



UNIVERSITY OF
SOUTH DAKOTA
SANFORD SCHOOL OF MEDICINE

Pillar 1 Student Handbook Class of 2029

2025-2026

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Table of Contents

WELCOME 4

COURSE LISTINGS AND DIRECTORS 5

COMPETENCIES 6

PILLAR I OBJECTIVES 7

PILLAR SCHEDULES 8

REFERENCE PILLAR BLOCK SCHEDULE 8

SAMPLE PILLAR I SCHEDULES 8

DESCRIPTION OF INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS 9

GETTING STARTED WITH D2L 11

USD CENTER FOR TEACHING & LEARNING (CTL) 11

CLASS ATTENDANCE POLICY 11

WORKLOAD POLICY 12

STUDENT ABSENCES DURING REQUIRED ACTIVITIES 13

FACULTY-GENERATED CANCELLATION OF REQUIRED EVENTS 14

WEATHER-RELATED HAZARDOUS TRAVEL 14

HUMAN ANATOMY LABORATORY POLICIES 15

EXAM DATE POLICY 16

TEST TAKING POLICIES 17

EVALUATION OF PROGRESS AND PERFORMANCE 18

PILLAR I GRADING POLICIES 18

LONGITUDINAL STUDENT EVALUATION 19

EARLY ALERT PROTOCOL 19

ACADEMIC AND WELL-BEING SUPPORT 19

FACULTY, COURSE, AND PEER EVALUATIONS 20

CHEATING AND PLAGIARISM POLICY (2.9.2): 21

ACADEMIC HONESTY 22

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI) IN MEDICAL EDUCATION POLICY 22

CONCERN/COMPLAINT RESOLUTION PROCESS 23

GRADE APPEAL 23

MISTREATMENT POLICY 23

FREEDOM IN LEARNING STATEMENT 24

ADA STATEMENT 25

STATEMENT ON RECORDING OF LECTURES BY STUDENTS 26

ACCEPTABLE USE OF TECHNOLOGY 26

EMERGENCY ALERT COMMUNICATION 26

PROFESSIONALISM IN THE CLASSROOM & UNIVERSITY BUILDINGS: 26

PROFESSIONALISM OUTSIDE THE CLASSROOM 27

PROFESSIONALISM RELATED TO PATIENT CONTACT 28

STUDENT AFFAIRS POLICIES 29

REQUIRED ACKNOWLEDGEMENT 30

Welcome

Dear Sanford School of Medicine Students,

Welcome to Pillar 1! The basic science and clinical faculty congratulate you on your admission to medical school and are eager to work with you as you begin your medical education. This initial phase of your medical training is designed to allow you to build a foundation of basic and clinical science knowledge that you may use to successfully transition to the clinical arena and your healthcare career. Our goal is to provide you with the fundamental information and learning tools that you will need to prepare you for success in Pillar 2 and beyond.

The courses that you will complete during Pillar 1 have been assembled into an integrated preclinical curriculum. The course content has been crafted by dedicated scientists and educators to explore both foundational and organ system-specific topics. While you navigate the science behind evidence-based medicine, you also will be learning basic clinical skills from our dedicated clinical faculty. This combination of science and clinical coursework will allow you to acquire the overall knowledge base necessary for you to prepare for the USMLE Step 1 exam, Pillar 2, and your post-graduate clinical training and practice.

During your Pillar 1 training, you will observe that many faculty, staff, administrators, and offices are very invested in your success here at the School of Medicine. Though you may not expect to need any help from us to successfully complete your preclinical training, my request to you is to allow us to help you when you need it.

Our Pillar 1 faculty, both here at USD and beyond, are excited that you have elected to continue your medical journey with us. This journey will require hard work and dedication, and we will be there working with you to help you become the best physician that you can be. Let's get started!

Sincerely,

Bruce Cuevas, Ph.D., MT(ASCP)
Pillar 1 Director
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Course Listings and Directors

Contact information for questions or concerns:

Pillar 1 Course Directors:

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Competencies

To ensure that learners have attained an adequate level of skill or knowledge to complete its MD program, the University of South Dakota Sanford School of Medicine applies the same six key areas of importance to the practice of medicine to its assessment system for students as is found in graduate medical education.

This framework centers the educational mission and program on the learner and what abilities that learner has and can obtain. The six core competencies that are necessary for a practicing physician include:

- Patient Care
- Medical Knowledge
- Practice-based Learning and Improvement
- Interpersonal and Communication Skills
- Professionalism
- Systems-based Practice

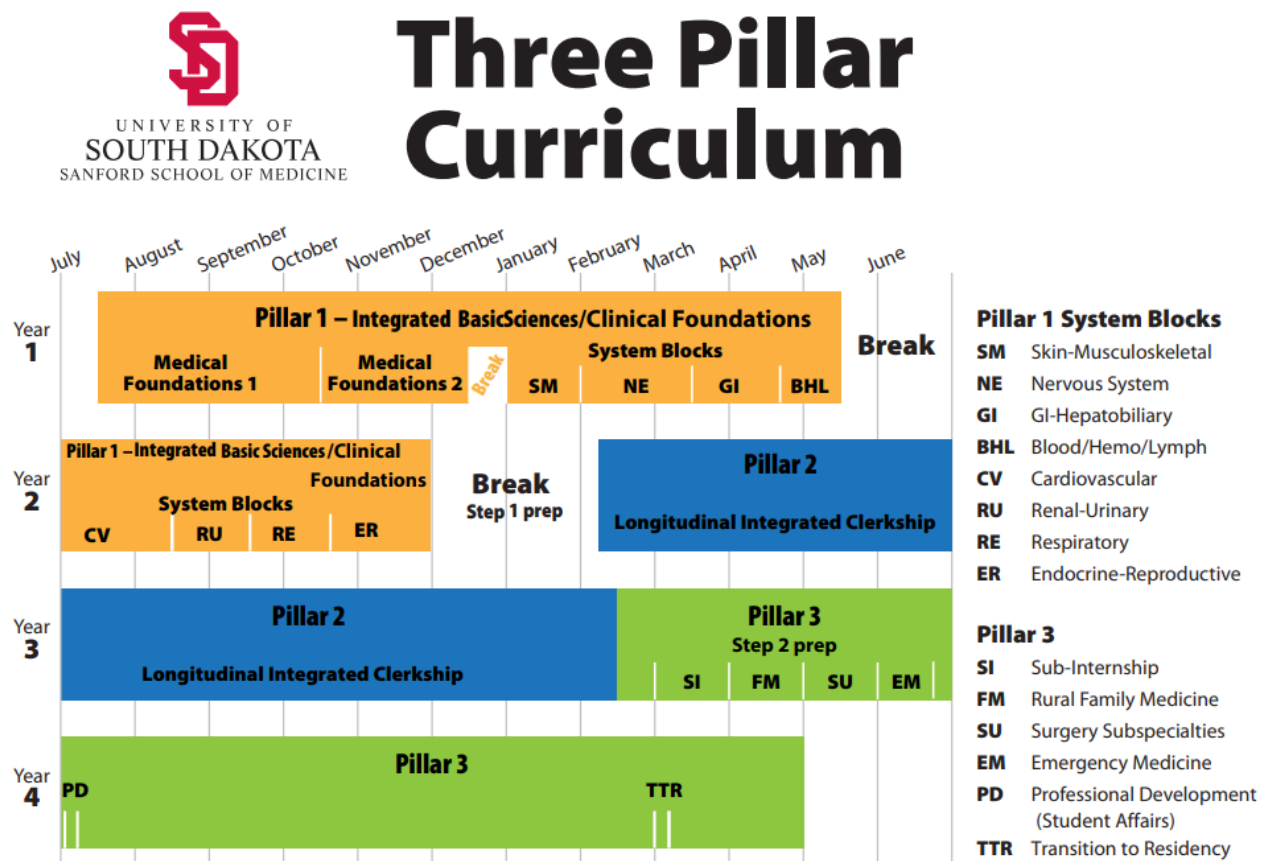
Just like a standardized physical exam uses an anatomic approach, the Medical Student Competencies provide a systematic framework to think about curriculum and assessment in medical education.

