MUSC Student Policy for Substance Abuse Prevention and Intervention

I. Policy

This policy is applicable to all students enrolled in credit courses in a degree-granting program at the Medical University of South Carolina (MUSC).

MUSC expects students to adhere to the policies contained herein regarding the consumption and serving of alcoholic beverages on University property and at University events as defined in the Medical University of South Carolina Alcoholic Beverage Serving Policy. MUSC also expects students who are of legal drinking age in the state of South Carolina (i.e., 21 years of age or older) to act responsibly on the occasions when they choose to consume alcoholic beverages.

The University adheres to the provisions of the Drug-Free Workplace Act of 1988 and as such intends to maintain a substance free workplace. See MUSC’s Human Resources Management Drug-Free Workplace Policy for additional information. Individuals impaired by the use of alcohol and drugs are harmful to themselves, the University’s mission, the treatment of patients, and the well being of co-workers, students, and visitors.

The University prohibits the illegal use or the abusive use of alcohol or other legal drugs on University property or at events that utilize the University's name. In accordance with state and federal laws, MUSC also strictly prohibits the use, possession, manufacture, sale, or distribution of illegal drugs or drug paraphernalia by any MUSC student. Students are expected to use only those prescription medications that are prescribed for them within the confines of a provider/patient relationship. Students are prohibited from using prescription medications not prescribed for them.

MUSC recognizes that alcohol and other drug abuse is a preventable and treatable condition and acknowledges that, as an institution dedicated to the healing arts, we have the responsibility to facilitate prevention activities and offer treatment to students who suffer from alcohol and other drug abuse.

MUSC encourages all impaired students to seek help voluntarily and favors the earliest possible intervention. MUSC will make treatment and referral services available to students.

MUSC respects the right to confidentiality of recovering students and will assist them to continue their education and employment. However, MUSC also respects the rights of patients and others and seeks to protect them from the harm that impaired students may cause. Hence, impaired students who fail to cooperate with appropriate evaluation and monitoring are subject to disciplinary actions up to and including dismissal as deemed appropriate by the Dean of the student's college.
In order to ensure the fulfillment of these institutional policies, guidelines and procedures will be implemented in each of three areas: I. Prevention, II. Intervention, and III. Legal Issues.

II. Guidelines and Procedures:

I. Prevention:

Recognizing the importance of preventive aspects of alcohol and other drug abuse education, MUSC will implement the following initiatives:

A. Curriculum: All colleges will recognize the importance of teaching about alcohol and other drug abuse. As deemed appropriate by the curriculum committee of each college or its designee, information about alcohol and/or drug abuse will be conveyed in courses required for graduation from degree-granting programs.

B. Orientation: Each year at each college-based orientation, the Dean of the college or his/her designee (e.g., the Associate Dean for Student Affairs or another designated faculty member who will be referred to in this policy as the Dean’s designee) will inform new students about the availability of MUSC resources (viz., him/herself, the Counseling and Psychological Services Center, the Center for Drug and Alcohol Programs in the Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences) for students concerned about alcohol and other drug use and abuse. Students will also be provided information about MUSC’s Student Policy for Substance Abuse Prevention and Intervention and regulations that govern the serving of alcoholic beverages at events which utilize the University’s name. This information will be provided in the University Student Handbook published online by the Office of Student Programs under the auspices of the Associate Provost for Education and Student Life.

C. Wellness: Students will be encouraged to develop healthy lifestyles through the availability of exercise facilities, sports programs, and other health-promoting activities at the Harper Student Wellness Center. Information about the Harper Student Wellness Center programs will be provided at each college-specific orientation for new students.

D. Social Activities: Any event for MUSC students that utilizes the University’s name must serve food and have non-alcoholic beverages available if alcohol is served. Any advertisement placed on the MUSC campus that indicates that alcoholic beverages will be served at an event that utilizes the University’s name must also indicate that non-alcoholic beverages and food will be served. In addition, any event that uses MUSC’s name must meet the guidelines specified in the Alcoholic Beverage Serving Policy for Students.

E. Other Prevention Activities: The MUSC Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences Center for Drug and Alcohol Programs (CDAP) will serve as a resource and help coordinate educational presentations about alcohol and other drug use and abuse for students if requested.

II. Intervention

A. Early Identification:

1. In the spirit of prevention and early intervention, any member of the University community who is concerned that an MUSC student’s use of alcohol or other drugs may be causing the student to be impaired (see Definition of Impairment in Section II.B. below) is encouraged to report his/her concern to the Director of the MUSC Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) Center. The Director of CAPS will contact the identified student and request he/she present to CAPS for evaluation. (See section II.C.7 for additional details) If
the Director of CAPS ascertains that the identified student is impaired, Steps 2 - 12 as outlined in Section II.C. ("Intervention ") of this policy will be implemented.

