

Rationale: Honor Code and Honor Council

One of the six domains of competence in our curriculum is Medical Professionalism, which includes, among other things, a commitment to abiding by ethical principles. A report by the Assessment and Evaluation Committee, submitted to the Steering Committee in the summer of 2010, recommended the institution of an Honor Code and Council that promotes professional and ethical behavior by students. The Steering Committee for the new curriculum endorsed that recommendation.

It is envisioned that an Honor Code with a student led Honor Council would shift the expectation regarding ensuring ethical and professional behavior from faculty enforcement to students and the student body. This expectation of professional and ethical behavior would be the start of our students' transition to membership in the profession of medicine. Students would pledge to uphold our honor code and report violations of integrity by others. The Honor Council, made up of students, would attend to allegations of cheating, plagiarism, fabrication, breaches of confidentiality and other reports of unprofessional behavior. It might also be involved of activities to promote ethical and professional behavior. An Honor Code and Council are only effective if they are integrated into both the learning environment and the curriculum in a meaningful manner. A thoughtful and detailed plan to implement and reinforce the Honor Code and Council policies will be necessary to assure that it is more than words on a page.

The Honor Code and Honor Council should be developed in conjunction with the Office of Education, Student Affairs, faculty, and students and be integrated into our curriculum for the class that enters in August of 2012. Implementation in 2012 would allow a year's worth of experience and adjustments before the large structural curricular change in 2013. All Honor Code and Council policies and procedures must be consistent with SUNY policies and other statutory and accreditation requirements. Implementation of the Honor Code and Council with reliance on student responsibility would reinforce the cultural change we are asking of our faculty and students. It would prepare the school for the 2013 curriculum that asks students to move from passive learners to learners actively engaged in their development as professionals. The Honor Code and Council align strongly with the Medical Professionalism Competency and will help create a learning environment that supports students' development into physicians. Not only does it ask change of students, but of faculty and administration as well. All will need to examine their values and beliefs about students and professional responsibility. The school will not want to convey a mixed message to students, so faculty, the Offices of Education and Student Affairs must work to find a consistent view and policies and procedures aligned with that view.

It is proposed that small group be convened whose task it is to develop a charge. The charge would define the scope of the work, timeline, and deliverables for endorsement by the Dean, the Senior Associate Dean for Education, the Vice Dean for Student Affairs, and Faculty Governance by July 8th so that the group charged with delivering the work can begin work this summer.