Pillar I Objectives

- Equip students with foundational knowledge of biomedical sciences, emphasizing mastery of human anatomy, physiology, pathophysiology, disease mechanisms, and foundational principles of diagnosis and treatment
- Equip students with foundational clinical skills necessary for effective patient care, including medical history-taking, physical examination techniques, communication skills, professionalism, and critical thinking in clinical contexts

Pillar Schedules

Reference Pillar Block Schedule



Sample Pillar I Schedules

Sample Pillar 1 [Calendar](#) – First Year

Sample Pillar 1 [Calendar](#) – Second Year

Sample Pillar 1 [Weekly Schedule](#)

Description of Instructional Methods

Throughout Pillar I a variety of instructional paradigms will be employed. In addition to the traditional lecture format, these include "flipped classroom" sessions, patient-based, case-based, or team-based learning sessions, student laboratory exercises, assignments, and various self-study activities.

a. Types of Learning Sessions:

- a. **Flipped Classroom Sessions:** In a traditional lecture format students are provided with new information in a classroom setting which they then review independently to achieve the desired level of comprehension and retention. In the "flipped classroom" model students are given information to be viewed prior to the classroom session, which then takes the form of an interactive conference rather than a lecture. Conferences may begin with a graded quiz on the preview material followed, if necessary, by a student-led question and answer session. The class is then presented with an opportunity for assessment. Although viewing podcasts is not compulsory, it is each student's responsibility to come adequately prepared to participate in the conference session.
- b. **Problem-solving sessions:** This is an exercise in which students learn new material either individually or as a group. These exercises can vary depending on the content that is being covered and might include, for example, calculations involving buffers and pH, reading and interpreting EKG strips, or completing worksheets related to renal function.
- c. **Patient-based learning (PBL):** Involves learning modules where groups of students will work on issues based on specific patient information. Cases have to be addressed using hypothesis generation, library research, identification of student learning issues, asking for and interpreting test results, and then deriving treatment options from evidence-based conclusions. Points awarded for PBL exercises will be based on each individual's contribution to the group learning process; as such this will be a Pass/Fail exercise.
- d. **Team-based learning (TBL):** Requires students to apply information that they already possess to solve complex problems in a small group setting. Students may be assigned pre-reading material to be completed outside of class time. TBL exercises include an Individual Readiness Assurance Test (iRAT) and a Group Readiness Assurance Test (gRAT). These tests are given before the TBL application exercise to ensure student preparedness. TBL applications can consist of complex problems or clinical cases. The class will work in teams on the same application at the same time. At various times during this process, each team will be expected to give and defend answers to faculty-derived questions. Points awarded for TBL exercises may come from any or all of the following: student performance on the iRAT and gRAT, the application exercise, and the peer evaluation process.
- e. **Student Laboratories:** Student laboratories such as human anatomy, provide practical hands-on experience with many scientific and biological principles you will encounter throughout Pillar 1. Teaching laboratory sessions generally follow the pertinent lecture presentations or group activities. Participation in each of the student laboratories associated with Pillar 1 is mandatory and will be assessed in

the form of short laboratory reports. The format, content, due date, and other requirements for each laboratory report to the faculty member directing the activity. Each report should represent the efforts of a single student, it should be legible and written in complete sentences, using both correct spelling and grammar; points will be deducted if these are inadequate. Abbreviations are acceptable if used in the correct context and when instructors, textbooks, or contemporary literature commonly use them in the same form. If the material you submit is handwritten and cannot be deciphered, the information it contains will be deemed to be incorrect.

- f. **Student Assignments:** All student assignments are to be completed and turned in by the specified deadline unless a waiver has been obtained in advance. The mechanism for this (electronic or hard copy) will be provided by the Course Director. Papers and other assignments turned in late (i.e., starting one minute after the set deadline) will be docked 5 percentage points for each day or partial day that elapses after the deadline has passed. However, all assignments must be completed in order for a student to achieve a passing grade in the course. This policy will be strictly enforced.
- g. **Self-Study Activities:** During Pillar 1 you may be assigned a number of self-study exercises pertaining to material that is not reviewed during class time (e.g., pre-reading for a team-based learning activity; studying via HistoWeb; podcasts, audio PowerPoint presentations). You are responsible for fulfilling the stated goals of these activities and, as such, all material assigned via this mechanism is testable.
- h. **Simulation Activity:** Multiple courses conducted during the third semester of Pillar 1 (Cardiovascular System, Renal & Urinary Systems, and Respiratory System) will include a high-fidelity simulation exercise conducted at the Parry Simulation Center located in the Health Science Center in Sioux Falls. This exercise will allow students to apply knowledge gained from systems courses and any pre-reading provided to enable students to solve a clinical problem. Students are responsible for fulfilling the stated goals of this activity and, as such, all material assigned via this mechanism is testable. The exercise may include interactions with students from other Health Science-related programs (Interprofessional Exercise (IPE)) with the goal of gaining experience working as part of a comprehensive healthcare team. The exercise will be observed by clinicians who will provide a clinical debrief session afterward and a basic science debrief may be included in that post-simulation session.

Note: During any of these exercises comments made by panelists, guest speakers, or patients do not necessarily reflect the views of The University of South Dakota, The Sanford School of Medicine, or the faculty.