2. An MUSC student who is arrested or charged with a misdemeanor or other crime involving the use, possession, manufacture, sale, or distribution of alcohol or any other drug, is required to report this information to the Dean or the Dean’s designee in his/her college within two university/college business days of the offense. Please refer to the full Arrest Policy in the Student Handbook for guidelines and procedures. The Dean or his/her designee will take whatever action he/she deems appropriate. These actions include, but are not limited to, initiation of an intervention as outlined in Section II.C. ("Intervention") of this policy, suspension of the student, or dismissal of the student. Students who fail to report violations or charges will also be subject to conditional study, suspension or expulsion should this failure be later discovered.

3. An MUSC student who receives a positive drug screen as a result of an MUSC pre-employment (including work-study) or clinical rotation requirement must insure that his college Dean or Dean’s designee is informed. With the exception of those in CAPS and Student Health who are in a confidential patient/provider relationship, if a university staff is informed of the positive drug test, he/she will notify the student’s Dean’s Office. The Dean or designated official will interview the student and take whatever action he/she deems appropriate, including removal from clinical rotations. These actions include, but are not limited to, initiation of an intervention as outlined in Steps 2 - 12 in Section II.C. ("Intervention ") of this policy. The student’s ability to complete his/her course of study may be impacted.

4. Refusal by a student to submit to testing will result in removal from educational activities and may result in dismissal.

B. Definition of Impairment: An MUSC student who meets any one of the following criteria will be identified as impaired:

1. The student exhibits impaired professional (i.e., academic, clinical and/or research) performance in association with the observed or alleged improper use of alcohol or drugs.

2. The student poses a danger to himself/herself or others or displays behavior that is disruptive to the goals of the student’s academic, clinical and/or research programs in association with the observed or alleged improper use of alcohol or drugs.

3. The student is, or appears to the reasonable observer to be, under the influence of alcohol and/or other drugs in the classroom, clinical, or other campus or professional setting.

4. The student is discovered using or is found to have possession of any illicit substance on University property or at an event which utilizes the University’s name.

5. The student is arrested or convicted of violating any federal or state law related to the student’s use, possession, manufacture, sale, or distribution of alcohol or other drugs.

C. Intervention

1. A student who voluntarily refers him/herself to the MUSC Student Health program or the MUSC Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) Center for evaluation or treatment of problems related to alcohol or other drug use or abuse will retain his/her rights to confidentiality, in accordance with state and federal laws.
2. If an MUSC student, faculty member, or any other member of the MUSC community is concerned that a student may be impaired (see definition of impairment in II.B. above) he/she is encouraged to call CAPS to discuss his/her concerns. He/she is also encouraged to: 1) refer the student to CAPS for voluntary evaluation and/or treatment, and 2) inform CAPS of the name of the student being referred. The referring individual is encouraged to inform the student’s Dean’s Office and the Dean’s Office will take appropriate action, including determining whether to contact the student. If the Dean’s Office contacts the student they should ask the student to sign a release of information form authorizing CAPS staff to provide information to the Deans Office as indicated on the form. CAPS will attempt to contact the referred student to schedule an evaluation. A student who is referred for voluntary contact with CAPS will retain all rights to confidentiality accorded students who self-refer to CAPS with the exception that CAPS will inform the Dean’s Office that the student reported or failed to report for evaluation.

3. If an MUSC student, faculty member, or any other member of the MUSC community is so concerned about an allegedly impaired student that he/she believes that the situation warrants a mandated referral to CAPS, he/she may elect to: 1) discuss his/her concerns with a clinician at CAPS, 2) seek a consultation from the MUSC Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences, or 3) call 911 if the student appears to be an imminent danger to self or others.

The referring individual should contact the Dean or the Dean’s designee in the student’s college to request a mandated evaluation and/or monitoring (see II.C.4-10. below for a description of the mandated evaluation and monitoring process, especially II.C.7.). A request for a mandated evaluation should be implemented when the allegedly impaired student is thought to be at risk for self-harm or harm to others. Examples include but are not limited to suicidal ideation or threats of self-harm, threats toward others, negative impact on patient care or safety, a significant impairment in the student’s academic performance, or other threats to the student’s physical or psychological well-being. The Dean or his/her designee would then determine the appropriate course of action to include a possible mandated evaluation and monitoring at CAPS, or some other type of intervention (e.g., removal from classes or a clinical rotation, leave of absence, suspension, or dismissal. These actions will henceforth be referred to in this policy as “an appropriate disciplinary action.”).

4. If the Dean or his/her designee elects to mandate an evaluation or monitoring at CAPS, he/she should request that the student sign a release of information form authorizing CAPS staff to share specified information with the referring individual (see CAPS Web site for authorization form). If a mandated student declines to sign a release of information form, the Dean or his/her designee will determine an appropriate course of action, which includes but is not limited to a mandated assessment at CAPS with no authorization form in place, or an appropriate disciplinary action.

