

Policy Name: AIMU policy on relationships between faculty and/or administrators and students

Previous Policy: N/A
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Policy Date: November 19, 2017
Effective for a period of three years (till November 18, 2020)

Responsible Office: Office of the Dean of Medicine

Policy Statement

The American International Medical University (AIMU) holds that activities at the College should be guided by written policies and that all members of the University Community, staff, students, suppliers and casual visitors should be familiar with and adhere to all AIMU's policies. AIMU is also committed to:

- a. Establishing policies that do not discriminate against any person on any basis whatsoever;
- b. Adopting only policies that are consistent with the laws of Saint Lucia and with the academic bye-laws of AIMU;
- c. Updating its policies in a manner consistent with most recent and relevant knowledge;
- d. Ensuring that all members of the University become familiar with its policies

Statement of Philosophy:

All interactions between the faculty/administrators and students at AIMU are guided by principles of professional ethics, mutual respect and trust. Professional relationships between faculty and/or administrators and students contain a power differential, and carry risks of conflict of interest, abuse of power, and breach of trust, and professional ethics.

The University is committed to fostering an environment that promotes academic and professional success at all levels. The achievement of such success is dependent on an environment free of behaviors which can undermine the important mission of the University. An atmosphere of mutual respect, collegiality, fairness, and trust is essential to create an atmosphere of excellence and for continuous growth of the institution.

Objectives of the policy:

The objective of this policy is to ensure that all relationships between students and faculty/administrators at AIMU, Saint Lucia are objective, free from conflicts of interest, abuse of power and eliminate the possibility of an inappropriate relationship (intimate, financial or otherwise) influencing the professional relationship between the student and a faculty member/administrator.

Definitions:

Faculty- For purposes of this policy only, all full- or part-time faculty, teaching assistants, members of committees, and all other persons who teach, assess, or supervise research by

students. Individuals who prepare important academic documents and have overall responsibility for different types of student records, supervision and conduct of various examinations shall also come under the purview of this policy.

Administrator – For purposes of this policy an administrator is defined as someone who occupies a position of superiority in their relationship with students. These individuals have a power differential in their dealings with students which can lead to bias. At present in AIMU, Saint Lucia, administrators are the Vice-President Administration, Director of student admissions, accounts personnel, facility manager, IT manager, laboratory manager and librarians. This list can be expanded at a future time with the growth of the University.

Students- Student would be all persons who had been registered for a course of study at AIMU but who had not graduated, withdrawn or expelled from the University.

Inappropriate Behavior-Any behavior that demonstrates disrespect for others or lack of professionalism in interpersonal conduct, such as unwanted physical contact or the threat of the same, sexual harassment or harassment based on age, gender, race, ethnicity, national origin, religion, disability or sexual orientation, cyber bullying, verbal insults, discrimination of any form, or requests for others to perform inappropriate personal errands unrelated to the didactic, investigational, or clinical situations. Various forms of inappropriate behavior are detailed in subsequent sections of the document.

Consensual relationship-Any dating, romantic, or sexual relationship. As there is a power differential in the relationship between a student and a faculty member or administrator these relationships cannot be regarded as consensual as the student may be consenting because of the power differential.

Socialization - Social interaction with the students outside of the University settings such as visiting homes of faculty or students for functions and social gatherings that are not school related. These are potential sources of conflict of interests and can also lead to bias, partiality and favoritism. These are mentioned in detail in later sections of the document.

Position of authority- Includes but is not limited to situations in which the faculty member is responsible for evaluations/assessment of a student for admission, coursework, promotion, financial aid, research and any other type of supervision, suspension, expulsion, or other discipline.

Policy:

This policy prohibits consensual relationships between:

- Faculty, administrators or University teaching affiliates ("teaching affiliates") and students;
- Student employees/student tutors and any student whom that student employee/tutor teaches, manages, supervises, advises, or evaluates in any way; and

- Faculty, administrators and/or affiliates where one teaches, manages, supervises, advises, or evaluates the other in any way

In the event a prior consensual relationship exists between faculty, administrators, affiliates, and students the following steps *must immediately* be followed by the person in the position of greater authority or power:

- a. report the consensual relationship to the Dean and the VP Administration
- b. cooperate in the development of a mitigation plan designed to reduce or eliminate the conflict of interest and the potential for exploitation or the appearance of exploitation or favoritism.