Getting Started with D2L

USD Center for Teaching & Learning (CTL)

- [D2L Part 1](#): Introduction, Course Setup, & Content
- [D2L Part 2](#): Grades and the Classlist
- [D2L Part 3](#): Communication Tools and Personal Tools
- [D2L Part 4](#): Assessment Tools
- [D2L Part 5](#): Rubrics
- [D2L Part 6](#): Quiz Security

Class Attendance Policy

The primary site for educational activities in Pillar I is Vermillion. While lectures are recorded using the Panopto system for later review, learning is enhanced by student-to-student and instructor-to-student interaction. Classroom participation and in-person interaction are integral components of the education process for face-to-face courses, and the university expects students enrolled in those courses to be physically present for scheduled in-person class sessions. **The use of video delivery technology (Zoom) to supplement classroom instruction is at the discretion of the instructor, but students should not assume that it is universally available.** Students should also not assume that participation via Zoom meets attendance requirements. Zoom access will be handled as one of the following in Pillar 1.

1. Zoom will not be used for standard lectures.
2. At the course director's discretion, Zoom may be used for clinical lectures, PBLs, and clinical correlations.
3. At the course director's discretion, Zoom may be used during inclement weather (See section 4 Weather-Related Hazardous Travel) or other unforeseen circumstances not listed here.
4. Students are not allowed to stream a lecture without the permission of the course director and the faculty member delivering the lecture.

Lectures, small group activities, and other educational exercises provide a framework for Pillar 1 and serve to direct students' study of the many important topics that will be introduced; **the material covered by any of these mechanisms is testable.** Additionally, many of the non-lecture-based learning opportunities that will be made available (including ad hoc group activities during scheduled lecture time), are experiential and cannot be replicated in other ways. It is the experience of the faculty, over many years, that students who are routinely absent from class do not perform at an acceptable level throughout the pre-clinical curriculum. For these reasons, attendance and participation in lectures is an expectation of all medical students, regardless of where they have chosen to live or any other events scheduled for that day. Attendance is **required** at all other scheduled educational activities (laboratory exercises, exams, clinical presentations, patient-centered activities, PBL/TBL sessions, discussion groups, etc.). Failure to attend required activities will result in a grade deduction as determined by the course director and defined in the grading section. Attendance is also **required** for all scheduled activities in Foundations of Clinical Medicine I, II, and III. Information regarding in-person training during Clinical Foundations will

be provided in a separate document. Faculty will take into consideration any obligations members of the military may have.

While the ability to review lectures online via the “Panopto” system is a useful facility, it should be noted that correcting technical problems (video and/or sound quality; transfer to the archive) is not done by SSOM faculty and is beyond their control; as a consequence, there may be occasions where “testable” information provided in class will not be available online. Note that the “Panopto” system will not be used for any Clinical Foundations activities due to the experiential nature of the course.

From time to time there may be a sign-up sheet to record attendance at the various activities throughout Pillar 1. It is the responsibility of each individual to sign in when this occurs. **Signing in for any other student, for any reason, will be considered a breach of professional conduct and will result in a referral to the Student Progress & Conduct Committee. Without exception, anyone whose signature does not appear on the attendance sheet will be considered to have been absent.** Unexcused absences from any of the required activities within Pillar 1 will result in the loss of any points that were available during that time. Additionally, points lost because a quiz or other assessment was missed due to an unexcused absence cannot be redeemed at a later date.

The decision as to whether an absence is “excused” or “unexcused” will be made by the Course Director and, if necessary, in consultation with the Dean of Medical Student Affairs. Examples of events consistent with an excused absence may include a documented medical or family emergency, a weather-related travel advisory, or attendance at a school-sponsored educational activity; other issues will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis.

A student who is, or will be, absent from any scheduled required activity (regardless of the reason) must promptly notify the Course Director whose contact information appears on page 2 of this syllabus. In addition, the required Pillar 1 Absence Request Form must be submitted. This form can be found on the course’s D2L homepage. For private/personal matters that the student wishes not to share with the Course Director, the Medical Student Affairs Office may be contacted regarding the absence. Although Medical Student Affairs will inform the Course Director of an impending absence, the student must communicate directly with the Course Director at the first available opportunity in order to draw up a plan to compensate for all missed material.

Workload Policy

The Pillar 1 phase of medical student training is a three-semester period that provides students with both basic science and foundational clinical skills training. Each semester includes 2-4 basic science courses with each basic science course running concurrently with one clinical foundations course. Scheduled class time may occur from 8 AM to 5 PM, Monday through Friday, and is limited to 32 hours or less of both scheduled class time and out-of-class required curricular activities. Each regular week of scheduled activities (5 days without one or more holidays) will include at least 8 hours of unscheduled time within the regular weekly schedule for students to engage in independent study, self-directed learning, or review. The workload limit includes only

time devoted to curricular activities and does not include time spent in independent study or extracurricular activities.

Preparing for scheduled learning activities may require students to complete work outside of regularly scheduled class time. These out-of-class activities may include assigned reading or completion of online self-study modules or other preparatory work. The time required for students to complete these out-of-class activities is included in the total activity hours per week and is subject to the workload hour limit of 32 total hours. The amount of time required for students to complete out-of-class reading was calculated based on published estimates of average medical student reading capabilities.

Student Absences during Required Activities

1. PBL

- a. Any student who does not complete PBL exercises due to an **excused absence** must complete an equivalent alternative PBL exercise administered by a trained facilitator to successfully complete the course requirements. Students will coordinate with their regular PBL facilitators to schedule a time when they may complete an equivalent alternative PBL exercise.
- b. An equivalent alternative PBL will be developed in advance of each Pillar 1 Systems course. Although distinct from the regularly scheduled PBL, each equivalent alternative PBL will address the same learning objectives as the regularly scheduled PBL and will allow the facilitator to assess student understanding of the required PBL objectives.
- c. Students who do not complete a PBL due to an **unexcused absence** will receive a score of zero (no points awarded) for the exercise and a Professionalism Report form will be filed to Office of Medical Student Affairs. The student will be required to complete an alternative equivalent PBL activity and will be responsible for coordinating with their regular facilitator to schedule a time when they may complete an equivalent alternative PBL exercise.

2. Unexcused absence during other required events

- a. Students who do not complete a required event/activity due to an **unexcused absence** will receive a score of zero (no points awarded if points are assigned for the activity) for the exercise and a Professionalism Report form will be filed to the Office of Medical Student Affairs. The student will be required to complete an alternative activity and will be responsible for coordinating with the course director to schedule a time when they may complete an alternative exercise as determined by the course director.

Faculty-Generated Cancellation of Required Events

If students are unable to attend a required event that is canceled due to a faculty-generated issue, then one of three actions will be taken at the discretion of the course director:

1. The event will be rescheduled if possible, or
2. An alternative equivalent may be provided for the students that effectively addresses the same learning objectives in the original event, or
3. The points that were assigned to the activity as listed in the syllabus will be awarded to the students if options #1 or #2 are not feasible within the remaining course schedule.

