Court and most other lower courts have typically assumed that some level of due process protection is available to college students in cases involving academic or disciplinary matters that can result in sanctions such as dismissal from a program or an institution (Fossey, 2015).

The educational governing board of the state of Mississippi, the Mississippi Institutions of Higher Learning (IHL), recognizes the importance of students' rights at public universities by mandating that all universities have policies and procedures for student academic policies (Mississippi Institutions of Higher Learning, 2020). Broadly situated in the domain of student rights and procedures in the context of academic policies, this Dissertation in Practice (DiP) examines student academic policies among the seven schools that comprise the University of Mississippi Medical Center (UMMC). Along with comparing the various policies, an overriding interest relates to identifying potential areas where policies can be streamlined and developing suggestions for standards that promote fairness and consistency in the treatment of students enrolled at UMMC.

The concept of due process within student academic policies and procedures is concerned with ensuring justice, fairness, and equity for students. The Bill of Rights, applied at first to the federal government and later to the states, was created to guarantee a set of minimum rights for people living in the United States. It provides protections to people from the government and agencies that are acting on behalf of the government (Gehring, 2000, p. 363). Manuscript 1 addressed the legal dimensions of due process protections, which apply to public colleges and universities, as well as how contract principles can also apply at private and public institutions in terms of the protections available to students in relation to academic policies.

Due process is a concept that derived from the Constitution and Bill of Rights, with due process protections applied to the federal government through the Fifth Amendment and to the states through the Fourteenth Amendment. Despite a considerable volume of cases, institutional actors and courts can still lack precision about the specific protections and procedures that should apply in the context of academic policies. Still, court decisions have laid out general expectations of what due process procedures need to be followed in student disciplinary cases and in academic dismissal cases due to poor academic performance (Fishner, 2006). Such expectations include providing students access to the standards under which they are governed as students, displaying basic fairness and consistency in the treatment of students, and providing students an opportunity, even if informal, to respond to assertions that a policy has been violated.

One result of the formation of student affairs units in higher education was the development of offices and units charged with handling student disciplinary issues, with academic infractions often left to the academic side of institutions. Dungy (2003) separated the student affairs division into thirty-one different areas. The primary areas in which issues of student conduct and due process arise are judicial affairs or student conduct offices. The purpose

of judicial affairs is to ensure that the “academic integrity, ethics, and behavioral standards” that the university sets forth are being followed. Such units also often create, interpret, and maintain institutional conduct codes (Dungy, 2003, p. 349). The judicial process is in place to serve two main functions: (a) to educate students about institutional conduct expectations and to hold them accountable to these standards, and (b) to protect the campus community (Pearson, 2001).

Students are able to access academic policies at UMMC; however, policies or procedures on the same or similar issue can vary among schools at UMMC. Such variations are potentially problematic for students and to the institution. This manuscript contains an examination of the academic policies at UMMC’s seven schools. Based on interactions with students related to various policies, it seems variations exist that could raise concerns of fairness and consistency. Fairness is important to ensure students have the right to due process and, apart from legal considerations, is an academic value that colleges and universities should embrace. Whenever a student is denied his or her right to due process in the application of academic and conduct standards, harms can include issues related to academic records, progression, and dismissal. Student rights are those rights, such as civil, constitutional, contractual, and consumer rights, which regulate student freedoms and allow students to make use of their educational investment (“Student Rights in Higher Education,” n.d.).

Summary of the Problem of Practice

A key focus of this DIP is to compare academic policies for students enrolled in the seven programs at UMMC, with an overview of the seven schools comprising UMMC provided in Manuscript 1. The project is ultimately focused on helping to establish more fair and equitable policies, including in ways that transcend the basic legal requirements related to students and

academic policies. In Manuscript 1, three primary components were identified as key goals when reviewing student academic policies at UMMC:

- the processes of making a grievance with student academic policies among each school
- claimants entitled to file grievances
- administrative decision makers of a grievance case

In order to achieve the goals of this study, three research questions were identified.

1. What are the differences and similarities in policies among the UMMC schools, and do they affect the students differently?
2. How are student academic policies and professional conduct designed?
3. Who are the decision makers in cases involving student academic policies versus conduct policies?

Conceptual Framework

To achieve the objectives of this project, the researcher selected a theoretical framework that is centered on integral aspects of the legal process and the treatment of students, which are fairness and due process in the case of public institutions. Educational policy depends on assumptions about fairness in education, whether they are made explicit or remain implicit.

Without a view of fairness, it would be unknown what should be done about the reproduction of social inequality through education, or whether anything should be done at all in particular situations (Bøyum, 2014). It is important to remember that each school on UMMC's campus has unique and individualized needs; however, it is also vital to ensure that students feel confident in the university's policies and procedures relative to academic and conduct standards and that students are treated fairly and consistently in relation to academic policies and standards.

By formulating fairness and due process as the guiding platform for this study, this research works to review and, ultimately, to help provide suggestions to reduce inconsistencies in student academic policies at UMMC. Efforts to provide a seamless process for all students is vital to the student experience. As noted, while looking to aspects of due process as a legal concept, the author is concerned about fairness and equity in student academic policies that go beyond the legal minimums required in the treatment of students.

Mississippi Institutions of Higher Learning

In Mississippi, the Institutions of Higher Learning (IHL) serves as the governing body for public universities in the state and its board of trustees authorizes policies and bylaws for these institutions to follow. There are twelve board members, representing the three Supreme Court Districts. Appointed by the Governor and confirmed by the Mississippi Senate, the members serve nine-year terms. The terms are staggered so that only four members roll on or off the Board at the same time. (Mississippi Institutions of Higher Learning, 2020). Eight public universities and several other entities are under IHL's authority:

- Alcorn State University
- Delta State University
- Jackson State University
- Mississippi State University
- Mississippi University for Women
- Mississippi Valley State University
- The University of Mississippi, including the University of Mississippi Medical Center
- The University of Southern Mississippi

- Mississippi Cooperative Extension Service
- Mississippi Agricultural and Forestry Experiment Station
- Forestry and Veterinary Medicine
- 23 satellite centers at various locations throughout the state

The Mississippi Institutions for Higher Learning requires student academic policies; however, the board does not provide uniformity on its mandates of policies and bylaws.

Data Overview

Data from this project was obtained from current policies publicly available on the UMMC website. As such, institutional review board (IRB) review for this project was not required.

UMMC Bulletin

The academic regulations of the institution are set forth in Academic Affairs policy and procedure. All Academic Affairs policies and procedures must conform to the expectations of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC), to be approved through appropriate institutional procedures, published in appropriate institutional documents, accessible to those affected, and enforced by the institution (UMMC, 2020). The University of Mississippi Medical Center has a collection of institutional and individual school policies and procedures published in one document, the *UMMC Bulletin* (UMMC, 2020). Changes may be made to the academic policy or procedure at any time to promote the best interests of the Medical Center and its students. The dean of each school is the final arbiter of academic regulations for that school. The Associate Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs adjudicates academic regulations that affect more than a single school at the Medical Center (UMMC, 2020).

Policy Accessibility

The seven schools at UMMC provide student handbooks to the students electronically, and most policies are stored on an electronic digital storage platform called the Document Center. As defined by the institution, the Document Center is a centralized hub for storing, accessing, and maintaining large numbers of institutional policies, procedures, and other official documents produced by the university (UMMC, 2020). The Document Center is a searchable platform that allows users to research documents by using key words to locate a subject matter or policy. The information in the platform is divided based on the four divisions of UMMC's institutional mission—Education, HealthCare, Research, and Administration. One can find policies with broader themes or narrow the search by identifying the division on the related policy. Each policy stored on this platform is assigned an identification number. The Document Center also contains a quick search list, which contains the subject, context, a brief overview, and an expandable link to review the entire document with the most recent additions added to the platform.

Policy Identification

Each of the seven student handbooks contains a table of contents that is arranged by topic into categories and subgroups. This outline provides a quick reference for students, faculty, staff, and external viewers to research and reference the policy in question. The student handbook demonstrates different layouts among the seven schools. The researcher discovered that there are commonalities in the policy identification and themes; however, inconsistencies are also present. The researcher also determined that each student handbook is located on each school's respective webpage, and not in one collection or designated area. Overall, as noted, the institution provides

an easy- to-reference system for policies that are available electronically via the UMMC Document Center and on each school's individual webpage.

Limitations

As with all research, this study had limitations. First, the institutional policies used for research in this study came from one source. Administrators or students have not evaluated the effectiveness of the policies identified at this time. As a scholar-practitioner, I aim to help improve the methods in which institutions such as UMMC can create and inspect student academic policies for fairness, consistency, and effectiveness, and the analysis in this manuscript represents an important, if initial, part of such a process.

Secondly, there are many student academic policies that vary in subject. For this study, three topics, as described in Manuscript 1, were identified across the seven program areas at UMMC for review, namely academic complaints and grievances, grade appeals, and dismissals. Bounding the analysis in this way was intended to provide a uniformity and cohesiveness to the data obtained and to assist in making meaningful comparisons across the schools. Additionally, these policy areas represent “high stakes” academic policy domains, as students can be dismissed from academic programs if deemed to have failed to meet the expectations.

Presentation of Policy Themes and Findings

Student Academic Policies Comparison by School

The University of Mississippi Medical Center offers a centralized digital reporting platform that allows students to report comments and complaints anonymously. The form to submit a report consists of four sections, of which only one is a required field. The form requests the following information from the student: name; email; name of the school in which the student is enrolled; and complaints, comments, suggestions, or request (required field).

Once the form is submitted, it is received via an email to the Chief Student Affairs Officer. The form indicates that a preliminary response will be provided to the student within 48 hours. The institution's Student Affairs Council (SAC) maintains the reports submitted via this platform. This council is comprised of associate deans and directors of student affairs from each school. The council is asked to report all nonacademic and non-misconduct complaints that rise to the level of the individual school dean's office to the Student Affairs Council quarterly. The Chief Student Affairs Officer is responsible for monthly reporting of the complaints that rise to the institutional level (UMMC, 2020). Student academic policies vary among the seven schools at UMMC. Table 1 provides an overview of the policies that are available among the seven schools at UMMC.