If a prior consensual relationship exists between faculty or administrators of the University and one of those persons is presented with the opportunity to teach, manage, supervise, advise, or evaluate the other in any way, the existing relationship must be reported by the individual in the position of greater authority or power to the appropriate University officers (Dean and Vice-President Administration) as soon as possible and prior to the individual accepting a role that would create a conflict of interest and the potential for exploitation or the appearance of exploitation or favoritism, and a mitigation plan must be developed.

Mitigation Plan

If the conflict of interest and the potential for exploitation or the appearance of exploitation or favoritism can be successfully mitigated and managed, a written mitigation plan will be produced within ten (10) business days of the report (unless there are reasonable grounds for additional time) by the dean and the Vice-President of Administration

If the conflict of interest and potential for exploitation or the appearance of exploitation or favoritism created by the consensual relationship cannot be successfully mitigated and managed, then the consensual relationship is prohibited.

Interactions with students:

Faculty members or administrators who have a personal or familial relationship to a student must have no involvement in the academic assessment of that student. Faculty members who serve as members of the Promotions Committee must also recuse themselves from any deliberation if they have provided health services to a student.

Interacting with students for the purpose of personal gain either financial or otherwise and Unless related by familial or marriage ties staying together with a student/s under the same roof or house is strictly forbidden. 'Staying in the same house' means the faculty and the student is sharing some living areas or spaces.

Faculty or administrator's involvement in students' private affairs, private parties and money related matters is strictly not allowed.

Faculty members or administrators are prohibited from subletting rooms in their apartments to students of the University as this can lead to the possibility of bias

Students must not be invited to or participate in faculty parties and get-togethers.

It is strongly recommended that faculty members or administrators do not entertain students either individually or in groups at their places of residence.

Faculty and/or administrators who were once students of the University will also come under the purview of this policy. They should strictly abide by this policy while interacting with other students including their batch mates. Faculty members should also be aware that the former student is now an employee and should interact with them in an appropriate manner.

Faculty members or administrators should not engage in inappropriate behaviors, socialization or intimate/consensual relationships with students, regardless of whether faculty members have professional positions of authority with respect to students, such as teaching a course, evaluating, supervising, or advising students as part of an educational program. Even when faculty members or administrators have no professional responsibility for students, they should not engage in inappropriate behaviors or intimate relationships with students, and should be sensitive to the perceptions of other students that the student who has an intimate relationship with the faculty member or administrators may receive preferential treatments from them.

Other Behaviors Inappropriate to the relationship between faculty/administrator and student

These behaviors are those which demonstrate disrespect for others or lack of professionalism in interpersonal conduct. Although there is inevitably a subjective element in the witnessing or experiencing of such behaviors, certain actions are clearly inappropriate and will not be tolerated by the institution. These include, but are not limited to, the following:

- unwanted physical contact (e.g. hitting, slapping, kicking, pushing) or the threat of the same;
- sexual harassment (including romantic relationships between teachers and learners in which the faculty member has authority over the learner's academic progress) or harassment based on age, gender, race, ethnicity, national origin, religion, disability or sexual orientation;
- loss of personal civility including shouting, personal attacks or insults, displays of temper (such as throwing objects);
- discrimination of any form including in teaching and assessment based upon age, gender, race, ethnicity, national origin, religion, disability, or sexual orientation;
- requests for others to perform inappropriate personal errands unrelated to the didactic, investigational, or clinical situation at hand;
- grading/evaluation on factors unrelated to performance, effort, or level of achievement.

More details of possible inappropriate behaviors are mentioned below.