Weather-Related Hazardous Travel

SSOM Medical Student Inclement Weather Policy

The weather in South Dakota can vary greatly from location to location. Thus, the inclement weather policy of the USD Sanford School of Medicine will also vary from campus to campus.

USD SSOM campuses rarely close due to weather. When travel may be hazardous, the course director, in consultation with the Pillar 1 director, will decide if a class is canceled. This decision will be announced via e-mail using the appropriate medical student listserv, usually 2 hours before the start of the first class of the day. Biomedical Sciences courses and Clinical Foundations are separate courses. On split days, each course director will notify the class if their session is canceled or moved to virtual delivery. Official closure of the Vermillion campus by USD overrides course director discretion. In the absence of a campus closing or e-mail cancellation, students should assume classes will be held. The closing of the SSOM Sioux Falls campus should not be interpreted as applying to the Vermillion campus. The SSOM Sioux Falls Campus normally follows the weather policies of the Sioux Falls Public School District. Clinical faculty in Sioux Falls can still present material to students in the Lee Medical Building via virtual delivery if travel to Vermillion is deemed unsafe. Regardless of official announcements, students should use their best judgment when making travel decisions.

Access to class material when travel is unwise:

Most classes that take place in the Lee Medical Building are recorded and are available for review. Classes occurring in the Sioux Falls Health Science Center also may be recorded. The recording system is not utilized for small group activities or patient encounters at either location.

Human Anatomy Laboratory Policies

Student Laboratories provide practical, hands-on experience with the many scientific and biological principles you will encounter throughout Pillar 1. Laboratory sessions follow the pertinent lecture presentations and group activities. Your work in the Human Anatomy Laboratory involves the study of the human body. The following set of rules has been established in the interests of preserving the integrity of individual donors, as well as for the safety of students. **Students should be aware that any violation of these rules can lead to immediate removal from the course and possible dismissal from the program.**

1. White lab coats are required to be worn prior to entering and at all times in the lab. Scrubs are encouraged to be worn. Shoes should have a no-slip sole and open-toed shoes are not permitted. Students are strongly encouraged to wash their lab coats on a weekly basis.
2. The bodies have been deeded to the University by the donors and their families and are making a substantial contribution to the student's professional education and the welfare of humanity, students are expected to be professional and respectful at all times. Any behavior deemed unprofessional will be referred to the Student Progress and Conduct Committee.
3. Students are not permitted to loan their key card to anyone outside the class nor are they permitted to bring in any guests, family or friends, into the anatomy lab. Any unauthorized tour given by a student will be referred to the Student Progress and Conduct Committee.
4. Do not refer to your donor by any nicknames or make derogatory comments regarding your donor's physical appearance.
5. Any information you may receive about your donor is confidential. Student experiences within the Human Anatomy Laboratory, including specific details regarding the dissection and any anatomical findings, should not be discussed with anyone outside of the class. These experiences should not be posted on any form of social media.
6. Photography and video recording in the laboratory are strictly prohibited.
7. Copies and/or recordings of the dissection videos are strictly prohibited.
8. Do not cut or remove any portion of the body unless so directed. Only anatomical, dissected material must be placed in the designated container identified with the table number. Do not place material from one table on any other table.
9. Ear tags must always remain with the donor. If a tag becomes detached, immediately notify a faculty member.
10. Students are responsible for maintaining the condition of the body on which they are working. Keep the body moist using the wetting solution provided at the conclusion of each lab session. Report any suspected mold growth or tissue decomposition to the faculty.
11. Each lab team is responsible for its instruments, atlases, lab guides, etc. Dispose of any sharp objects in the designated disposal container. Mop up any spills immediately. Paper products and gloves should be disposed of in the wastebaskets.
12. Practice universal precautions at all times. Treat all blood and other potentially infectious materials as if contaminated with bloodborne pathogens. Inform faculty of any accidents

or injuries and/or contaminated instruments and areas for appropriate sterilization. It is your responsibility to seek treatment at Student Health or from your personal healthcare provider. Band-Aids, eyewash, blanket, etc. are available in the laboratory (northeast corner).

13. Do not handle the Sectra Table, models, or imaging films with used gloves.
14. Do not touch the plastinated donor or specimens, instead use the laser pointers provided.
15. Students are expected to keep the locker rooms clean and neat. If students wish to add a combination lock to a locker, that combination must be kept on file with the Director of Anatomical Laboratories.
16. Report any suspicious activity or unknown persons in the laboratory to a faculty member or the University Police Department.
17. Formalin and phenol have long been used to preserve body tissue for study and their use usually need not cause concern for gross anatomy students or faculty. Under normal laboratory circumstances, the environmental concentrations of phenol and formaldehyde do not exceed those allowed by Federal guidelines. To minimize exposure risk, the following precautions must be observed:
 - A. Drinking or eating is not permitted in the Human Anatomy Laboratory.
 - B. Protective eyewear and disposable respiratory masks are required when bone saws and/or hand saws are in use.
 - C. Women who are or who become pregnant during the course should inform the faculty and contact their personal physician to discuss their exposure to the chemicals used in the laboratory.
 - D. Chemicals and formaldehyde may be irritants and therefore could cause damage to contact lenses. Students are advised to check with their eye care provider to see if their lenses are appropriate for the anatomy lab.
 - E. Notify faculty if persistent skin irritation occurs. However, it is your responsibility to seek treatment at Student Health or from your personal healthcare provider.

Exam Date Policy

Unless the University is unexpectedly closed, all exam dates are fixed. There will be no student-initiated changes in the dates and times on which quizzes/exams are taken and, with the exception of approved/documented absences (e.g., illness, bereavement, or personal emergency), individuals or groups of students will not be permitted to take an exam at a different time or on a different day. In the case of individual students whose absence from an exam is excused, the exam may be rescheduled at the discretion of the Course Director and any other faculty member(s) involved. The make-up exam may differ in form from the exam given on the scheduled date.

Test Taking Policies

Quizzes and examinations during Pillar 1 will be administered using NBME (National Board Medical Examination) policies and students will be required to sit at designated NBME workstations. Regardless of the testing format (paper or electronic), all books, notes, flashcards and other personal items must be stored in the front of the room prior to the start, and for the duration of, the testing session. With the exception of the computer used for testing, electronic devices with audio/video recording, 3G/4G/5G, Wi-Fi, or other outside connectivity will not be permitted. Cell phones must be turned off during the examination session and are to be stored away from the testing area. The course director and/or assessment proctors reserve the right to restrict any additional items at his/her/their discretion to maintain academic integrity.

During the testing session, you will not be permitted to ask any questions regarding the examination content, but you may ask for assistance if you have a computer problem. If you feel that a question is misprinted or incorrect, you should attempt to answer the item to the best of your ability with the information provided. This is based on the policy that is currently utilized during the NBME Exams.