5. The Dean or his/her designee will inform CAPS of the mandated student’s name and provide background information regarding the circumstances that led to the mandated assessment. The Dean or his/her designee should inform CAPS of the nature of the referral question.

6. When an allegedly impaired student is referred or mandated for evaluation or monitoring at CAPS, the student will be provided with a copy of the MUSC Student Policy for Substance Abuse Prevention and Intervention.
7. At the time an allegedly impaired student is referred or mandated to CAPS by a member of the University community for an evaluation or monitoring, this evaluation will include assessment of the student's substance use, identification of actions needed to better evaluate the student's substance use, and, if indicated, formulation of treatment recommendations and/or a monitoring contract.

8. If a student is mandated for assessment at CAPS and does not report for the assessment, CAPS personnel will attempt to contact the student. If CAPS cannot contact the student or he/she declines to complete an assessment at CAPS, CAPS personnel (even in the absence of a signed release of information form) will inform the referring Dean or his/her designee. CAPS will also take reasonable steps to inform the student that his/her Dean will be informed of the student's nonparticipation in the mandated assessment or monitoring.

9. If after an initial assessment at CAPS the mandated student continues to decline to sign a release of information form allowing specified information to be shared with the referring Dean or his/her designee, CAPS personnel will inform the referring Dean or his/her designee that the student has declined to sign a release of information form. The Dean or his/her designee will determine an appropriate course of action that could include an appropriate disciplinary action.

10. If a Dean or his/her designee is informed by CAPS that an allegedly impaired student has failed to comply with a recommended or mandated evaluation or that an impaired student has failed to comply with a monitoring contract, the Dean or his/her designee will take whatever action he/she believes is appropriate. Potential actions include but are not limited to, mandating or re-mandating evaluation or monitoring, or an appropriate disciplinary action.

11. If a Dean or his/her designee elects to place the student on an involuntary leave of absence, suspend the student, or invoke some other action which interrupts the student's academic progress, prior to deciding whether to readmit the student the Dean or his/her designee will mandate an evaluation at CAPS to include treatment recommendations and require the student to sign a release of information form allowing CAPS to share with the Dean or his/her designee CAPS' assessment regarding the student's suitability for returning to his/her academic work, CAPS' treatment recommendations and the information specified by the Dean or his/her designee. If the student declines to sign the release of information form, the Dean will take an appropriate course of action, up to expelling the student.

12. If an MUSC student is arrested for or convicted of violating a state or federal law involving the use, possession, manufacture, or sale of alcohol or other drugs, the student must satisfy the requirements of the legal system. If suspension or expulsion had been recommended by MUSC, and the student has satisfied his or her legal requirements, the student may petition the appropriate Dean for readmission. If the student is readmitted, he/she will be required to enter into an appropriate monitoring program supervised by the Dean or his/her designee in the student's college. The Dean or the designated faculty member will consult with a professional at CAPS who will conduct an evaluation of the student, ascertain what action should be taken to better evaluate the student's substance use, and recommend treatment and/or monitoring. The student, CAPS, the Dean or his/her designee will adhere to steps 2-11 stated above in Section II.C. ("Intervention t") of this policy.

D. Responsibilities of MUSC:

1. MUSC will make available to students a cost-effective health insurance policy that provides some coverage for the cost of chemical dependency inpatient treatment.
2. MUSC will make outpatient alcohol abuse and other drug abuse treatment available through the MUSC Counseling and Psychological Services.

E. Status of the Impaired Student:

1. The student’s college administration will make the decision about the student’s status in his/her program of study taking into consideration the student’s academic and professional qualifications for the program of study and the student’s compliance with the recommended actions.

2. Providing the impaired student follows the recommended monitoring and assuming he/she remains academically and professionally qualified for his/her program of study, the student may qualify as an individual with a disability and receive reasonable accommodation under University policy.

III. Legal Issues

A. Responsibilities of MUSC

1. The reporting and treatment procedures outlined in this policy will preserve program participants’ confidentiality within the guidelines noted above in the section entitled "Intervention" and compliance with the program will normally ensure continued student status.

2. Participation in alcohol and other drug abuse treatment and/or monitoring programs does not confer immunity for the individual from legal prosecution for criminal acts. All records and communications shall be held in the strictest confidence and disclosure made only pursuant to applicable state and federal laws.

B. Non-liability Clause

Persons who in good faith and without malice make a report about a student’s use/abuse of alcohol or other drugs to the Director of the MUSC Counseling and Psychological Service center or the Dean or the designated faculty member of the student’s college shall not be held liable for damages resulting from such reporting, providing said report is made in the reasonable belief that such action or recommendation is warranted by the facts known to him/her after reasonable effort is made to obtain the facts on which such action is taken.

IV. Effective Dates of the Policy

This policy will become effective July 1, 2012. It shall remain in effect until modified or rescinded by the Provost of the University.


Lisa K. Saladin, PT, PhD, FAPTA
Vice President for Academic Affairs and Provost

2/4/19 Date