

# VCU School of Medicine

## An Informal Process for Addressing School of Medicine Concerns Regarding Professionalism

### Student Concerns

Heightened awareness of the need for embracing optimal professional behavior on the part of students and teachers alike has led to the development of the plan described below. When students perceive instances of personal abuse or some other form of what they view as unprofessional behavior on the part of their teachers (faculty or housestaff), they are encouraged to report such incidents to someone for counsel and possible rectification. Discussion of such concerns with the student's course director (or chairperson) may be appropriate but, in some instances, this route may be considered quite awkward for the student for a host of reasons. An alternative, possibly more appropriate and comfortable approach, is confidential **informal** consultation with members of the School of Medicine Professionalism Committee.

The general process is as follows.

- 1) Any student may contact the Chairperson or any other faculty member on the Professionalism Committee to discuss the student's concern with this faculty member acting as an ombudsperson.
- 2) The faculty Committee member will hear the details of the concern, discuss the situation with the student, and offer guidance as to the relevant considerations associated with proceeding beyond this initial consultation.
- 3) If the student's concern is not easily resolved by the discussions, a modified version of the Informal Complaint Option for specific grievances (Pg. 41, VCU Resource Guide, 2005/06) will be followed. This modified approach is as follows:
  - a) The Chairman or any member of the Professionalism Committee serves as an ombudsperson (rather than an administrator as described in the grievance process in the VCU Resource Guide).
  - b) The ombudsperson, when deemed appropriate, may choose to include other members of the Professionalism Committee in the informal confidential review process.
  - c) The person serving as ombudsperson (possibly with other Committee members) may include in this review communication with the individual for whom a concern had been expressed, if deemed appropriate.
  - d) If not resolved by this process, the matter will be referred to the departmental chairman and the Dean for a more formal action process as is described in the Resource Guide.

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