Testing will be conducted using ExamSoft. To avoid delays and student stress, only computers on the "approved" list are to be used for taking exams. When testing in Lee Med, upon completion of an ExamSoft (Examplify) assessment students should verify the green (upload complete) screen before leaving the room. At the end of each Pillar 1 course, with the exception of Foundations of Clinical Medicine, a customized NBME (National Board of Medical Examiners) will be administered.

With the exception of a gRAT, no collaborative efforts during examinations will be permitted. Exams may contain questions that cover material for which you have been told you are responsible (e.g., Assigned reading, Laboratories, Self-Study Exercises), even if this was not formally addressed in a scheduled activity. It is expected that you will also have a working testable knowledge of the material presented in the earlier courses in Pillar 1

Whenever short answers are required, legible handwriting, correct spelling, and grammar are expected; points will be deducted if these are inadequate. Abbreviations are acceptable if used in the correct context and when instructors, textbooks, or contemporary literature commonly use them in the same form.

All course examinations will be timed, allowing an average of 72 seconds per question. All students in the class must begin the exam at the designated time once the password has been given. No student may continue to study from their notes once the rest of the class has started the test.

Students requesting a medical exemption or academic accommodation from any part of this exam policy must do so via the procedures described in section 16 (ADA Statement) of this syllabus.

Evaluation of Progress and Performance

While numerical grades will be assigned for summative assessments and all graded exercises in each course, the final reported grade for each course will be either Satisfactory (S) or Unsatisfactory (U).

Pillar I Grading Policies

1. It is necessary to achieve a score of 75% or higher on the comprehensive final exam for each course in order to be awarded a Satisfactory grade.
2. A student failing the comprehensive final exam, but who has a Satisfactory (>75%) grade in the course, will be offered the opportunity to take a second comprehensive final examination following a period of remediation (typically on Friday of the exam week);
 - a. If the student achieves a score of >75% on this second final exam s/he will be awarded a grade of "S" for the course.
3. A student who passes the in-house final exam while having a final Course average of less than 75% but at least 71% will be permitted to take the remediation final to demonstrate satisfactory performance.
 - a. If the student achieves a score of >75% on this second final exam s/he will be awarded a grade of "S" for the course.
4. A student who has remediated 3 course final exams will be referred to the SSOM Student Progress & Conduct Committee along with faculty-driven suggestions for improving his/her performance.
5. All students earning a final course grade of Unsatisfactory ("U") are automatically referred to the SSOM Student Progress and Conduct Committee (SPCC) for evaluation
6. No student may receive a grade of "U" in two courses during the first portion of Pillar 1 (Medical Foundations 1 through Blood/Hematopoietic/Lymphoreticular Systems) or in two courses during the second portion of Pillar 1 (Cardiovascular through Endocrine) because time constraints then preclude the possibility of successful remediation. Any student meeting this criterion will automatically be referred to the SSOM Student Progress & Conduct Committee.

The dates and times for exams and other activities can be found in the attached schedule. **There will be no attendance points, bonus points, or extra credit assignments in any component of Pillar 1.**

Grades for each course will be determined according to the following criteria:

S = 75.00 - 100%

U = 0.000 – 74.999%

Please note these cut-offs mean that **individual scores will not be rounded up**, irrespective of how close they are to a particular letter grade.

In all cases, the courses, clerkships, and sub-internships comprising Pillars I, II, and III of the SSOM curriculum will follow the Board of Regents policy with regard to the use of a grade of "Incomplete". The relevant [BOR Policy](#) specifies the criteria that must be met in order for this grade to be utilized: "An incomplete grade may be granted only when all of the following

conditions apply: a) a student must have encountered extenuating circumstances that do not permit him/her to complete the course; b) the student must be earning a passing grade at the time the incomplete is necessitated. Anticipated course failure is not a justification for an incomplete; c) the student does not have to repeat the course to meet the requirements; d) the instructor must agree to grant an incomplete grade; and e) the instructor and student must agree on a plan to complete the coursework": There will be no exceptions to this policy.

Longitudinal Student Evaluation

Course Directors meet regularly during the academic year to discuss both academic and non-academic student performance. During these meetings concerns regarding students will be discussed candidly and in confidence. On occasion, the Dean of Medical Student Affairs will follow up on such concerns and will inform the Course Directors of his/her actions. At the end of each course the Course Director, with input from the teaching faculty, may prepare individual student evaluations to be placed in each student's permanent file. The individual student evaluation assesses academic as well as non-academic performance, such as behavioral issues, class participation, and professionalism.

Early Alert Protocol

The Early Alert Protocol is designed to promptly identify students who may benefit from additional support to aid in their academic progress and/or personal well-being. Any medical student who receives a grade of <70% on any summative quiz/assessment in a course will be required to meet with the course director to ascertain the reason(s) for the deficient performance. Students must respond to the Course Director's request to discuss the deficient grade in a manner acceptable to the Director. **A Professionalism Report will be filed to the Office of Student Affairs if the student does not respond to a Course Director's request to meet to discuss a deficient assessment grade.** The Course Director will advise the student regarding how to improve their performance. If the student receives a **grade of <70% on a second summative quiz/assessment**, the Learning Specialist will reach out to the student to triage the situation and refer the student to the appropriate resource. The Learning Specialist will also notify the course director of the contact.

Academic and Well-being Support

Academic support, including Tutoring, Supplemental Instruction, and general academic skills coaching is available to all students wishing to improve their academic standing. Students seeking such assistance can contact Paula Hawks, Medical Education Learning Specialist (Paula.Hawks@usd.edu), or Dr. Jason Kemnitz, EdD, Associate Dean of Academic Development (Jason.Kemnitz@usd.edu). Self-referral is confidential, and the Course Director/teaching faculty will not be notified of any such meetings.

In addition, free and confidential counseling by mental health professionals is available through the USD Student Counseling Center and Psychological Services Center on the Vermillion Campus. Counseling by private mental health professionals is also available. A complete list of these resources is provided in the Student Professional Support Services pamphlet distributed at the start

of each academic year. In addition, Rebecca Glover, MA, NCC, LPC-MH, QMHP, is the USD Sanford School of Medicine Liaison with the USD Student Counseling Center and is a Licensed Mental Health Counselor who is available for individual counseling (via telehealth or in person) along with consultations to provide more information regarding counseling services and overall wellness. Rebecca can be reached at Rebecca.Glover@usd.edu or by putting in a request on the Student Counseling Centers website <https://www.usd.edu/student-life/scc>.