Table 1*General Policy Topics*

School	Grievance Policy Sub Policies				Dismissal Policy Sub-Policies		
	Has an Academic Complaint or Grievance Policy	Has a Policy for Grading and/or Appeals (Test/Final Average)	Allows Students to Challenge Grades	Has a Progression Policy	Has a Dismissal Policy	Allows Students to Appeal Dismissals	Has a Policy for Readmissions
School of Medicine (SOM)	X			X	X	X	X
School of Nursing (SON)	X			X	X	X	X
School of Dentistry (SOD)	X			X	X	X	
School of Health-Related Professions (SHRP)	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
School of Graduate Studies in the Health Sciences (SGSHS)	X			X	X	X	
School of Pharmacy (SOP)	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
School of Population Health (SOPH)	X	X	X	X	X	X	

Tracking grievances is important to the institution for accreditation purposes. The University of Mississippi Medical Center is accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC). According to the SACSCOC Principles of Accreditation (2018):

The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) is the regional body for the accreditation of degree-granting higher education institutions in the Southern states. The Commission's mission is the enhancement of education quality throughout the region and the improvement of the effectiveness of institutions by ensuring that they meet standards established by the higher education community that address the needs of society and students. It serves as the common denominator of shared values and practices among the diverse institutions in Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, Latin America, and other international sites approved by SACSCOC that award associate, baccalaureate, master's, or doctoral degrees. SACSCOC also accepts applications from other international institutions of higher education. Accreditation by SACSCOC signifies that the institution (1) has a mission appropriate to higher education, (2) has resources, programs, and services sufficient to accomplish and sustain that mission, and (3) maintains clearly specified educational objectives that are consistent with its mission and appropriate to the degrees it offers and that indicate whether it is successful in achieving its stated objectives. (p. 3)

At the University of Mississippi Medical Center, each school outlines different processes for enrolled students to submit grievances.

Analysis for Differences and Similarities of Complaint/Grievance Policies

The researcher discovered multiple differences and similarities during the review of the identified student academic policies. The researcher identified three student academic policies to review for this project: grievance and complaint grade appeals, progression and dismissal, and readmissions policies. What follows is an overview of policies in these areas for each of the seven schools that comprise UMMC.

School of Medicine

Grievance and Complaint Policy. The School of Medicine does not provide information on how to define each complaint in the School of Medicine Handbook or the UMMC Document Center. The researcher concluded that this school allows students to submit three different types of complaints. The three types of complaint are identified in the School of Medicine's Student Handbook as: (a) academic, (b) non-academic, and (c) misconduct (UMMC, 2020).

The word *grievance* was not found in a search of School of Medicine policies. However, the school states that if the student feels that a nonacademic or non-misconduct complaint was not resolved satisfactorily, he or she may file a written grievance with the chief student affairs officer. The SOM outlines that a student has a right to seek resolution for the three identified complaints via a resolution process that is not published in the student handbook. The handbook states that the student should follow the school's published administrative channels; however, the researcher was unable to identify the reference policy via the student handbook (*School of Medicine Student Handbook*, 2020).

It is also important to note that the school does not have accessible links to SOM-specific required documents for student use if he or she elects to file a complaint. The link to the referenced section was not provided. The school also provides an outline of how a student may file an appeal for non-academic issues. The handbook indicates that non-academic and non-

misconduct complaints filed by SOM students are directed and the issue is resolved through the appropriate office on campus designated to address those particular student concerns (*School of Medicine Student Handbook*, 2020). It appears that the SOM acknowledges that complaints may be resolved outside the School of Medicine.

Progression Policy. Progression policies outline the standards that a student must maintain in order to matriculate and stay enrolled. The School of Medicine's progression policy indicates that an enrolled student who receives a grade of less than 70 in any single course, or earns a weighted average grade of less than 75 for all courses does not meet the standards for academic progression (*School of Medicine Student Handbook*, 2020).

These standards are outlined under the School of Medicine's Policy on Academic Achievement. If a student enrolled in the School of Medicine does not meet the progression policy standards, he or she may have the opportunity to enroll in an Academic Achievement Program, which is designed for students who fall below the progression standards set forth by the school. This policy ensures that students with academic difficulty participate in the UMMC Academic Achievement Program (AAP). Once enrolled in the AAP, a student must fulfill the following requirements:

- Meet with the appropriate course director(s) and/or course faculty to obtain an assessment of performance and guidelines for improvement.
- Meet with the director of academic counseling to discuss appropriate academic assistance that is available to students, both directly and on a referral basis.
- Meet with the assistant dean for academic affairs or assigned administrative advisor.

Student will communicate with their administrative advisor on a minimum monthly basis

to give an update or progress. The student may be required to be evaluated by Student Health.

- Once enrolled in the AAP, students will remain until completion of all M2 requirements.
- Any student enrolled in the AAP who does not perform in a manner consistent with the passage of Step I, determined by a successful predictive score on the National Board of Medical Examiner's Clinical Basic Shelf Assessment to be administered in May, will be required to submit to an approved study program.
- Failure to actively participate in the Academic Achievement Program will be communicated to the School of Medicine Promotions Committee and will be considered in decisions regarding promotion (*School of Medicine Student Handbook*, 2020).

Dismissal Policy. The School of Medicine Dismissal Policy provides the following:

A student dismissed from the School of Medicine shall not be eligible for readmission in advanced standing. Such students shall not be precluded from applying for readmission to the first-year class as any other new candidate. Dismissal from the School of Medicine may be for:

1. Academic failure. This includes students who have academic deficiency in the current school year, students who have a repeat failing grade in any repeated course or block or who failed any course or block in a repeated year, or students with other failures as determined by the Promotions Committee.

2. Health reasons. This includes students who by reason of health, including behavioral and psychiatric disorders, are precluded from satisfactory academic performance or satisfactory performance as a physician in the practice of medicine.

3. Conviction of a felony.

4. Conduct deemed to be other than honorable or ethical (i.e., cheating on examinations, taking credit for work not one's own, etc.).

5. Committing an unlawful act on or off the Medical Center campus, or for conduct discrediting the Medical Center in any way. The student will be subject to disciplinary action up to and including dismissal (*School of Medicine Student Handbook*, 2020).

Appeal Policy. The School of Medicine provides the following policy language to guide appeals:

The executive faculty shall act as an appeal body for all academic and/or unprofessional behavior matters that concern grades, promotion and conditions imposed by suspension, dismissal, or withdrawal. Students shall be notified of adverse academic decisions such as the requirements for remedial work, the conditions upon withdrawal or dismissal. Each student shall be notified of his or her right to appear before the executive faculty to appeal such decisions. Any request for appeal must be by written petition to the dean within 14 days of the recommendation of the sanction. Failure to make a written appeal within this 14-day time period shall constitute a waiver of the appeal right and shall result in the sanction becoming final as recommended. During an appeal hearing before the executive faculty, the student shall be permitted at his or her expense to have an adviser or legal counsel at the hearing and through all other stages of the disciplinary process. The role of the counsel shall be limited to an advisory capacity only. The council will not be permitted to make opening or closing statements or questions, choose witnesses or make concluding statements on the student's behalf. The student is entitled to present witnesses or other evidence, question opposing witnesses and make opening and concluding statements on his or her own behalf. The executive faculty shall record all

hearings and the record shall be preserved until all avenues of appeal available to the student have expired. The executive faculty shall have the right to approve the recommended sanction, impose a lower sanction or no sanction, or impose a harsher sanction than recommended. The executive faculty shall render a written decision within 10 working days of the completion of the hearing and shall notify the student with a copy of the written decision. All decisions by the executive faculty concerning academic matters are final. The student shall have the right to file a procedural appeal in writing to the associate vice chancellor for medical education/provost within 10 working days. If a procedural violation is found to have occurred, the case will be returned to the point of procedural issue and readdressed (*School of Medicine Student Handbook*, 2020).

Readmission Policy. Per the School of Medicine's Dismissal Policy, a student dismissed from the school is not eligible for readmission in the advanced standing program; however, the academic achievement program is an option for dismissed students to return (*School of Medicine Student Handbook*, 2020).

Academic Achievement Policy. The academic achievement policy for the School of Medicine ensures that students with academic difficulty participate in the UMMC Academic Achievement Program. Any student who maintains a grade of less than 70 in any single course or who maintains a weighted average grade of less than 75 for all courses will be referred to the associate dean for medical education. If recommended by the dean, the student must, without exception, participate in this program. Once enrolled in the Academic Achievement Program, a student must fulfill the following requirements:

1. Meet with the appropriate course director(s) and/or course faculty to obtain an assessment of performance and guidelines for improvement

2. Meet with the director of academic counseling to discuss appropriate academic assistance that is available to students, both directly and on a referral basis

3. Meet with the associate dean for medical education or assigned administrative advisor. The student will communicate with his or her administrative advisor on a minimum monthly basis to give an update of progress, and the student may be required to be evaluated by Student Health

4. Remain enrolled the AAP until completion of all M2 requirements

5. Perform in a manner consistent with passage of Step 1, determined by a successful predictive score on the National Board of Medical Examiner's Clinical Basic Science Shelf Assessment to be administered in May. Students who do not perform in like manner will be required to submit to an approved study program. A student's failure to actively participate in the Academic Achievement Program will be communicated to the School of Medicine Promotions Committee and will be considered in decisions regarding promotion (*School of Medicine Student Handbook*, 2020).

School of Nursing

Grievance Policy. The School of Nursing defines a grievance as a dispute concerning some aspect of academic involvement arising from an administrative or faculty decision which the student claims is unjust, arbitrary, or capricious (UMMC School of Nursing, 2020). The researcher noted that the School of Nursing only defines one category for filing a grievance, which is for academic reasons. The school does outline an intensive process for students to resolve a dispute informally before he or she is allowed to submit a formal grievance. The researcher found that the school provides digital accessibility for the forms required for the grievance processes.

Academic Complaints. According to the School of Nursing policy for Grievance/Complaints, students have the right to complain, verbally or in writing, regarding any area of academic or student life without fear of coercion, harassment, intimidation, or reprisal from the institution or its employees. Students also have the right to expect a timely response to any complaint related to student life. However, defamatory or baseless charges may cause a student to be held responsible for violations of institutional policies or for action through the courts. The School of Nursing further outlines in this policy that grades cannot be contested, with the school indicating that grades will only be reviewed in cases of miscalculation or documentation error (*School of Nursing Student Handbook*, 2020).

Progression Policy. The School of Nursing does not have a policy for progression that differs from the undergraduate and graduate policy.

Graduate Standards for Scholastic Performance. In the School of Nursing, a student must achieve a grade of 70 or higher in each graduate course and must satisfactorily complete all requirements stated in the syllabus for each course to become eligible for progression. A grade of Incomplete is reported when the student has not fulfilled the course requirements. A grade of Incomplete is not an expectation but rather a privilege that is extended in unusual circumstances by the course coordinator. The course coordinator determines the time allowed for the student to remove the incomplete grade. The Incomplete grade is converted to a grade of F if not removed within 12 months from the time it was assigned (*School of Nursing Student Handbook*, 2020).

Undergraduate Standards for Scholastic Performance. An undergraduate student in the School of Nursing must achieve a grade of 76 or higher in each course and must satisfactorily complete all requirements stated in the syllabus for each course to become eligible for progression. A grade of Incomplete is reported when the student has not fulfilled the course

requirements. A grade of Incomplete is not an expectation but rather a privilege that is extended in unusual circumstances by the course coordinator. The course coordinator determines the time allowed for the student to remove the incomplete grade. The Incomplete grade is converted to a grade of F if not removed within 12 months from the time it was assigned (*School of Nursing Student Handbook*, 2020).