Verbal

- Yelling or shouting at a student
- Humiliation or putdown (e.g., disparaging remarks about being in medicine)
- Racial, ethnic, or sexual orientation discrimination (e.g., slurs, jokes, prejudiced remarks)
- Non-constructive criticism
- Threatening to hit or to cause harm to others

Emotional

- Being assigned work duties for the purpose of punishment rather than education
- Having others take credit for students' work (e.g., papers, projects, clinical work, or research)
- Creation of a hostile environment
- Exclusion from formal or informal learning settings
- Threats to one's academic standing (e.g., threatening to fail, to lower grades, or to give a poor evaluation)

Sexual

- Being stared at or leered at
- Unwelcome sexual comments, jokes, innuendoes, or taunting remarks about one's body, attire, age, gender, sexual orientation, or marital status
- Malicious gossip pertaining to sexual habits
- Display of pornographic, sexually offensive, or degrading pictures
- Unwanted sexual advances, including unnecessary physical contact by touching, pinching, or patting
- Nonconsensual sexual intimacy with or without actual intercourse

Physical

- Being pushed, shoved, shaken, or tripped
- Being slapped, hit, punched, or kicked
- Assault with a weapon (e.g., needle or surgical instrument)
- Aggressive violation of one's personal space (e.g. "getting in one's face")

Faculty members or administrators are required to maintain a cordial, professional behavior with learners. While it is important they support and counsel learners and motivate them to excel relationships of a more personal nature may not be appropriate. Faculty members or administrators are encouraged not to accept gifts of a personal nature from students and their family members. Faculty members should have no financial dealings with students. Faculty members or administrators should not engage in any behavior or practice which can compromise their independence or objectivity or which in any way can introduce bias into the relationship.

Involvement of faculty members or administrators in University business matters:

Faculty members or administrators should not be involved in business matters of the University. Faculty members or administrators should not have financial ties with student recruitment agencies. They should not be provided commissions for student admissions.

Providing medical help and consultation to students:

Faculty members or administrators licensed to practice in Saint Lucia cannot charge students for consultation either at the school or in their private offices.

If an employed faculty with license to practice in Saint Lucia attends any students with emergency health problems in the school premises they cannot charge the students for the same.

Social media accounts of faculty or administrators:

Faculty members and administrators should ensure that photos and posts on their social media accounts do not have the potential to be regarded by external accrediting agencies as constituting

conflict of interest with regard to relationship with students. Faculty members must refrain from negative posts about the University, other faculty members and students on their social media and other web platforms

Students should not be included in the faculty or administrator's personal social media accounts. They can only be included in a separate dedicated official account or group.

Noncompliance with the Policy:

Any credible allegations of a faculty members or administrators failure to comply with this policy obligate the Dean and/or Vice President Administration to initiate a prompt and thorough investigation to determine whether the allegations are true. When it is concluded that any form of inappropriate behavior or a faculty/administrator-student intimate/inappropriate relationship exists, the Disciplinary Committee, the University administration and the VP Administration shall impose disciplinary action against the parties involved.

Disciplinary Action:

Individuals who violated this Policy shall be subject to disciplinary actions ranging from verbal or written warnings, to suspension, dismissal, or termination. Individuals who knowingly make false allegations that any form of inappropriate behavior or a faculty/administrator-student intimate/inappropriate relationship exists shall be subject to the same disciplinary actions.

Procedure

1. Who can report: Anyone in the Institutional setting
2. Report to whom: In writing to Dean and or Vice-President Administration.
3. Dean/VP informs the individual against whom an allegation has been made within 3 working days
4. Alleged individual/s responds in writing within 5 working days.
5. The individual meets the Dean and/or VP Administration after the response
6. Dean/VP determines the degree of offense and determines:
 - Give warning if the allegations are mild
 - If the allegations are of serious nature the Dean and/or VP will inform the Grievance/Disciplinary committee to investigate further. If the Dean and/or VP Admin determine the nature of the offense is very serious, they can immediately suspend the individual with pay until further notice after consulting with the Board of Governors. (Mentioned in the disciplinary committee procedures)
7. If the Disciplinary committee finds the alleged guilty of the serious allegations, it will inform the Management Council Chair and the Board of Governors in favor of suspension for a period of time without pay and or dismissal of the alleged from service.
8. If the alleged individual is not satisfied with the decision of the disciplinary committee she/he or they have the right to appeal to the board of governors.

This policy consists of six (6) pages.