Faculty, Course, and Peer Evaluations

You will periodically be asked to complete online Instructor evaluations and then an overall evaluation at the end of each course. Evaluations are centrally administered through the Office of Medical Education and are reported to the Dean of Medical Education as well as the Medical Education Committee. These evaluations are very important for the continued quality improvement of your faculty and the curriculum. The following expectations will be placed upon each medical student during their time at the Sanford School of Medicine:

1. Evaluations will be sent out during assessment week in Pillar 1.
2. All evaluations must be completed by the Friday that occurs 2 weeks from the Friday after the student receives them in One45. Each student is expected to complete these evaluations before midnight on the due date. If a student fails to accomplish this task on more than two occasions during the Pillar, he or she may be cited for failure to demonstrate professionalism in the completion of an assigned task by a representative of the Office of Medical Education, using the school's professionalism reporting form.
3. Student evaluations are mandatory and we guarantee confidentiality. Your evaluation comments are expected to be frank, honest, and written in a helpful, professional manner. However, in cases of extreme lack of professionalism (for example, racist, sexist, or other demeaning comments) or for the safety of our community, the Office of Evaluation and Assessment reserves the right to break the confidentiality guarantee. The Director of Evaluation and Assessment is the only individual who will have access to the identity of a comment's author and this information will never be provided to the teaching faculty. In exceptional cases, this process may result in a referral to the Student Progress & Conduct Committee. Comments that are simply critical of lectures, group activities, educational content, or faculty teaching styles will always remain anonymous and you are encouraged to critique all aspects of the program candidly and professionally.

Please remember that your comments are taken seriously and will guide the development of the curriculum for future classes. The following guidelines are offered to help you provide feedback that is constructive in helping the faculty with its forward planning.

1. Be specific about what you liked or disliked about the course content. For example, writing that a lecture was "boring" or "useless" is far less helpful than writing that "the material presented was too complex and not understandable at my current level of education."
2. Simply stating that a course was "too hard" does not tell us that you felt this way because there was, for example, too much material, the level of the content was too high, there were too many student-directed activities or the final exam did not adequately reflect the objectives you were given.
3. Give concrete suggestions on how a speaker may improve his/her style or how the course organization might be improved. Rather than writing "awful speaker" state "Speaker needs

to sloooooooooow down - talks too fast to understand!!!”; give specific examples of what you found to be redundant, out of sequence, or overwhelming during a particular course.

4. Provide positive comments as well as negative ones - everyone benefits when an effort is noted or when a task well accomplished is acknowledged.

At various points throughout Pillar 1, each student will be required to contribute to the non-cognitive assessment process by completing an anonymous peer evaluation form for each of their fellow small group members; failure to participate fully in this process will be recorded as an issue of professionalism.

Weaknesses identified through peer evaluation and methods of remediating these will be discussed individually with the student, but the peer evaluation process will **NOT** affect a student's course grade. However, this evaluation will become part of the file used by the Dean of the Medical School.

Cheating and Plagiarism Policy (2.9.2):

A. PURPOSE

To establish the expectations of student conduct in academic programs, the process for determining when academic misconduct has occurred, and the appeals process when a violation is found.

B. DEFINITIONS

1. Academic Misconduct: means Cheating or Plagiarism.
2. Cheating: includes, but is not limited to, the following:
 - 2.1. Using any unauthorized assistance in, or having unauthorized materials while taking quizzes, tests, examinations, or other assignments, including copying from another's quiz, test, examination, or other assignment or allowing another to copy from one's own quiz, test, examination, or other assignment;
 - 2.2. Using sources beyond those authorized by the instructor in writing papers, preparing reports, solving problems, or carrying out other assignments;
 - 2.3. Acquiring, without permission, tests or other academic material belonging to the instructor or another member of the Institutional faculty or staff;
 - 2.4. Engaging in any behavior prohibited by the instructor in the course syllabus or in class discussion;
 - 2.5. Falsifying or misrepresenting data or results from a laboratory or experiment; or
 - 2.6. Engaging in other behavior that a reasonable person would consider to be cheating.
3. Plagiarism: includes, but is not limited to, the following:
 - 3.1. Using, by paraphrase or direct quotation, the published or unpublished work of another person without full and clear acknowledgment.
 - 3.2. Using materials prepared by another person or agency engaged in the selling of term papers or other academic materials without prior authorization by the instructor; or
 - 3.3.1. Engaging in other behavior that a reasonable person would consider plagiarism.

4. Student: includes all persons taking courses from the Institution, both full-time and part-time, enrolled in undergraduate, graduate, professional, or special topic courses, whether credit-bearing or not.
5. Other capitalized terms in this policy are defined in Board Policy 3.4.1, Section 2

Academic Honesty

Students are expected to demonstrate honesty, professionalism, and integrity in all aspects of their education. This includes interactions with faculty, staff, colleagues, and patients. **Each student has a professional obligation to report any breach of ethics through the appropriate channels.** For students matriculated in the M.D. or M.D./Ph.D. programs, such matters are normally first referred to the Dean of Medical Student Affairs for action. Cheating and Plagiarism fall under "Academic Dishonesty" described in the Medical Student Affairs Handbook under the heading, "The Code of Professional Conduct".

Any student suspected of academic misconduct will be subject to the [South Dakota Board of Regents Policy 3:4 - Student Conduct Code](#) and [Policy 2:33 - Student Academic Misconduct](#). A student who has been found to violate the SSOM Code of Professional Conduct by participating in any form of academic dishonesty will receive a failing grade (U) for that entire course, clerkship, or sub-internship and will automatically be referred to the SSOM Student Progress and Conduct Committee. This grade adjustment can be applied retroactively, even if events come to light after a student has graduated.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) in Medical Education Policy

Student Expectations:

Absent a clear statement from a course instructor, use of or consultation with generative AI shall be treated analogously to assistance from another person. In particular, using generative AI tools to substantially complete an assignment or exam is not permitted. Students are expected to provide credit to any outside resource used, including AI tools. Not doing so is considered academic dishonesty and will be seen as unprofessional academic behavior. This may include examples of idea formation, text, or illustrations along with a description of their methods of how the AI tool was used to develop the end scholarly product. A student should default to disclosing such assistance when in doubt. If you are in doubt about whether a generative AI source (or any source) is permitted aid in the context of a particular assignment, please review with the instructor. When AI tools are used, they should be cited, such as in this format: Tool Name. (Year, Month Date of Query). "Text of Query." Generated using Tool Name. Link to Tool Name. Students are also responsible for misinformation, disinformation, and bias in the use and/or submission of AI if it is used in the creation of a scholarly product.

Concern/Complaint Resolution Process

To resolve any concerns, complaints, or questions regarding a course experience, the student should initially attempt to address issues of concern directly to the instructor or the appropriate decision maker as defined by the chart appended to the university's [academic appeal form](#). Together the student and the instructor should establish a timetable for resolving the issues of concern. If a student feels the conflict has not been resolved, the student should communicate this concern to the chair of the department offering the course. If questions or concerns remain, or if the instructor is the department chair, the student may contact the dean's office for the college or school in which the course is offered.