The grade of F is given if the student has failed based on the evaluation of required work and course objectives. Any required course in which the student has received a grade that is less than satisfactory—a D or an F—must be repeated either at the University of Mississippi School of Nursing or, with permission of the dean, at another college or university. A minimum grade of B is required on any course that is repeated at another college or university. Both the first grade and the grade received when the course was repeated are calculated in the School of Nursing overall GPA for undergraduate SN students (*School of Nursing Student Handbook*, 2020).

Dismissal Policy. The School of Nursing has a separate dismissal policy for each of its various programs. An outline of the School of Nursing's dismissal policy for each of these programs follows.

Undergraduate Programs.

- The student earns a second failing grade (D or F) in a nursing course; or
- A student repeats a failed nursing course and does not earn a grade of C or higher; or
- The student has earned a failing grade (D or F), and the student's overall nursing GPA is less than 2.0 on all coursework completed in the SON after two consecutive semesters on academic probation; or
- The student behaves in a way that is deemed unprofessional, unethical, unsafe, or illegal or when performance is unsuitable for the practice of nursing; or

- The student violates the UMMC code of conduct, the SON honor code, or compliance requirements (*School of Nursing Student Handbook*, 2020).

Accelerated BSN Program.

- All dismissal guidelines for undergraduates apply.
- Failure to successfully complete each course within each semester (including withdrawal) may result in dismissal from the program (*School of Nursing Student Handbook*, 2020).

Graduate Programs.

- The student earns an F in a clinical course; or
- The student earns a second failing grade in a nursing course; or
- The student behaves in a way that is deemed unprofessional, unethical, unsafe, or illegal; or when performance is unsuitable for the practice of nursing; or
- The student violates the UMMC code of conduct, the SON honor code, or compliance requirements (*School of Nursing Student Handbook*, 2020).

Readmission Policy. Students who are eligible to reapply to the School of Nursing after a 12-month cycle can follow the following steps to seek readmission:

1. Students dismissed for academic reasons may be eligible for readmission one year following dismissal if so stated in the letter of dismissal.
2. Readmission is considered on a case-by-case basis.
3. No one is guaranteed readmission.
4. If readmitted, the program/track director or assistant dean will design a plan of study based upon the applicant's individual needs and in accordance with existing SON policies (*School of Nursing Student Handbook*, 2020).

Students may not be admitted to other programs within the SON before the one-year requirement (*School of Nursing Student Handbook*, 2020).

School of Dentistry

The School of Dentistry (SOD) defines an academic grievance as complaint against faculty, administrators, staff member, or other employees concerning evaluation of student performance, conduct of instructor, and other activities related to academic policies of the school (University of Mississippi School of Dentistry [UMSOD], 2020). The researcher determined that the SOD provides a list of potential grounds for grievances, which are complaints against faculty, administrators, staff members, or other employees, or other employees concerning evaluation of student performance, conduct of instructors, and other activities related to academic policies of the school. In addition, the school states that the list is not inclusive. A student can more easily determine from the provided examples if he or she has grounds to file a claim. The SOD also indicates that it is the responsibility of the student to submit the burden of proof regarding the claim (*School of Dentistry Student Handbook*, 2020). The SOD does reference the words *grievance* and *complaint* in separate categories in its student handbook. The SOD also provides digital links to for the viewer to reference the policy in the Document Center.

Academic Complaint. The School of Dentistry outlines the academic grievance policy by explaining the intent of the policy. The school does not state the difference between an academic or non-academic grievance. The infractions the school defines as an academic grievance are clearly outlined in the student handbook and in the UMMC Document Center. The policy states it is intended to guarantee the rights of students without encroaching on academic freedoms or restricting the traditional prerogatives of faculty (*School of Dentistry Student Handbook*, 2020). A student academic grievance consists of a complaint against faculty,

administrators, staff members, or other employees concerning the evaluation of student performance, conduct of instructors, and other activities related to academic policies of the school. The burden of proof of academic mistreatment lies with the student (*School of Dentistry Student Handbook*, 2020).

Grading Policy. The School of Dentistry has several facets when it comes to the evaluation and promotion of students. The school has a Student Evaluation and Promotion Committee (SEPC) that is responsible for determining academic status. The policy states that the SEPC is composed of seven full-time faculty members and the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs, who serves as the permanent chairperson. The Dean appoints five clinical science and two basic science faculty members to serve on the committee for a term of three years. Lengths of terms are adjusted so that no more than one basic science member and two clinical science members are appointed during one academic year. All deliberations and records of the SEPC are considered confidential and are made available only to the Office of the Dean. The Office of the Dean may use the information (within right-to privacy guidelines) for SOD purposes as considered necessary and appropriate, but always within the legal constraints of the rules and regulations of the SOD (*School of Dentistry Student Handbook*, 2020).

Dismissals. The School of Dentistry has an established dismissal policy. The policy provides that “A second failing grade (even though the first failing grade was remediated to a passing grade) or one failing course grade in a repeated course (including repetition of an academic year) may be grounds for dismissal recommendation.” (UMSOD, 2020).

Readmissions. The School of Dentistry requires students to enroll in the same curriculum simultaneously as it is being taught, commonly known as a *lock-step program*. Students leave the program only when the Dean grants a leave of absence for non-academic

reasons, which allows students to return the following year. The School of Dentistry does not have a readmission policy (*School of Dentistry Student Handbook*, 2020).

School of Health Related Professions

The School of Health Related Professions (SHRP) provides in its student handbook outline a brief description of the subject of grievances and complaints, with digital links that direct the viewer to the UMMC Document Center for details on the policy. The school also provides a link to the UMMC Bulletin for additional academic policies and procedures. The School of Health Related Professions advises students that complaints are allowed, with the school providing the following information to students:

Students who have complaints about an educational program, school policies, incidents in the classroom, or other academic or non-academic matters are asked to notify a faculty member or their departmental chair, the student services office, or a member of the administration in the Office of the Dean. The complaint can be made verbally followed by written comments describing the issue or concern, or the complaint can be made in writing in any form comfortable for the student.” (University of Mississippi Medical Center School of Health Related Professions [UMMC SHRP], 2020, p. 6)

The SHRP outlines a student’s right to file a grievance with the chief student affairs officer if a student is dissatisfied with the results of his or her complaint. The school does not provide examples of valid complaints or a standardized form for submitting a formal complaint.

Grading Policy. The School of Health Related Professions has a policy that allows students to request a grade review from the instructor. The process is outlined in Appendix A. The responsibility for evaluating student work and assigning grades lies with the instructor of a course. However, a student may initiate a grade review process. In all cases of a disputed grade,

the student has the burden of proof that the assigned grade was not appropriate (*School of Health Related Professions Student Handbook*, 2020).

Progression Policy. The School of Health Related Professions policy for progression is identified as the Academic Progress Policy (*School of Health Related Professions Student Handbook*, 2020). The policy is described below:

Promotion. Promotion is contingent upon successful academic performance, including demonstration of professional attributes and expectations, as determined by each department.

Letter of Concern. Upon completion of the semester, a student may be sent a Letter of Concern from the program director/department chair if the student did not meet the minimum academic and/or professional standards for promotion.

Probation. In regard to undergraduate programs, the DOMS certificate program, and the MSS post-baccalaureate certification program, “Upon the recommendation of program faculty, a student may be placed on probation when either the student’s semester or overall cumulative grade point average falls below 2.00 or the student has failed to meet professional expectations” (*School of Health Related Professions Student Handbook*, 2020).

In regard to graduate programs, the HI post-baccalaureate certification program, and the LM post-baccalaureate certificate program, “upon the recommendation of program faculty, a student may be placed on probation when either the student’s semester or overall cumulative grade point average falls below 3.00 or the student has failed to meet professional expectations” (*School of Health Related Professions Student Handbook*, 2020)

Dismissal. The School of Health Related Professions provides a policy related to dismissal from their programs. In the undergraduate programs, the DOMS certificate program,

and the MSS post-baccalaureate certificate program, upon the recommendation of the program faculty, a student may not be allowed to continue enrollment if:

- the student has received a final course grade of F,
- the student's overall cumulative grade point average is less than 2.00 on all course work completed at the University of Mississippi Medical Center,
- the student's semester grade point average is less than 2.00 in each of two consecutive grading periods,
- the student has failed to meet professional expectations including behavior determined to be unprofessional, unethical, unsafe, or illegal, or
- the student incurs an unexplained or unexcused absence from all classes and school and departmental activities for a period of two continuous weeks (*School of Health Related Professions Student Handbook*, 2020).

In the graduate programs, the HI post-baccalaureate certificate program, and the LM post-baccalaureate certificate program, upon recommendation of the program faculty, a student may not be allowed to continue enrollment if:

- the student has received a final course grade of F,
- the student's overall cumulative grade point average is less than 3.00 at the end of the second semester or any semester thereafter,
- the student's semester grade point average is less than 3.00 in each of two consecutive grading periods,
- the student has failed to meet professional expectations including behavior determined to be unprofessional, unethical, unsafe, or illegal, or

- the student incurs an unexplained or unexcused absence from all classes and school and departmental activities for a period of two continuous weeks (*School of Health Related Professions Student Handbook*, 2020).

Dismissal Appeal Policy. The School of Health Related Professions identified several infractions, such as grades, misconduct, and various other causes that could result in a dismissal. However, students do have a policy to appeal dismissal:

The policy for appeal of dismissal is designed to provide the student with a clearly defined avenue for appealing their dismissal if they believe the dismissal was an arbitrary or capricious action, or for other reasons not related to academic performance. (*School of Health Related Professions Student Handbook*, 2020)

The appeal procedure is as follows:

The student must submit a written request for an appeal to the Dean within five (5) calendar days from the time that the notice of dismissal is sent by email. Failure to make a written appeal within the five (5) calendar day time period shall constitute a waiver of the appeal right and result in the sanction becoming final as recommended. The written request for an appeal must set forth the substantive basis for the appeal and be documented in an official letter to the Dean. The official letter of appeal should be sent as an email attachment to the Dean.

The Dean may uphold or deny the appeal, or may appoint a committee to hear the appeal.

If the dean appoints a committee to hear the appeal, the student will be informed of the time and place of the appeal hearing. The student must appear in person at the hearing to present the appeal to the appeals committee.

During an appeal hearing, the student shall be permitted, at their own expense, to have an advisor/legal counsel at the hearing and through all other stages of the disciplinary process. The role of the advisor/legal counsel shall be limited to an advisory capacity only. They will not be permitted to make opening or closing statements, question witnesses, or make oral arguments. The student is entitled to present witnesses or other evidence, and make opening and concluding statements on their own behalf. If the student elects to bring an advisor/legal counsel to the hearing, they must give notice to the Dean within two (2) working days prior to the appeal hearing.

The appeals committee deliberates and reviews the case and will forward its written recommendation to the Dean. The decision by the Dean of the School of Health Related Professions shall be final (*School of Health Related Professions Student Handbook*, 2020).

Forgiveness Policy (Readmissions). The School of Health Related Profession has an established policy titled the Forgiveness Policy. This policy is designed to provide a comprehensive grade forgiveness process that is inclusive for all programs under the school's authority. Since the school has various programs, this policy allows the program director discretion on how to enforce this policy. The policy has two categories: program readmission and program reclassification (*School of Health Related Professions Student Handbook*, 2020).

Program Readmission. Program readmission is defined as a previously admitted student, who was dismissed or withdrawn from a designated program, reapplied, and was reaccepted in a new admission cycle. Readmission into a program requires the student to repeat coursework previously completed. In the event that a student is readmitted, the student shall automatically have the second attempt of coursework calculated for credit earned towards a UMMC degree and

the resulting grade point average. Based on the recalculated grade point average, the student shall have all privileges associated with the new GPA (i.e., opportunities for honors and/or scholarships). Although not calculated in the cumulative grade point average, all coursework attempted at UMMC shall remain documented on the student's official transcript (*School of Health Related Professions Student Handbook*, 2020).

Program Reclassification. Reclassification is defined as a student being administratively reassigned to a lower level in a program than originally anticipated. Reclassification requires a student to repeat previously completed coursework. In the event that a student is reclassified within a program, the student shall automatically have the second attempt of coursework calculated for credit earned towards a UMMC degree and the resulting grade point average. Based on the recalculated grade point average, the student shall have all privileges associated with the new GPA (i.e., opportunities for honors and/or scholarships). Although not calculated in the cumulative grade point average, all coursework attempted at UMMC shall remain documented on the student's official transcript (*School of Health Related Professions Student Handbook*, 2020).

The school also has a policy that outlines the opportunity for students to repeat a course within a program without readmissions or reclassification. The policy follows:

Repeated Course. A repeated course is defined as the opportunity for a student to repeat a single course within a program without readmission or reclassification. This policy shall not supersede departmental promotion policies. The following guidelines are followed for course forgiveness:

- A student must obtain written approval from the chair/program director and academic dean to repeat a course for grade forgiveness.

- Courses are not eligible for grade forgiveness when the previous grade was due to reasons of academic discipline.
- A student must have a grade of “F” to be eligible for grade forgiveness.
- A student may repeat up to two courses for grade forgiveness, and each course may only be repeated one time.
- Although both courses will remain on the student’s transcript, the last grade received will be the grade used to calculate credit earned and the resulting cumulative grade point average.
- Based on the recalculated grade point average, the student shall have all privileges associated with the new GPA

School of Graduate Studies in the Health Sciences

Upon researching the School of Graduate Studies’ Student Handbook, the school does not identify grievances and complaints under the SGSHS Policies and Procedure section.

However, the school provides a statement to explain students’ rights, which is as follows:

Students have the right to complain, whether verbally or in writing, regarding any area of academic or student life without fear of coercion, harassment, intimidation, or reprisal from the institution or its employees. (University of Mississippi Medical Center School of Graduate Studies in the Health Sciences [UMMCSGSHS], 2020, p. 23)

The school provides digital links in the handbook that directs the viewer to the UMMC Document Center for full disclosure of the policy. The researcher noticed that the SGSHS encourages students to attempt to resolve academic, personnel, research, ethical, policy, or non-academic issues with his/her mentor or faculty advisor and/or graduate program that he or she is enrolled (UMMCSGSHS, 2020). The school provides a standardized complaint/grievance report

form that can be submitted via email. The school also provides the institutional complaint link that reports to the chief student affairs officer.

Academic Complaint. The School of Graduate Studies in the Health Sciences outlines that students have the right to submit a complaint or grievance based on academic, personnel, research, ethical, policy or non-academic issues. The school does not define the differences in academic versus non-academic complaints. If a student elects to submit a grievance, he or she must follow the policy that is outlined in the appendixes.

Grading Policy. The School of Graduate Studies in the Health Sciences does have an established policy for grading; however, this policy only describes the process of how grades are determined. The policy outline is outlined in Appendix A.

Grade Appeal. The School of Graduate Studies in the Health Sciences does not have a policy for students to appeal grade discrepancies.

Progression Policy. Students in the School of Graduate Studies in the Health Sciences may be enrolled for an extended period based on the program and hours enrolled. The progression policy for the school requires that students be evaluated, at a minimum, semi-annually by the program director. The complete Student Progression and Semi-Annual Review policy for the School of Graduate Studies in the Health Sciences is located in Appendix B.

Dismissal and Dismissal Appeal Policy. The School of Graduate Studies in the Health Sciences has a dismissal policy for their students, which is described in the Appendix C.

Readmission. The School of Graduate Studies in the Health Sciences does not have an existing policy that outlines a readmission policy for students. The school does have a policy titled *Grade Forgiveness*. This policy allows a student to repeat coursework. The policy states that:

Enrolled students who earn a grade of C or less in a course in the School of Graduate Studies in the Health Sciences may retake the course once, and the grade earned in the repeated course will be used in calculating the student's overall University of Mississippi Medical Center (UMMC) grade point average (GPA). Although the original grade will not be calculated into the student's overall GPA, it will remain on the UMMC transcript. (*School of Graduate Studies in the Health Sciences Student Handbook*, 2020)

School of Pharmacy

The University of Mississippi School of Pharmacy (UM SOP) is a unique component to the schools on the UMMC campus. The School of Pharmacy is an extension of the pharmacy program offered through the University of Mississippi. Students enrolled in this program spend their first two years at the University of Mississippi in Oxford, Mississippi, and then spend the last two years on the campus of the University of Mississippi Medical Center in Jackson. The SOP has specific requirements for academic policies that are developed by a Scholastic Standards Committee. These students are bound by the policies and procedures of two separate campuses. The School of Pharmacy provides statements to acknowledge the separate policies, and students are responsible for becoming familiar with both publications (*School of Pharmacy Student Handbook*, 2020).

University of Mississippi M-Book. One of the documents that provides guidance to students in the School of Pharmacy at the University of Mississippi is the M-Book.

The M-Book, The University of Mississippi Handbook of Standards, is published by the Office of the Dean of Students for the benefit of all students at The University of Mississippi. Every student enrolled at the University is expected to become familiar with

the contents of this book. The M-Book serves only as a complement to the University Policy Directory and both the Graduate Catalog and Undergraduate Catalog. (University of Mississippi, 2020, p. 15)

University of Mississippi Medical Center Bulletin. All students that attend the University of Mississippi Medical Center, including those enrolled in the School of Pharmacy are also governed by the Medical Center Bulletin.

While this book is a compilation of many different policies, students should understand that this publication is not a complete listing of university policies but only a guide to assist students with understanding their rights, responsibilities, obligations, and the operating order of the University. Furthermore, students should understand it is their responsibility to become familiar with all policies governing this institution. In some instances, School of Pharmacy policies may differ from those in the M-Book.

Additionally, P3 and P4 students are also expected to comply with certain UMMC policies, which are included in the UMMC Bulletin. For a complete listing of policies governing The University of Mississippi, please visit the University Policy Directory. (University of Mississippi, 2020, p. 15)

The researcher found that the M-Book provides detailed steps to describe the process for filing a complaint. The university does not provide a standardized form to file a formal complaint. The process outlines that students must attempt to resolve an issue informally with a university decision maker, though the term “decision maker” was not defined. However, the policy outlines that the university decision maker is required to provide the name and title of the person to whom a formal complaint should be submitted. A student is allowed to appeal a

complaint if he or she is not satisfied with the results (*School of Pharmacy Student Handbook*, 2020).

Students assigned to the University of Mississippi Medical Center have the right to submit student complaints; however, they are instructed to continue to submit grievances through the student services office on the Oxford campus. While both campuses have employees who hold positions related to student services, School of Pharmacy students are directed to contact the Oxford campus even when they are taking classes on the UMMC campus in Jackson (*School of Pharmacy Student Handbook*, 2020).

School of Population Health

The School of Population Health (SOPH) was established in 2017, and is the newest school at the University of Mississippi Medical Center. The student handbook provides links to the UMMC Document Center or the UMMC Bulletin for the viewer to read the full disclosure of the school's policies.

Academic Complaint. The school provides two opportunities for students to file complaints. Students are directed to the UMMC Student Comment and Complaint submission link, and the SOPH has an internal policy that allows students to submit complaints. SOPH students are first advised to discuss the issue with the program director. If the issue is not resolved through that channel, students are allowed to file a formal complaint. The school does not provide a standardized form for submission. If the student is not satisfied with the outcome of the complaint, the student may appeal the decision. The term grievance is not used in the policy outlined by the SOPH.

Grading. The grading policy outlined by the SOPH does not indicate that a student can challenge a grade, with the policy describing, instead, how grades are derived. The entire policy can be found in Appendix A.

Progression/Good-Academic Standing. The SOPH does not have a policy that refers to progression; however, the school does provide an outline of what constitutes good academic standing for students. According to SOPH policy, GPA is the one of the main factors that determines good academic standing, which differs for doctoral and masters level students. The appendix provides further details on these standards.

Dismissal. The SOPH's Student Handbook (*School of Population Health Student Handbook*, 2020) outlines standards for dismissal. Students enrolled at the School of Population Health can be dismissed for a variety of reasons, which may include, but are not limited to, unsatisfactory academic performance, failure to pass qualifying examinations, poor research performance, breaches of scientific integrity (e.g., plagiarism, falsification of data, etc.), or behavioral issues (i.e., harassment). The full policy is located in Appendix C.

Dismissal Appeal. The SOPH does have an established dismissal appeal policy for students to follow. The policy indicates that a student has the right to appeal within a designated timeframe after a dismissal. The school's policy also follows the standards of the other schools on campus that allows students to appeal a dismissal to the Associate Vice-Chancellor of Academic Affairs. Further explanation of this policy is outlined in the appendix.

Student Academic Policies and Professional Conduct Policy Design

In the review of the policies, it was found that the institution does not provide a universal template from which the schools can derive their policies for student academic and professionalism. Each school has autonomy in creating its own student academic policies in

relation to the areas considered in this study. The researcher did find consistency among the schools with the institutional option to report a complaint and to provide suggestions and comments directly to the Chief Student Affairs Officer. The researcher also found that this option was listed in each school's student handbook.

The researcher found that each school has a professional conduct policy that is specific to the professional standards of each school. The professional conduct policies of the schools varied by topics, standards, and requirements. The observation is that since UMMC is a professional training school, it is unlikely that a standardized policy would be applicable for the entire institution.

Decision Makers: Academic vs. Conduct Policies

At the University of Mississippi Medical Center, the decision makers for grievances or complaints filed by students vary among the schools. The schools' plan may indicate that the decision maker may be an Ad Hoc Committee, school administration, or the Dean. An Ad Hoc Committee is defined as a special committee established for a particular assignment or objective, and is usually dissolved after the conclusion of the charge or attainment of the objective. Table 2 provides a quick reference overview of the decision makers in each school, which indicates the variations in titles, options for decision makers, and the involvement of the school's dean.

The researcher noted that some schools provide definitions for the decision makers and others provide limited titles. The researcher did find a common themed statement provided at the beginning of the institution's student complaints, suggestions, and comments page:

Current students at the University of Mississippi Medical Center may seek resolution to academic or misconduct complaints through the school's published administrative channels, entering at the appropriate level and proceeding in the documented order.

Students may seek resolution of non-academic or non-misconduct complaints through the appropriate office on campus designated to address the particular concern. (UMMC Document Center, 2020)

The statement indicates that students should seek resolution to academic or misconduct complaints through the school's published administrative channels; however, the researcher was unable to locate such a published listing. The researcher noted that the definitions of those decision makers were not provided; however, peer-reviewed definitions are outlined below, along with the name of the school that utilizes the decision maker in their academic and conduct decisions.

Table 2*Decision Makers for Student Policies by School*

School	Academic Policies	Conduct Policies	Dean's Approval	Procedural Appeals to Associate Vice Chancellor
School of Medicine (SOM)	Varies based on school's administrative channels	Dean's Council or ad hoc committee	Yes	Yes
School of Nursing (SON)	Associate Dean for Academic Affairs	Dean	Yes	Yes
School of Dentistry (SOD)	Associate Dean for Academic Affairs	Ethics or Civility Council with Dean's approval of the recommendations		Yes
School of Graduated Studies in the Health Sciences (SGSHS)	Initiated by the program director of the student's program and approved by a vote of the faculty of that program with Dean's approval of the recommendations	Initiated by the program director of the student's program and approved by a vote of the faculty of that program with Dean's approval of the recommendations	Yes	Yes
School of Health Related Professions (SHRP)	Initiated by the program director of the student's program and approved by a vote of the faculty of that program with Dean's approval of the recommendations	Recommendation for action submitted by the department chair to the Associate Dean of Academic Affairs	Yes	Yes
School of Pharmacy (SOP)	Varies based on school's administrative channels	Professional Conduct Council, University of Mississippi	Appeals must be made to the Council of Dean of the SOP by the Professional Conduct Council Review Committee with final appeal must be submitted to the Dean of the SOP	No, separate from the UMMC campus
School of Population Health (SOPH)	Initiated by the program director of the student's program and approved by a vote of the faculty of that program with Dean's Approval of the Recommendation	Initiated by the program director of the student's program and approved by a vote of the faculty of that program with Dean's Approval of the Recommendation	Yes	Yes

Roles of Judicial Committees

School of Medicine

An Ad Hoc Grievance Review Committee is utilized in the SOM when a student feels that his or her non-academic or misconduct complaint is not resolved properly. The guidelines for an Ad Hoc Committee include that the committee “may not duplicate the function, duties, or responsibilities of any University Standing Committee. An Ad Hoc Committee functions on a short-term basis, has a clearly defined and specific goal or task, and has a clearly defined and stated membership structure” (*School of Medicine Student Handbook*, 2020).

School of Dentistry

The SOD employs an Ethics and Civility Council as its judicial committee. This council is convened in the SOD if a student, faculty, or staff member has reason to believe that a student has violated of the student conduct policies. The researcher found that the SOD provides a full explanation of the Student Ethics and Civility Council, along with a definition of the duties of each participating member in the School of Dentistry Student Handbook (UMMC SOD, 2020).

Student Ethics and Civility Council. The Student Ethics and Civility Council will consist of twelve voting members, selected by the Associate Dean for Student Affairs: two members from each dental class and two members from each dental hygiene (UMMC SOD, 2020, p. 21).

Role. The Student Ethics and Civility Council serves in an advisory capacity to the Dean. The final decision regarding the recommended actions to be taken rests solely with the Dean (UMMC SOD, 2020, p. 21).

Chair. The Ethics and Civility Council will elect a chair annually. It is recommended that the chair have served on the council for at least one year previously (UMMC SOD, 2020, p. 21).

Secretary. The chair will designate a secretary at each meeting to record minutes and write a summary of activity of that meeting (UMMC SOD, 2020, p. 21).

Advisor. An advisor to the Ethics and Civility Council will be appointed by the Dean on an annual basis (UMMC SOD, 2020, p. 21).

Academic Appeals Committee. If a dismissal is recommended for academic or misconduct reasons the student has the right to appeal; however, the Dean has the right to uphold, set aside the action, or convene the academic appeals committee. This committee consists of the last three School of Dentistry chairs (UMMC SOD, 2020, p. 24).

School of Health Related Professions

Academic and Misconduct Complaints. The researcher noted that students can submit complaints internally. If a student is not satisfied with attempts to resolve an issue informally, he or she has the right to submit a formal complaint to the Office of Student Services. Per the outlined policy, the researcher noted that the decision maker is not defined. The policy states that the Director of Admissions and Learning Advancement will address the concerns and submit the resolution of the complaint within a specified time frame. The policy does acknowledge that the Director of Admissions and Learning Advancement may attempt to arrange a meeting with the student to encourage a discussion with the identified parties of the complaint, but does not indicate who the final decision maker of the complaint is.

Appeal Committee. The School of Health Related Professions states in their dismissal policy, that the student has the right to appeal a dismissal decision; however, the Dean has the right to uphold or deny the appeal. If the Dean decides to hear the appeal, he or she has the right to appoint an appeal committee. The researcher noted that the school does not define the role of

the appeal committee, nor does it provide an organizational outline of who shall serve on this committee.

The School of Population Health

Academic and Misconduct Complaints. The School of Population Health and the School of Health Related Professions follow the same outline for their academic and misconduct complaints. The only difference is the assigned person who is responsible for addressing the claim. The decision maker for this school is the Associate Dean of Student Affairs.

The School of Graduate Studies in the Health Sciences

Academic and Misconduct Complaints. The School of Graduate Studies in the Health Sciences also allows students to submit grievances with the same outline as that the School of Population Health and the School of Health Related Professions. The Dean of the School has the right to reject, uphold, or appoint an ad hoc committee from the SGSHS Student Affairs Council as the decision maker.

School of Nursing

Academic Complaints. Within the School of Nursing, the decision maker for academic complaints is initially assigned to the Associate Dean of Academic Affairs (ADAA). The school does not provide the role and responsibilities of the ADAA in the student grievance or dismissal policies. If the student is unhappy with the outcome of his or her case, he or she has the right to appeal to the Dean. The Dean also has the right to uphold, reject, support the appeal, or appoint a consultant to review the matter for a recommendation regarding academic complaints.

Misconduct Complaints. If a student violates a misconduct policy, he or she is allowed to file an appeal per the SON dismissal policy. The decision maker for misconduct complaints is the Dean or an appointed Dean's designee.

School of Pharmacy

All infractions related to misconduct or academic policies are reported to the University of Mississippi for consideration. The University of Mississippi Medical Center is not associated with final decisions made by this school.

Summary of Findings

The policies and procedures found via public information of the University of Mississippi Medical Center student academic policies provided an enormous amount of information and data to analyze. This study provides an in-depth view of the data that could make a significant impact on learning the best practices for themes, patterns, writing, and implementation of student academic policies. Exploring the student academic policies exposed that there are several components to reflect upon when writing student academic policies. All schools identified in this study follow state, federal, and institutional mandates to establish and provide a set of rules for student academic policies. The data reveals themes, such as the variations with decision makers and the use of appointed committees. There were also common trends found in the type of type of policies found for electronic publication. In addition, dissimilarities in the guidelines and the process for students to follow with various student academic policies were noted. Deciphering each school's student academic policy and finding the best practices that benefits the students and the institution is critical to establishing cohesive student academic policies.

Conducting the research for this study uncovered many interesting factors to think through when developing and implementing student academic policies for a collective group of students at one institution. This study is exclusive to the University of Mississippi Medical Center; however, there may be other schools who also have this structure for creating student academic policies. Although all the schools at the University of Mississippi Medical Center

included policies with similar topics, there were differences discovered in the steps and process among the schools. Exploring the policies of each school and the considerations found in this study provides a way for the University of Mississippi Medical Center to apply to set of guidelines for the entire campus for student academic policies; this is imperative to creating streamlined student academic policies. The information found while conducting research for this project will serve as a guide for manuscript three, which has a goal of creating a protocol/tool that will help an institution create more equitable student academic policies.

Manuscript 3: Implementation and Dissemination Plan

Summary of Problem of Practice

The problem of practice for this research project aims to improve the understanding of the student academic policies across the schools and programs comprising the University of Mississippi Medical Center (UMMC). This research helps to shed light on the potential need to review, revise, and consolidate student academic policies at UMMC. When creating policies and procedures, consistency in language and enforcement is important to ensure fairness and consistency in the treatment of students. The research findings from this project indicate a lack of consistency in student academic policies at UMMC. As the principal investigator of this project, I have a passion for this topic and the equitable and consistent treatment of students in relation to academic policies at the UMMC. I am also motivated to create pathways to more streamlined policies at UMMC and other higher education institutions through this research by introducing a protocol tool to provide guidance in creating student academic policies, including necessary variations among programs or schools, such as those based on professionalism standards. This study used publicly available information and documents to conduct a review and comparison of UMMC student academic policies, as presented in Manuscript 2. The research questions addressed the differences and similarities in student academic policies, the design of these policies, and the decision makers involved in student academic policies at UMMC. The conceptual framing for the project was derived from the concepts of fairness and due process in the treatment of students in academic and professional matters. In examining academic policies for fairness and consistency as an outcome of this study, it is also important to note that certain

academic policies among UMMC schools and programs do require customization, such as ones related to accreditation or professional licensure requirements. Specific to UMMC, the research aimed to answer three main questions: (1) What is the process of making a grievance per student academic policies? (2) Who gets to make a grievance? and (3) Who are the decision makers?

Based on the data collected and analyses of the policies, a protocol tool was created to contribute suggestions and a checklist for fairness and consistency in student academic policies. This tool is presented in this manuscript. The protocol tool is specifically aimed at UMMC, but it could prove beneficial for use at for other institutions.

Data Overview and Summary

In Manuscript 2, I began the analysis and interpretation of the data found in policies and information that were publicly available. The analysis began with the researcher identifying the student academic policies selected for this project. The identified policies were divided into two categories: grievance and dismissal policies. These categories also included information regarding progression and readmissions. As indicated in Table 1 below, all schools at UMMC were consistent in that each had an established policy; however, the processes for policies were often inconsistent across schools. Table 1, which was also presented in Manuscript 2, provides an overview of the results from the examination of UMMC student academic policies.

Table 1*General Policy Topics*

School	Grievance Policy Sub Policies				Dismissal Policy Sub-Policies		
	Has an Academic Complaint or Grievance Policy	Has a Policy for Grading and/or Appeals (Test/Final Average)	Allows Students to Challenge Grades	Has a Progression Policy	Has a Dismissal Policy	Allows Students to Appeal Dismissals	Has a Policy for Readmissions
School of Medicine (SOM)	X			X	X	X	X
School of Nursing (SON)	X			X	X	X	X
School of Dentistry (SOD)	X			X	X	X	
School of Health-Related Professions (SHRP)	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
School of Graduate Studies in the Health Sciences (SGSHS)	X			X	X	X	
School of Pharmacy (SOP)	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
School of Population Health (SOPH)	X	X	X	X	X	X	

Summary of Findings and Recommendations

The information from Table 1 indicated that a majority of the schools on the UMMC campus have policies that reflect the same topics, but often applied in different ways across schools. The autonomy given to UMMC schools provides the option for them to have differences in the process and policies for students. As shown in Table 1, four out the seven UMMC schools do not allow students to challenge grades and lack a published grading policy. It is important to note that the School of Pharmacy primarily follows the policies and procedures indicated by the University of Mississippi for the Oxford campus.

The data collection and analysis revealed other elements that need to be taken into consideration when creating processes for crafting fair and consistent student academic policies. The realization that not all student academic policies at UMMC can be uniform due to the needs of the various schools informed the suggestion in this manuscript to develop a template for developing fair and consistent student academic policies, while also taking into account the need for variations in such policies. Namely, the checklist helps to provide a focus on rights, responsibilities, and resources.

Creating the Three R's (Rights, Responsibilities and Resources) to Improve Safeguards in the Development of Student Academic Policies

The following checklist, presented in Table 3, strives to help higher education faculty, policymakers, and leaders to create consistent and fair student academic-related policies across differing programs and schools. The checklist is derived from my examination of student academic policies at UMMC, literature dealing with fairness in the treatment of students in relation to academic and professionalism covered in Manuscript 1, and my professional experience working with students at UMMC.

Table 3

Three R's (Rights, Responsibilities and Resources) for Safeguards Checklist

Rights
Student Infraction Forms/Letters
Goal: To promote uniformity with student communication.
<input type="checkbox"/> Provide all schools with a consistent template to notify students of an infraction.
<input type="checkbox"/> All schools should provide a consistent form to respond to a notification.
Notification to Students
Goal: Prevent discrepancies with fairness and equity.
<input type="checkbox"/> Students' notification should come within 5-7 business days of an infraction/dismissal decision.
<input type="checkbox"/> Students need to be provided consistent timelines to respond to an infraction or notice.
<input type="checkbox"/> Notifications need to come from the same office within each school or a centralized office.
<input type="checkbox"/> Students should have the opportunity to respond to the notification within 3-5 business day of the recipient notification.
Responsibilities
Institutional
Goal: Promote consistency within the student judicial system.
<input type="checkbox"/> State the goals of the student judicial system, and the stance of the institution.
<input type="checkbox"/> Appoint a designated department or employee as an advocate to assist student with navigating the judicial process.
<input type="checkbox"/> Student academic policies from each school must not contradict other institutional policy standards.
<input type="checkbox"/> Create policy names that are consistent among all schools.
<input type="checkbox"/> Publicly provide the mission statement of the fairness and equity to students within the student judicial system.
<input type="checkbox"/> Inform the students of the policies in one format on a comparison chart to disclose any variations among schools.
<input type="checkbox"/> Clearly explain why there are variations among differing student academic policies, if any are present.
<input type="checkbox"/> Student academic policies from each school must adhere to other institutional policy standards.

<input type="checkbox"/> Schools are recommended to have the same or similar structure for decision makers.
<input type="checkbox"/> Provide a hierarchy of the action steps of how decisions are concluded.
<input type="checkbox"/> Provide tile names and a description of the role of the administrators involved in determining a decision of a student judicial claim.
<input type="checkbox"/> Options for the decision makers notify a student of a decision must be the same. (ex. Notification through official institutional method, decision delivered via a meeting (web-based or in-person) with student and the decision maker, or certified mail)
<input type="checkbox"/> Schools should provide the same appeal opportunities.
<input type="checkbox"/> Pathways for decision makers to conclude a decision should be consistent. (ex. dean's decision, designated appointee, or Ad Hoc committee decision)
<input type="checkbox"/> The number of steps for students to complete should be equal among all schools.
Resources
Goal: Reassures to the students at your institution that administrators provide transparency and equality.
<input type="checkbox"/> Communicate verbally and electronically with reminders of the location of student academic policies.
<input type="checkbox"/> Inform students of their responsibilities when seeking action via the student judicial system.
<input type="checkbox"/> Establish a campus-wide consistent informal process for students to resolve issues, before formally filing a complaint/grievance.
<input type="checkbox"/> Provide a set of guidelines for how students, administrators, faculty, and staff should respond during the process of the student judicial system.
<input type="checkbox"/> Add information to FAQ list or design policies describing the circumstances on how the institution may or may not respond to claims.

Goal I: To Promote Uniformity with Student Communication

Policy Names. To create cohesive student academic policies, institutions need to ensure that students are aware of the proper name for the policy or are able to easily locate it. Ideally, to the extent possible, a policy name should be the same, or as similar as possible, across all

schools, departments, or programs for an institution. A student being able to identify and locate a relevant policy is a simple way to provide equity to students through facilitating access to the appropriate policies.

Policy Location and Navigation. Students who experience receiving a notice of violation or performance failure for a school's academic policies are often frustrated, worried, and upset at the idea of having to face potentially negative outcomes. It is imperative that student academic policies can be found in easy-to-access locations and that the step-by-step instructions are provided to help students understand the process that will be followed and their responsibilities in the process. This will help ensure that students have a process that is easy to comprehend and that promoted fairness and supports the provision of due process in the treatment of students to help institutional decisions withstand any potential legal challenge. Ease of access and make policy language understandable are a straightforward ways to promote equity and fairness to students. UMMC is in a transition phase of providing all policies on the UMMC Document Center; however, some student policies can be found in separate publications, such as an individual school's website and student handbook. The UMMC Document Center is the ideal concept: a place to ensure that all policies are found in one storage area for consistency.

Goal II: Promote Consistency within the Student Judicial System

Policy Procedures. Student-centered policies should have consistency embedded within them and their associated procedures. If it is determined that an institution cannot have centralized student academic policies, there should be consistency to the extent possible in the number of steps a student has to complete in each school, department, or program. Fairness to students is not well served if a student must follow two steps in one school and ten in another

school in the same rule or policy domain. An institution can promote ways to create consistency in the steps followed.

It is important that an institution provide consistency in the violation notification process. For example, the same template could be used among all UMMC schools. Students should also have the same amount of time to respond to a violation or academic or professionalism failure allegation at each school. The institution should provide consistent forms for students to submit their responses regarding allegations. Such a form would ensure that each school is collecting the same information from students to help ensure consistency and fairness in how students are treated, ease potential frustrations for students, and aid decision-makers in coming to equitable conclusions.

Decision Makers. The administrative structure of each school at UMMC was found to be different. It would be a difficult task to have consistent decision makers on student academic policies because of this issue. There is also not a centralized reporting office for student academic policies. Schools are allowed to design and implement their own policies; however, all academic issues are under one senior administrator who has oversight of all the deans and each school's senior administration. The Vice-Chancellor of Academic Affairs is the common thread among decision makers; when a student has exhausted their appeal opportunities for a violation, they are allowed to follow the same procedural appeal policy, of which the Vice-Chancellor of Academic Affairs is the decision maker. Although the Vice-Chancellor of Academic Affairs does oversee individual offices in each school, their policies do not require commonality across schools. The lack of a centralized reporting office with consistent policies regardless of school or department potentially impinges on due process and equity in the treatment of students. Although the schools have autonomy in creating their own student academic policies, an idea that merits

consideration is a more centralized process to handle student academic policies and procedures. School administrators could file the appropriate paperwork with this office per their school's policy, and the centralized office would contact the student to advise them of the next steps to take. This office could use standardized forms to notify students when an infraction has occurred. Such a centralized office could improve consistency within the institution without changing each school's processes related to student academic policies.

Goal III: Provide Transparency and Equality

Establishing Student-Focused Processes and Policies. It is important to remember that the driving force of student affairs professionals and the ultimate purpose of higher education is to train the next generation of students to lead. Creating student-focused policies and procedures contributes to another aspect of learning to students' experience. Student-centered policies transition into learning experiences. Student-centered learning, also known as learner-centered education, generally incorporates ways of instruction that modify the concentration of teaching from the institution to the student. When student-centered learning goals were first implemented, they were intended to grow student self-sufficiency and objectivity by pushing accountability for the knowledge pathway in the influences of scholars. Student-centered instruction concentrates on abilities that empower permanent education and self-regulating solutions. Student-centered education philosophy and training are centered on the constructivist learning theory that highlights the students' serious part in building significance from fresh data and previous understanding.

Dissemination Plan for Findings

Upon finalization of this study, as the researcher, I would like to disseminate the findings for vetting. First, I would like to present create an executive summary of my research to present

to other student affairs professionals at UMMC. I would like to present this in small group or personal sessions. The goal is to provide a confidential and personal atmosphere for comments and suggestions from my colleagues. After I review the comments and suggestions from my concept meetings, I plan to present my executive summary to the first to the dean of the School of Nursing for awareness of my plans. After meeting with the dean, I would like to present my findings to UMMC's Student Affairs Council (SAC). This council is comprised of all student affairs representatives from each school. Upon the comments to from the SAC, I would like to present my executive summary to the Associate Vice-Chancellor for Academic Affairs for further inspection and possible implementation.

Conclusion

The objective of this project was to perform an analysis of student academic policies among UMMC schools with the goal to help promote fairness and equity in the treatment of students. This study also sought to provide a protocol tool for higher education institutions, administrators, faculty, and student affairs professionals to facilitate protecting and improving equity, ethics, and social justice in student academic policies. The goal of protocol tool is to promote a student-focused approach during the formulation of student academic policies and procedures. The protocol tool provides guidance for administrators to ensure fairness and equity. The recommendations also provide information to reference a student's rights, a reminder of student responsibilities and ownership, and a guidance to the resources provided to the students.

It is imperative for higher education institutions to provide pathways to due process and fairness in the student judicial process through written policies and procedures that are either standardized among all schools or consistent in nature. It is the student's obligation to correctly seek the appropriate channels to follow processes; however, students should be able to easily

follow simple steps to due process. Accountability is a major factor that higher education has placed on students by requiring them to be self-educated and self-guided through student academic policies and procedures. The data collection during this project showed that standardization is not always feasible; furthermore, differentiation is often warranted and required, such as based accreditation or licensure standards. The requirement of differentiation in particular situations seems to be essential for the structure of UMMC's student academic policies; however, it is vital that standardization and the differentiation requirement blend with the need to provide fairness and equity in the treatment of students.

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LIST OF APPENDICES

Appendix A: Grading Policies

School of Dentistry

The School of Dentistry reports most grades on a 0-100 numerical scale. The numerical grade is converted to a 4.0-point scale for letter grade reporting of A, B, C, or F. Some 9-course grades are reported as Pass/Fail (P/F).

- The method of determining course grades is a departmental responsibility; however, the grading system is to be made known in writing to students by the beginning of each course.
- A grade of 70 or above (2.0 or above in the 4.0 conversion) or a “P” in a pass/fail course is a passing grade given when course work has been completed satisfactorily according to course guidelines.
- Passing grades are necessary for promotion and graduation. A grade of less than 70 (less than 2.0 in the 4.0 conversion) or an “F” in a pass/fail course is given when the expected work is unsatisfactory according to established course guidelines.

The SEPC (Student Evaluation and Promotion Committee) recommends whether a student with a failing grade will be subject to re-examination, remediation of the course(s), repeat of the year or dismissal. A numerical progress grade, indicating progress-to-date in a course, is given when a course continues into the next academic semester. A progress grade does not appear on a permanent transcript. If work is incomplete for reasons beyond a student’s control, a temporary grade of “I” is given. The incomplete grade must be replaced with a final grade prior to the termination of the following semester. The administrative responsibility to obtain, record, and distribute grades is that of the UMMC Office of Enrollment Management. If a student is required to repeat a course, the initial grade and the subsequent grade are included on

the student's transcript, but only the initial grade is used to compute academic class rank and grade point average.

School of Health Related Professions

The grade review process is as follows:

- The student should first speak with the instructor to better understand the reason(s) why the grade was assigned. This provides the instructor the opportunity to review the grade with the student and to examine for possible errors.
- If satisfaction is not found after speaking with the instructor, the student should speak with the program director and/or department chair who will advise the student to submit a written petition to include a copy of the syllabus and any assignment/grading rubrics along with copies of any tests, quizzes, assignments, or other written work completed for which the student is questioning the grade.
- If the student is still not satisfied, the Dean's Office will review the action of the program director and/or department chair to see if the grade being reviewed was appropriately assessed. If, in the opinion of the Dean's Office, deficiencies in instruction are so grave as to warrant such a change, the proper remedy will usually involve alternative assignments or examinations to allow the student the opportunity to demonstrate the appropriate level of competency in that area in order to earn a different grade than originally assigned. The decision of the Dean's Office is final.

School of Graduate Studies in the Health Sciences

Grades for academic credit will be awarded based on a 4-point grading scale. Grades are reported as a percentage, which are converted into a letter grade and reported on the transcript

according to the following rubric: A, 90-100; B, 80-89; C, 70-79; F, 0-69. Under such a scale, a grade of A is assessed 4 points, a B is assessed 3 points, a C is assessed 2 points, and an F is assessed 0 points. A grade of F is not acceptable for graduate credit, but is included in the calculation of the student's GPA. A grade of C is acceptable for graduate credit, but an overall GPA greater than or equal to 3.0 (or 80% weighted numerical average) for a PhD student, or 2.8 (or 75% weighted numerical average) for a MS student, must be maintained.

Individual programs may have specific academic requirements in addition to those stated here. Repeating a course must be recommended by the student's advisor and approved by the program directors and course director. When a course is repeated, the second grade will be used in determining the student's overall weighted average, however the first grade will remain on the transcript. A course may be repeated only once.

In certain courses, a mark of P is given to indicate that a student has received graduate credit but has been assigned no point grade in the course. For example, official credit for satisfactory scholastic performance in seminars, journal clubs, research, and preparation of the dissertation or thesis may be recorded as P. However, in courses approved for the P mark, course directors may assign the grade of F.

An Incomplete (I) may be assigned with the approval of the dean when the student has not completed a course within the enrollment period. Graduate students receiving the mark of I must complete the course work within 12 months from the time the grade was assigned, unless the course director requires an earlier completion date.

A course instructor may change a reported grade only if the original grade was incorrectly assigned due to clerical or computational error, or if a student meets the requirements for the removal of, and I mark.

School of Population Health

Grades for academic credit will be awarded based on a four (4) point grading scale.

Grades are reported as a percentage which are converted into a letter grade and reported on the transcript according to the following rubric: A, 90-100; B, 80-89; C, 70-79; F, 0-69. A grade of A is assessed 4 points, a B is 3 points, a C is 2 points, and an F is 0 points. A grade of C or below is not acceptable for graduate credit but is included in the calculation of the student's GPA unless the course is successfully remediated.

An overall GPA greater than or equal to 3.0 must be maintained in the Bower School of Population Health. Individual programs may have specific academic requirements in addition to those stated here.

In certain courses a mark of P is given to indicate that a student has received graduate credit but has been assigned no point grade in the course, or a course director may assign a grade of F. For example, official credit for satisfactory scholastic performance in seminars, journal clubs, research, and preparation of the dissertation, thesis, or practice transformation practicum may be recorded as P.

An Incomplete (I) may be assigned with the approval of the dean's office when the student has not completed a course within the enrollment period. Graduate students receiving the mark of I must complete the course work within 12 months from the time the grade was assigned, unless the course director requires an earlier completion date as approved by the dean's office. A course instructor may change a reported grade only if the original grade was incorrectly assigned due to clerical or computational error, or if a student meets the requirements for the removal of an I mark.

Appendix B: Progression Policies

School of Dentistry

The School of Dentistry's progression policy is outlined in two stages: (a) scholastic performance and promotion for first through third year students, and (b) a separate policy for fourth-year students.

Scholastic Performance and Promotion: First, Second, and Third Years

- Achieve a grade of 70 or more in each numerically graded course, a grade of Pass in each Pass/Fail graded course, and satisfactorily complete all requirements stated for each course in the syllabus and all Clinical Practice guidelines in each Clinical Practice syllabus, and
- Achieve an overall score of PASS on the National Board Dental Examination, Part I to be eligible for continuation in the third year.

Fourth-Year Eligibility Requirements for the Doctor of Dental Medicine Degree

- Achieve a grade of 70 or more in each course and satisfactorily complete all requirements stated for each course in the syllabus, including all Clinical Practice 675 guidelines in each Clinical Practice 675 syllabus.
- Register and take the National Board Dental Examination Part II during the academic graduating year.
- Students must register for and take the Integrated National Board Dental Examination during the academic graduating year.
- Discharge all financial obligations to this school; and
- Merit a recommendation from the SEPC to the Dean for eligibility to receive the Doctor of Dental Medicine degree. The School and University make no actual or implied

guarantee that any student completing most or all of the required work will be granted a dental degree. Factors other than academic achievement are and may be used to determine the eligibility for a student to be granted a dental degree.

Each PhD student's academic progress must be evaluated at least semi-annually by the Program Director, once at the end of the fall semester and again at the end of the spring semester. After successful completion of the qualifying exam, the students' progress is evaluated semi-annually by the students' advisory committee, once at the end of the fall semester and again at the end of the spring semester. Progression review permits appropriate academic planning for the following semester, and allows for timely responses to inquiries about students in jeopardy of losing federal and/or state financial aid. Additionally, each PhD student's GPA must be reviewed after their first semester of enrollment, in order to identify any academic problems early in the program.

In preparation for the meeting, students will prepare, complete, and/or revise the annual progress review form provided by the SGSHS and an Individual Development Plan (using my DIP or equivalent tools.). Both documents will be reviewed during the annual progress meeting. Upon completion of the meeting, the annual progress form is to be signed by the student, major advisor, and program director.

These elements must be included in PhD student annual evaluation.

1. Review of the student's academic record including:
 - a) Evaluation of grade point average;
 - b) Addressing any incomplete and/or IP courses;
 - c) Monitoring overall progress toward completing the coursework phase of the program.
2. Planning for a timely defense of the dissertation research proposal or prospectus.

3. Monitoring adequate progress in research, including timeliness of degree completion i.e. manuscripts, and preliminary or qualifying exams. At the end of an academic year, the SGSHS will check GPAs of all enrolled students. If any PhD student is below 3.0, or an 80% weighted numerical average, a letter will be sent informing the student and program director of academic probation.

School of Population Health

Good Academic Standing

Purpose: To establish requirements for a student to be in Good Academic Standing in the John D. Bower School of Population Health.

Policy: The Bower School of Population Health defines a student in good academic standing as one who is making acceptable progress toward a graduate degree and who is eligible to register for and pursue academic coursework at UMMC for the current semester. All graduate students are expected to remain in good academic standing throughout the entire course of their study.

The minimum requirements for good academic standing established by the Bower School of Population Health are as follows:

1. A PhD student must maintain a grade point average (GPA) of 3.0 or higher based on a four (4) point grading scale.
2. A MS student must maintain a grade point average (GPA) of 2.8 or higher based on a four (4) point grading scaled.

Individual programs may have specific academic requirements in addition to those stated in this policy.

Student Progression Annual Review

Purpose: To establish guidelines for semi-annual review of John D. Bower School of Population Health student progression.

Policy: Each student's academic progress must be evaluated at least semi-annually by the program director and advisor, once at the end of the fall semester and again at the end of the spring semester. After successful completion of the qualifying examination, the student's progress is evaluated semi-annually by the student's advisory committee, once at the end of the fall semester and again at the end of the spring semester. Progression review permits appropriate academic planning for the following semester, and allows for timely responses to inquiries about students in jeopardy of losing federal and/or state financial aid. Additionally, each student's grade point average (GPA) must be reviewed after their first semester of enrollment, in order to identify any academic problems early in the program.

In preparation for the meetings, each student will prepare, complete, and/or revise the *Graduate Student Progress Report Form* and an *Individual Development Plan* (IDP) using MyIDP or equivalent tools. Both documents will be reviewed during the progress meeting. Upon completion of the meeting, the progression review form must be signed by the student, advisor, and program director.

These elements must be included in each student's annual evaluation:

- Grade point average (GPA)
- Incomplete and/or in-progress courses
- Overall progress toward completing required coursework
- Progress toward timely completion of all degree requirements (e.g., dissertation, thesis, practice transformation practicum, qualifying examinations)

Oversight of student progress is monitored by the degree program and reviewed by the Bower School of Population Health office of the dean. The following documents are to be provided to the office of the dean by June 1st of each year:

1. Completed and signed *Graduate Student Progress Report Form* forms for each student enrolled in the program.
2. Completed *Annual Student Progress Spreadsheet* for all students currently enrolled or graduated in that year.

School of Graduate Studies in the Health Sciences

Student Progression and Semi-Annual Review Policy

Purpose: This policy is to establish guidelines for semi-annual review of student progression.

Policy: Each PhD student's academic progress must be evaluated at least semi-annually by the Program Director, once at the end of the fall semester and again at the end of the spring semester. After successful completion of the qualifying exam the students' progress is evaluated semi-annually by the students' advisory committee, once at the end of the fall semester and again at the end of the spring semester. Progression review permits appropriate academic planning for the following semester, and allows for timely responses to inquiries about students in jeopardy of losing federal and/or state financial aid. Additionally, each PhD student's GPA must be reviewed after their first semester of enrollment, in order to identify any academic problems early in the program.

In preparation of the meeting, students will prepare, complete, and/or revise the annual progress review form provided by the SGSHS and an Individual Development Plan (using myIDP or equivalent tools.). Both documents will be reviewed during the annual progress

meeting. Upon completion of the meeting, the annual progress form is to be signed by the student, major advisor, and program director.

These elements must be included in PhD student annual evaluation.

Review of the student's academic record including:

- a) Evaluation of grade point average;
- b) Addressing any incomplete and/or IP courses;
- c) Monitoring overall progress toward completing the coursework phase of the program.

Planning for a timely defense of the dissertation research proposal or prospectus.

Monitoring adequate progress in research, including timeliness of degree completion i.e manuscripts, and preliminary or qualifying exams. At the end of an academic year, the SGSHS will check GPAs of all enrolled students. If any PhD student is below 3.0, or a 80% weighted numerical average, a letter will be sent informing the student and program director of academic probation.

Oversight of semi-annual progress reviews is provided by SGSHS. In order to review compliance, the following documents are to be provided to SGSHS by June 1st of each year:

1. Completed and signed semi-annual progress form (located on SGSHS website under forms) for each student enrolled in the program.
2. Completed semi-annual progress excel spreadsheet (located on SGSHS website under forms) for all students currently enrolled or graduated in that year.

Please note that the Individual Development Plans will not be collected.

Appendix C: Dismissal/Dismissal Appeal Policy

School of Graduate Studies in the Health Sciences

Graduate students may be dismissed from the graduate program for cause. This may include unsatisfactory academic performance and/or lack of progress, failure to pass qualifying examinations, poor research performance, breaches of scientific integrity, i.e., plagiarism, falsification of data, etc. or personnel issues, i.e., harassment.

Dismissal of a student from Graduate School is initiated by the program director of the student's program and approved by a vote of the faculty of that program. A recommendation for dismissal is then submitted in writing to the Dean of the Graduate School. Following his approval, the Office of the Dean notifies the student of the decision to dismiss and all necessary details related to the implementation of that decision through the student's official UMMC email account. Copies of the notification are sent to the program director of the student's academic program. Notification to the student includes a statement of the Appeals Process and the deadline for appeal. The student, in writing, must make appeal of the decision to the Dean of the Graduate School within 14 calendar days of from the date on the letter of notification.

School of Population Health

Dismissal Policy

Purpose: To outline the guidelines for the dismissal of a student from the John D. Bower School of Population Health.

Policy: Students may be dismissed from the Bower School of Population Health for cause. This may include unsatisfactory academic performance, failure to pass qualifying examinations, poor research performance, breaches of scientific integrity (i.e., plagiarism,

falsification of data, etc.), or behavioral issues (i.e., harassment). Dismissal of a student from the Bower School of Population Health will be initiated by the student's program director and approved by the program faculty. A recommendation for dismissal will be submitted in writing to the dean of the Bower School of Population Health. The Office of the Dean will notify the student of the decision through the student's official UMMC email account. Students have the right to appeal a dismissal in accordance with the Bower School of Population Health Appeal of Dismissal policy. Students who are dismissed from the Bower School of Population Health are ineligible for readmission into the Bower School of Population Health.

Appeal of Dismissal

Purpose: To establish guidelines for appeal of dismissal from the John D. Bower School of Population Health.

Policy: Students have the right to appeal a dismissal from the Bower School of Population Health.

1. Students will receive written notification of dismissal
2. Students may appeal a dismissal. Appeals of a dismissal must be made in writing to the dean of the Bower School of Population Health within ten (10) working days of receipt of the written notification.
3. The Bower School of Population Health Academic Council shall act as the appeal body for all matters concerning dismissal. During the appeal hearing, the student shall have the right to counsel and may present witnesses and other documentation. The decision of the Academic Council will be determined by anonymous written ballot.
4. The dean of the Bower School of Population Health will inform the student of the decision in writing. This decision will be final.

5. The student will have the right to file a procedural appeal in writing to the Associate Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs per the *Student Procedural Appeal for Academic Decisions*.

Appendix D: Academic/ Non-Academic Complaints

School of Medicine

Academic Complaint

The School of Medicine has a published Academic Status Policy. The policy states that the purpose of the policy is to define the rules and responsible entities for grading, promotion, leave of absence, withdrawal, dismissal and appeal. The researcher notes that this policy identifies infractions that could be challenged in an academic complaint.

Non-Academic Complaint

The School of Medicine has a published policy title Mistreatment Policy that defines infractions that could be challenged in a non-academic complaint. The policy states, general mistreatment comes in many forms, including but not limited to: verbal abuse, public humiliation, intentional neglect, assignment of tasks in retaliation, belittlement, and unreasonable/intentional exclusion from an educational opportunity.

Misconduct Complaint

Infractions related to misconduct within the School of Medicine are outlined in the Policy of Professional Behavior for the School of Medicine. The policy states that students enrolled in the School of Medicine must develop the professional behaviors expected of a physician. Students will be evaluated in the areas of attentiveness, maturity, cooperation, responsibility, personal appearance, respect (for authority, peers, patients, and other members of the health care

team), communication, judgment, ethics, honesty, morality, as well as other characteristics of professionalism important for a career in medicine.

School of Health Related Professions

The School of Health Related Professions identifies in their policy that the policy's purpose is to provide students with an avenue to complain without fear of retribution or retaliation. The policy further outlines that the students are entitled to a timely response to their complaints. The school does not define the difference between an academic or misconduct policy. The policy is outlined below:

- The student should first discuss the issue at hand with their Department Chair/Program Director.
- If the issue is not satisfactorily resolved, the student may contact the School of Health Related Professions Director of Admissions and Learning Advancement. If the comment/complaint is made verbally, it must also be followed by written communication sent via UMMC email. At a minimum, the complaint should give a complete description of the situation or incident, the date of occurrence, and the person or persons involved.
- It is the student's responsibility to ensure all necessary documentation is included at the time of submission. Electronic transfer of documents may be verified and the receiving party must be able to open and receive documents.
- The School of Health Related Professions Director of Admissions and Learning Advancement will address the complaint and will submit by UMMC email to the student any resolution of the complaint within ten (10) business days of the complaint being submitted. In order to achieve a resolution, the School of Health Related Professions Director of Admissions and Learning Advancement may attempt to arrange a meeting

with the student, encourage discussion between the student and a faculty member or administrator, or take other appropriate action.

- If the student is not satisfied with the resolution of the complaint, the student may choose to appeal the decision to the Dean of the School of Health Related Professions. If the student chooses to appeal to the Dean, the student must notify the School of Health Related Professions Director of Admissions and Learning Advancement within five (5) business days of the notice of the resolution.
- The Dean of the School of Health Related Professions will address the complaint and will submit by UMMC email to the student any resolution of the complaint within ten (10) business days of the appeal being submitted. The decision of the Dean will be final.
- Procedural appeals may be filed to the Associate Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs within ten (10) business days of the notice of the resolution from the Dean. In the case of a procedural violation, the case will be returned to the point of the procedural issue and readdressed. A procedural appeal ensures that the School of Health Related Professions has followed all appropriate School of Health Related Professions policies. No new evidence or additional information will be accepted.
- A record of all complaints and resolutions will be maintained by the School of Health Related Professions Director of Admissions and Learning Advancement.

School of Graduate Studies in the Health Sciences

The student submits the complaint either directly to the SGSHS Associate Dean for Student Affairs or via the Complaint/Grievance Report Form (*School of Graduate Studies in the Health Sciences Student Handbook*, 2020). The complaint should contain (at a minimum) the date and time of the alleged conflict or action, the reason(s) for the complaint, a summary of the

complaint, a list of other persons who may provide information and any appropriate documentation. The student must also include the resolution or outcome he/ she is seeking. The complaint should be submitted within ten (10) business days of knowledge of the alleged conflict or action.

The SGSHS Associate Dean for Student Affairs will submit by email to the student any resolution of the complaint within ten (10) business days of the complaint being filed. In order to achieve this, the SGSHS Associate Dean for Student Affairs may attempt to arrange a conference with the student, encourage discussion between the student(s) and the faculty member/administrator, or take other appropriate action.

If the student is not satisfied with the outcome of the complaint, the SGSHS Associate Dean for Student Affairs may choose to appoint an ad hoc committee from the membership of the SGSHS Student Affairs Council to review the information and render a recommendation to the dean of the SGSHS. The decision of the dean will be final.

A record of all complaints and their resolution will be documented and the records will be kept in the SGSHS office.

VITA

University of Mississippi Masters of Arts in Higher Education/Student Personnel (M.A.)	2015
Villanova University Human Resource Management Certificate Area of Concentration: Employee Retention and Recruitment	2009
Mississippi College Bachelors of Science in Business Administration (B.S.)	2008
Holmes Community College Associate of Arts (A.A)	2003

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

University of Mississippi Medical Center, School of Nursing Instructor-N439 Ambassador Elective	2016-present
Develops syllabus and overall course structure, and administers all grades	

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

University of Mississippi Medical Center, School of Health Related Professions Student Recruiter	2011-2016
Provided career and academic counseling, planning, and advising to potential students; assists students in the development of testing strategies, writing skills, and completion of applications through seminars and workshops; coordinates applications for financial assistance	

ADMINISTRATIVE APPOINTMENTS

University of Mississippi Medical Center, School of Nursing Director of Student Affairs and Service Learning	2016-Present
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University of Mississippi Medical Center, School of Health Related Professions

Coordinator of Multicultural Affairs

2015 – 2016

COMMITTEE INVOLVEMENT

University of Mississippi Medical Center Clinical Learning Environment Committee	2019-Present
UMMC School of Nursing Diversity and Inclusion Committee	2016-Present
UMMC School of Nursing Scholarship and Awards Committee	2016-Present
University of Mississippi Medical Center Student Affairs' Council (SAC)	2016-Present
University of Mississippi Medical Center, Martin Luther King Jr. Observance Program Committee	2013-2016
School of Health Related Professions, Pre-Professional Development Committee	2012-2016
University of Mississippi Medical Center, Office of Multicultural Affairs	2012-2014
Tribute to Seniors Planning Committee	2012-2014
School of Health Related Professions, Cytotechnology Admission Committee	2012-2013

PRESENTATIONS

The School of Health Related Professions- Resume Writing Workshop	2015
Association of Schools of Allied Health Professions- Concurrent Session Presentation <i>"Improving Student Services Recruitment Efforts Through Technology Utilization"</i>	2014
University of Mississippi Medical Center- Quarterly High School Visitation Program	2011

LANGUAGES

English– native language

MEMBERSHIPS

National Association of Student Affairs Professionals (NASPA)	2018-Present
Mississippi Association of College Registrars and Admissions	2012-2016
Association of Schools of Allied Health Professions (ASAHP)	2012-2015
Society of Human Resource Management (SHRM)	2008-2013