Policy Title: Professionalism and Student Use of Technology

Policy Number: EC.09.01.170912

Applies to: Elson S. Floyd College of Medicine Medical Students

Date: 9/12/2017

1.0 Policy Statement:
It is the Elson S. Floyd College of Medicine (ESFCOM) policy that students use technology in a professional, ethical, and in a manner consistent with the ESFCOM mission and vision. Any communication transmitted using University resources, including Wi-Fi, is subject to discovery in legal matters and is available to the general public.

2.0 Definitions:
Electronic Communication: Refers to the transfer of writing, signals, data, sounds, images, signs or intelligence sent via an electronic device.
Digital Content: Products available in digital form. It typically refers to music, information and images that are available for download or distribution on electronic media.
Email: Messages distributed by electronic means from one computer user to one or more recipients via a network.
Computer: Electronic device for storing and processing data, typically in binary form, according to instructions given to it in a variable program. Examples include: personal computer, PC, laptop, netbook, ultraportable, desktop, terminal and cell phone.
Social Media: Websites and applications that enable users to create and share content or to participate in social networking.
Public: Done, perceived, or existing in open view.
Private: Personal, own, individual, special, exclusive.
Professionalism: Conduct by medical students done with integrity, with respect to their peers, patients, colleagues and all members of the educational, clinical and research communities. Students should uphold the professional and ethical values essential to the practice of medicine, and remain committed to the health and well-being of their patients.
HIPAA: The Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA), Public Law 104-191, was enacted on August 21, 1996. Sections 261 through 264 of HIPAA require the Secretary of HHS to publicize standards for the electronic exchange, privacy and security of health information.

3.0 Responsibilities
Associate Dean for Student Affairs
4.0 Procedures

Professionalism and Use of Computer Technology

Washington State University provides computers, e-mail accounts and other communication technologies specifically to help students meet their educational and professional responsibilities. ESFCOM and WSU computers are tools to enhance and provide learning, communication and information management. Students are expected to utilize technology in a professional manner.

- Students are expected to use the student learning management system adopted by ESFCOM.
- Changing the setup of any WSU computer or mobile device without authorization is prohibited.
- Students must comply with copyright laws regarding software and information.
- All students are expected to maintain utmost respect and confidentiality of patients, faculty and colleagues in accessing privileged information.
- Use of appropriate language is essential. Language that would be considered unprofessional to others is unacceptable.
- Responding to messages that are obscene or threatening is unacceptable conduct. Reporting the incident to the proper authorities including the Associate Dean for Student Affairs, is the responsibility of the student.

Other activities that are considered professionally inappropriate use of technology include, but are not limited to:

- Accessing, viewing or downloading pornographic materials.
- Copying or downloading materials in a way that violates another’s licensure/copyright protection,
- Use of WSU computing resources to harass others.

Students are responsible for knowing and complying with the [WSU Electronic Communication Policy](#) and the [Text Messaging Policy](#).

Improper use of computer technology is considered professional misconduct.

Professionalism and Social Media

Social media channels are powerful communication tools that can be of great benefit to forwarding the mission and the message of Washington State University. These tools can also have a significant impact on organizational and professional reputations. WSU recognizes social media sites, such as Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, YouTube, SLACK, etc., and individual web pages or blogs can be effective tools for exchanging information and raising the visibility of the University.

Therefore, employees and students are permitted and encouraged to follow University social media accounts and blogs that contribute appropriate content about WSU and their work. However, there are rules and guidelines when posting information about the University on both official and individual social media sites, blogs, and other forms of user-generated media.
All students are expected to maintain professionalism when using social media platforms. The societal framework of “online professionalism” is evolving and as such, it does not have uniformly accepted standards for what is acceptable for individuals training to become physicians. However, just as in most areas of medicine, as new knowledge and tools are developed, standards can be defined and then later re-evaluated and adjusted as necessary. ESFCOM intends to help students by clearly defining what is acceptable regarding online professionalism for medical students.

- Patients and society trust physicians with their health and lives. Anything you post online in a public forum should honor this trust and uphold the professional standards expected of you. You will be judged by your professional reputation throughout your career, and your words, writings, and actions as a medical student should engender confidence by society at large.
- Patient data, patient identifiers, and other sensitive personal health information can only be transmitted in compliance with HIPAA.
- Information related to patient care or clinical work should not be shared on any electronic platform that is not approved by ESFCOM for medical education. This is especially true in cases where postings related to patient care or clinical work could compromise patient confidentiality or reveal patient identity.
- Still or video photography may not be used to capture any patient data or patient identifiers (including anatomy lab settings) unless under the direct supervision of a licensed physician for the express purpose of documentation in the official medical record.
- Taking pictures with patients is only allowed if the student, under the direct supervision of a licensed physician and if allowable by rules and regulations of the clinical site AND the student must secure photo release both from ESFCOM and the clinical site and submit to the Office of Student Affairs.
- When in doubt, ask for help. If you are unclear whether or not a post will be contrary to maintaining your online professionalism, contact the Office of Student Affairs (EFLOStudentAffairs@wsu.edu – 509-368-6727).

Consequence of violations are explained in the Student Handbook in the section: Co-Curricular Reporting, Violations, and Grievances Procedures, which is highlighted below.

If an individual observes a medical student not upholding the Professionalism and Social Media standards, they should submit a concern card form. Observed violations of the Student Affairs Professionalism Honor Code may also be reported in writing (anonymously or for attribution), or verbally to a member of the Student Affairs Office.

Students are encouraged to report violations involving possible discrimination, sexual harassment, and/or sexual misconduct to WSU’s Office for Equal Opportunity. WSU employees may be required to report such incidents to OEO; see https://oeo.wsu.edu/reporting-requirements-2/. 
Concerns about Student Affairs Professionalism Code of Conduct that are related to the University Code of Conduct will also need to be reported through the Office of Student Conduct via this form.

**Procedure for Resolution**

A student identified through the concern card or written/verbally to a member of the Office of Student Affairs will meet with the Associate Dean for Student Affairs. At this time, the student may share their point of view. The Associate Dean for Student Affairs may investigate the matter to understand the complexity of the situation. With the information through the investigation and from the student, the Associate Dean for Student Affairs will identify an appropriate sanction that may include a reflection, warning, letters of apology, or report to the Student Evaluation, Performance, and Awards Committee (SEPAC). The sanction will be communicated directly to the student in person with a formal letter summarizing the outcome of the investigation and sanction (if any).

**Appeal Procedure**

If the student is dissatisfied with the resolution from the Associate Dean for Student Affairs, the student may file a formal written appeal to the Student Affairs Professionalism Code of Conduct Appeal Committee lead by elected students to serve on the committee with advisors that include faculty and staff. The Appeal Committee must receive the grievance within five (5) business days of receipt of the decision. The Appeal Committee has 30 calendar days to provide a written decision to the student and to the Associate Dean for Student Affairs.

If the student disagrees with the outcome from the Appeals Committee, they can appeal to the ESFCOM Dean within five (5) business days of receipt of the decision. The ESFCOM Dean’s decision is final.

5.0 Related Policies:
- [WSU EP #4](#) – Electronic Communication Policy
- [WSU EP #36](#) – Text Messaging Policy
- [WAC 504-26](#) – Standards of Conduct for Students

6.0 Key Search Words
- Communications, electronic, e-mail, online, social media, technology, consequences

7.0 Revision History

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**Responsible Office:** Office of Student Affairs

**Policy Contact:** Associate Dean for Student Affairs

**Supersedes:** N/A