Contact information for questions or concerns:

Associate Dean: Daniel W. Bird PhD Daniel.Bird@usd.edu

Dean: William Mayhan PhD William.Mayhan@usd.edu

Grade Appeal

Under the Board of Regents ([Student Appeals for Academic Affairs Policy 2:9](#)) and University policy ([Student Academic Appeals](#)), students have the right to appeal such matters as course grades and dismissal from a program. Students wishing to appeal an academic decision must use the appropriate [appeal form](#). The form should be used only if an informal discussion with the academic decision-maker does not produce a satisfactory resolution and the student wishes to pursue the matter further. Appeals must be initiated by the student through discussion with the individual responsible for the decision (i.e., the academic decision-maker/instructor) to question the decision and explain the basis for doing so. The student must have this discussion within 30 calendar days of being notified of the decision that is being appealed. If notification occurs within 15 calendar days before the end of a term, the discussion must occur at the latest within 15 calendar days of the start of the next term. If a student wishes to pursue the appeal following the discussion with the academic decision-maker, they should complete Step 2 of the [appeal form](#) and submit within 5 working days of the discussion a signed copy to the mediator designated on the form.

Mistreatment Policy

The medical learning environment is expected to facilitate students' acquisition of the professional attitudes necessary for effective and compassionate health care. This requires mutual respect between teacher and learner, and the avoidance of mistreatment. Mistreatment, either intentional or unintentional, occurs when behavior shows disrespect for the dignity of others and unreasonably interferes with the learning process. Examples of mistreatment include sexual harassment; discrimination or harassment based on sex, race, color, creed, national origin, ancestry, citizenship, gender, gender identification, transgender, sexual orientation, religion, age, genetic information, veteran status, or disability; humiliation; psychological or physical punishment; or the use of grading and other forms of assessment in a punitive manner. Sanford School of Medicine adheres to the Board of Regents policies regarding mistreatment or harassment as stated in the Board of Regents Policy Manual on Governance (see links below).

For additional information:

Section 1:17 – Sexual Harassment;

<http://www.sdbor.edu/policy/documents/1-17.pdf>

Section 1:18 – Human Rights Complaint Procedures;

<http://www.sdbor.edu/policy/documents/1-18.pdf>

Section 1:19 – Equal Opportunity, Non-Discrimination, Affirmative Action;

<http://www.sdbor.edu/policy/documents/1-19.pdf>

Section 1-23 – Employee-Employee and Faculty-Student Consensual Relationships;

<http://www.sdbor.edu/policy/documents/1-23.pdf>

Procedure for Reporting Student Mistreatment

IDENTIFIED REPORTING: Direct Communication with any of the following faculty or staff members:

- Dean or Assistant Dean of Medical Student Affairs, (605- 658-6300)
- Dean of Faculty Affairs (605-357-1534) or a Campus Dean:
 - Rapid City 605-791-7800
 - Sioux Falls 605-357-1306
 - Vermillion 605-658-6324
 - Yankton 605-668-3065
- Coordinator of Student Professional Support Services (605- 658-6333)
- USD Chief Title IX Officer (605-658-3665)
- Directly to another faculty member
- Submission to the idea boxes located in the Pillar-specific D2L courses
- Submission of the one45 Concern Form located in the student's one45 To-Dos.

Completion and submission of this form creates a notification for the Pillar Director, Assessment and Evaluation Specialist, and Dean of Medical Student Education.

Freedom in Learning Statement

Under the Board of Regents and Regental Institutions policy, student academic performance may be evaluated solely on an academic basis, not on opinions or conduct in matters unrelated to academic standards. Discussion and debate are critical to education and professional development. Students should be free to take reasoned exception to the data or views offered in any course of study and to reserve judgment about matters of opinion, but they are responsible for learning the content of any course of study for which they are enrolled. While the exploration of controversial topics may be an important component of meeting the student learning outcomes in a course, no student will be compelled or directed to personally affirm, adopt, or adhere to any divisive concepts (as defined in SDCL 13-1-67). Students who believe that an academic evaluation reflects prejudiced or capricious consideration of student opinions or conduct unrelated to academic standards should contact their home institution to initiate a review of the evaluation.

ADA Statement

The Office of Accessibility is an integral part of the University of South Dakota, committed to ensuring students with disabilities shall not be discriminated against because of their disability in accordance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, and Americans with Disabilities Act Amendment Act of 2008. The Office of Accessibility provides support to students with disabilities to ensure full and equal access to the educational opportunities, programs, and activities USD offers through the provision of reasonable and appropriate accommodations. Reasonable and appropriate accommodations do not fundamentally alter the nature of programs or lower academic and other essential performance standards.

A student is responsible for the accommodation process and actively participating in the process by making timely and appropriate disclosures and requests. Any delay in the process on the student's part may result in limiting the ability of Disability Services to provide reasonable accommodations. The process includes:

- **Self-Disclose Disability and Register** - It is the student's responsibility to identify as a person with a disability and register with the Office of Accessibility. A student may self-disclose at any time, however, students are encouraged to self-disclose and register before classes begin. A student may contact the Office of Accessibility via online, e-mail, or phone to register, and begin the interactive process of requesting accommodations.
- **Provide Disability Documentation** - A student must provide the Office of Accessibility with documentation to support their request for accommodations. Each student and each disability is unique, therefore the type of documentation each student provides will be different. However, all documentation must be current and relevant, address the current impact of the disability, and illustrate a connection between the disability and the requested accommodation.
- **Request Accommodations** - Accommodation requests are approved to ensure full access to the educational opportunities, programs, and activities of USD. Accommodations ensure access by lessening or removing a barrier to access that may exist. Requested accommodations must be reasonable and appropriate in a college setting.
- **Actively Communicate** - A student must actively and continuously communicate with the Office of Accessibility and their professors to ensure the accommodations are effective. Active communication also allows for accommodations to be adjusted as needed throughout the course of the semester.

If you are a student with a disability, please contact the Office of Accessibility as soon as possible if you want to request accommodations. If you are a student and you suspect you may have a disability, contact Disability Services. Disability Services will refer you to the appropriate agency or organization for evaluations.

The Commons, Room 116

Phone: 605-658-3745

Fax: 605-658-3357

accessibility@usd.edu

Statement on Recording of Lectures by Students

Lectures, presentations, and other course materials are protected intellectual property under the South Dakota Board of Regents Policy. Accordingly, recording and disseminating lectures, presentations, or course materials is strictly prohibited without the express permission of the faculty member or as the result of an approved disability accommodation through Disability Services. Violation of this prohibition may result in the student being subject to Student Conduct proceedings under [SDBOR Policy 3:4](#).

Acceptable Use of Technology

Acceptable Use of Information Technology Resources: While Regental Institutions strive to provide access to computer labs and other technology, it is the student's responsibility to ensure adequate access to the technology required for a course. This may include access to a computer (not Chromebooks, iPads, etc.), webcam, internet, adequate bandwidth, etc. While utilizing any of the information technology systems students, faculty and staff should observe all relevant laws, regulations, [BOR Policy 7.1](#), and any institutional procedural requirements.

Emergency Alert Communication

In the event of an emergency arising on campus under [BOR Policy 7:3](#), USD will notify the campus community via the Everbridge emergency alert system. It is the responsibility of the student to ensure that their information is updated in the emergency alert system. The student's cell phone will be automatically inserted if available and if not, their email address is loaded. Students can at any time update their information in the student alert system.

Professionalism in the Classroom & University Buildings:

In addition to summative, grade-based assessments of comprehension of course content, each student will also receive a formative assessment of his/her progress in the areas of non-cognitive skills, attitudes, professionalism, and class participation. Such formative assessment intends to characterize a student's professional behavior, attitude toward learning, towards others, and ability to participate effectively in cooperative learning exercises with classmates. As future physicians and members of a healthcare team, students must be prepared to interact productively with many different types of individuals, regardless of their personal feelings.

Students need to remember, therefore, that academic professionalism includes both the classroom setting and all clinical experiences. Academic professionalism enhances the learning experience for everyone. In this regard, academic professionalism includes:

1. Arriving for class on time to avoid disrupting the learning experience of others and being disrespectful to classmates, guests, and faculty. Punctuality is an expectation of all medical students, regardless of where they have chosen to make their home location or the activity that they are attending. Students who arrive late (without receiving prior permission) should wait until there is a break in the ongoing activity before entering the room.

2. Switching cell phones off or putting them on "silent" during class. Students with the potential for an emergency call during class should alert the faculty in advance of this possibility and sit near an exit door. In the event an emergency call that must be answered is received during class, the student should quietly leave the room before conversing. It is SSOM policy that cell phones are to be turned OFF during any examination or quiz.
3. Limiting the use of portable computers (laptops, tablets, iPads, etc.) to academic pursuits during class sessions. Appropriate uses include taking notes, following along with the instructor on PowerPoint, with demonstrations and other whole class activities, and working on assigned in-class activities, projects, or discussions that require laptop use. It is easy for your laptop to become a distraction to you and those around you. It is both unprofessional and disrespectful to faculty and your peers to use your computer to access social media sites, check e-mail, play games, surf non-educational websites, or perform unnecessary computer-related actions at any time during class. Students who persistently engage in this behavior will be asked to leave the classroom or the activity in progress.
4. Remember the rules of netiquette and the [BOR Acceptable Use Policies](#) when utilizing computer technology on any USD campus.
5. Actively ensuring safety in all teaching spaces. This includes not blocking primary or secondary walkways with extension cords, backpacks, additional chairs/tables, or other materials.
6. Social distancing (six feet separation) is highly recommended and should be followed whenever possible. However, it is recognized that there will be times when adequate social distancing is not practical or possible.
7. The proper use of facemasks will be required. Additional Personal Protection Equipment (gloves, face shield, etc.) may be required and will be provided by the academic program.

Professionalism Outside the Classroom

Medical students also have professional responsibilities outside of the classroom. In addition to protecting the health and safety of students and patients, this also includes the way the general public may perceive SSOM, its faculty, students, or educational mission. In this regard, professionalism includes:

1. Appropriate and responsible use of social media at all times. Posting information with the potential to violate HIPAA or making disparaging comments [i.e., text that discredits, shows disrespect, or belittles] about SSOM, any aspect of medical education, faculty, staff, students or patients to a social media site (regardless of your privacy settings) will be viewed as an issue of professionalism. As such, any student found engaging in this activity will automatically be referred to the SSOM Student Progress and Conduct Committee.
2. Responsible use of electronic communications. Students are cautioned against sending e-mails to faculty in the heat of the moment as these can often appear belligerent and unprofessional to the recipient. Remember, once sent, the contents of an electronic communication cannot be retracted.

Professionalism Related to Patient Contact

Students need to recognize that the following applies to patient contact regardless of the setting (classroom or clinical). Students will be expected to treat patients who come into the academic setting with the same professionalism and respect as those patients they see in clinical settings. All aspects of patient contact professionalism include:

1. Providing proof of [all required immunizations](#) in a timely manner without the need for repeated reminders.

<http://portal.usd.edu/academics/med/loader.cfm?csModule=security/getfile&PageID=10920&casLogin=1>

See the [SSOM Immunization Compliance Policy](#) for consequences related to non-compliance.

2. Strictly maintaining patient confidentiality. Throughout their medical education students are exposed to a number of individuals in the classroom setting who have volunteered to describe their personal experiences as patients in the health care setting. Each of these discussions is to be treated as if it occurs in the context of a physician-patient visit with absolute respect for confidentiality. This is an important aspect of professional conduct and one that is expected of all students at the very onset of their involvement with patients.
3. Dressing and presenting yourself in a manner that is respectful to patients when in a clinical setting.
 - a. Tennis shoes, jeans, shorts, revealing clothing, sandals, and open-toed shoes are not acceptable dress.
 - b. Strong cologne or perfume may be nauseating to sick patients and should be avoided.
 - c. Body piercing(s), other than the ear, need to be removed or replaced with invisible retainers.
 - d. Tattoos need to be covered in all clinical settings.
 - e. Nails should be ¼" or less in length. Artificial nails should not be worn because organisms cling to the surface of the materials from which they are made and become an infection control issue that can endanger patients.
4. Identifying yourself properly. Name tags and a clean white coat with the medical school patch are required in all clinical settings. Medical students wear the shorter white coat. One coat is provided and students are encouraged to purchase additional white coats to ensure they have a clean coat for each clinical experience. Additional patches are made available to students.

Student Affairs Policies

The following policies can be found in the Medical Student Affairs Handbook provided by Student Affairs: <https://public.powerdms.com/USD/tree>

Mid-Course and Mid-Clerkship Feedback Policy

Narrative Assessment Policy

Clinical Supervision Policy

Student Mistreatment Policy

Procedure for Reporting Student Mistreatment

Teacher/Learner Responsibilities & Mistreatment

Confidentiality Policy (excerpts from Confidentiality Policy signed by students)

Non-Involvement of Providers of Student Health Services in Student Assessment Policy

Required Acknowledgement

I _____ (name) have been provided with access and policies related to the Sanford School of Medicine Pillar I Student Handbook and I understand that as a member of the student body, I am required to abide by the Handbook and all policies and standards of conduct outlined within those documents/items. I understand that I am responsible for reading and complying with the Handbook, policies, general guidelines, standards of conduct and ethics, and any updates to the items held within.

I understand that the Sanford School of Medicine reserves the right to make changes to the Handbook and any of its policies at any time, unilaterally and without prior notice.

Student Name:

Student Signature:

Date:
