

Essentials of Professionalism in College of Pharmacy, Nursing and Allied Sciences Graduate Programs

Dan Friesner, PhD

Associate Dean for Student Affairs and Faculty Development

Professionalism in the CPNAS

- Professionalism is generally defined as the values, expectations and codes of conduct for a given occupation or activity.
- In the College of Pharmacy, Nursing and Allied Sciences, we have five core values, which we expect all members of our College (students, faculty and staff) to exhibit:
 - honesty
 - integrity
 - accountability
 - confidentiality
 - proper demeanor (commensurate with the professional and ethical expectations of the discipline).

Professionalism in the CPNAS

- One of my responsibilities as Associate Dean is to ensure that all members of the College exhibit these professional values.
- To fulfill that responsibility, I am tasked with the following:
 - Educating faculty, staff and students about these expectations
 - Enforcing sanctions for individuals in the College who fail to exhibit certain types of professional behavior
 - Mediating and/or arbitrating professionalism issues when those issues are not clearly resolved by current professionalism policies
 - Ensuring that, when issues do arise, procedures have been followed appropriately (i.e., ensure procedural justice)
 - When no conflicts of interest arise (most often, when I do not have to levy a sanction), I am an advocate for students to ensure that they are treated fairly when allegations of unprofessionalism arise

Professionalism in the CPNAS

- The College operationalizes these expectations through several policies:
- Students (undergraduate, professional and graduate):
 - College Policy 3.01: Student Conduct Policy, see pages 93-98 of:
http://www.ndsu.edu/fileadmin/pharmacy/Policy_Manual_3-2-12.pdf
 - Rights and Responsibilities of Community: A Code of Student Behavior:
<http://www.ndsu.edu/fileadmin/studentlife/StudentCode.pdf>
 - Graduate students are also held to NDSU Graduate School Standards:
http://www.ndsu.edu/gradschool/bulletin/graduate_school_policies/general_policies/

Professionalism in the CPNAS

- Faculty, staff and other paid (non-degree-seeking) employees are subject to general NDSU policies: <http://www.ndsu.edu/policy/>
- These policies may be further disaggregated into
 - General Policies:
http://www.ndsu.edu/policy/section_1_general_employment/
 - Broadbanded Staff:
http://www.ndsu.edu/policy/section_2_broadbanded_staff_employment/
 - Faculty and Other, Non-Broadbanded Employees:
http://www.ndsu.edu/policy/section_3_non_banded_staff_employment_faculty_and_other/

General Philosophy for Students and Employees

- Each set of policies has different guidelines, jurisdictions and methods of procedural action.
- There are hundreds of different topics, scenarios and violations covered in these policies.
- To avoid problems or issues as one studies and/or works at NDSU, I recommend the following pieces of advice.
- They should be interpreted as a general philosophy or set of heuristic guidelines, not a set of hard and fast rules.

General Philosophy for Students and Employees

- Read the policy manual(s) that cover your particular status at NDSU.
 - I suggest reading the manual(s) like your favorite novel.
 - You want to have a sense of:
 - i) Topic coverage
 - ii) General ideas behind the policy
 - iii) Where to go if you have specific questions
 - iv) General methods of process, including rights to appeal

General Philosophy for Students and Employees

- I also suggest downloading a copy of each relevant policy each year and saving it on a computer or USB drive.
 - Rules change frequently, and problems that arise usually are identified and resolved much later.
 - You do not want to be judged according to standards that did not apply to you at the time you took a particular action.
 - There is no guarantee that the old policy will be maintained and accessible to you when you need it.

General Philosophy for Students and Employees

- Problems often arise relative to professional standards in three general circumstances:
 - When policies are vague
 - When institutional practice fills in the gaps between, or conflicts with, institutional policies
 - When power differentials exist between two people, and that differential is inappropriately exploited to one person's advantage

General Philosophy for Students and Employees

- To manage risks arising from vague policies:
 - Know where to look up a policy and see where the vagueness occurs (in jurisdiction, in process, in sanction).
 - Complete all required training on an annual basis (sexual harassment, baseline safety, IRB/IBC training).
 - Be transparent about what you do.
 - Document things as much as possible.

Example: You are taking a graduate level course. Someone in the class has posted the answers to a homework assignment or problem set on his/her closed Facebook page. What do you do?

General Philosophy for Students and Employees

- To manage your risks associated with institutional practice supplementing and/or conflicting with policies:
 - Know where to look up a policy and see where the policy stops and the institutional practice begins.
 - Complete required training on an annual basis (sexual harassment, baseline safety, IRB/IBC training).
 - Be transparent about what you do.
 - Document things as much as possible.

Example: You are working in the lab and your advisor asks you to come to the lab on Saturday and Sunday to complete some preliminary experiments for a project with an impending deadline. What do you do?

General Philosophy for Students and Employees

- To manage risks associated with power differentials between individuals:
 - Know where to look up a policy and see how to identify and report abuses of power.
 - Complete required training on an annual basis (sexual harassment, baseline safety, IRB/IBC training).
 - Be transparent about what you do.
 - Document things as much as possible.

General Philosophy for Students and Employees

- That sounds like a broken record, but power differentials are trickier to deal with, because power differentials are **always** going to exist.
- In many practical situations, the consequences for the individual with less power are going to be more severe.
- There are a larger number of policies governing these differentials and greater vagueness associated with these policies.
- You need to be more aware of issues that may arise due to power differentials, and how to deal professionally to prevent, mitigate and/or resolve such issues.

Specific Power Issues

- I want to highlight several specific issues of power between employees (usually faculty) and students (usually graduate students).
- Faculty are here to educate and train you to perform research and/or clinical practice. They hold power over their students. That power includes, but is not limited to:
 - The ability to fund/not fund students
 - The ability to define (within reasonable limits) student work activities and schedules within the lab and/or for any students being funded by the faculty
 - The ability to remove a student from the lab or a course based on poor work performance, disruptive behavior or creating an intimidating work environment
 - The ability to set and enforce expectations for course grades
 - The ability to set and enforce expectations for thesis, disquisition or dissertation work (including lab and clinical work done to complete the written work)

Specific Power Issues

- There are some things that faculty may not do.
- Faculty are not allowed to create an intimidating environment in any fashion.

- NDSU Policy Manual, Section 163.1:

“Violence, threats, intimidation, and other disruptive behavior in our workplace will not be tolerated. All reports of incidents will be taken seriously and will be dealt with appropriately. Such behavior can include, but is not limited to, oral or written statements, gestures, expressions that communicate a direct or indirect threat of physical harm, or acts of violence against person or property.”

- If this happens, document it if possible, and report it to the faculty’s supervisor (the Department Chair) and myself.
- The Chair’s job is to resolve the issue.
- My job is to ensure that the Chair resolved the issue and that students are protected from retaliation after reporting the issue.

Specific Power Issues

- This applies to everyone in our College. If students are in a position of power and create this occurs, it simply falls under a different policy.

- Paraphrasing College Policy 3.01:

“Examples of unprofessional conduct include, but are not limited to the following:” ...

“3. Contributing to, or engaging in any activity which disrupts or obstructs the teaching, research, or outreach programs of the College or University, on campus or at affiliated training sites.

Specific Power Issues

4. Entering the classroom or clinical experience habitually late or leaving early, arriving late to a professional activity, without prior permission from the instructor. The instructor also has the obligation to notify the class, if possible in advance, of any changes in class times, possible late arrival and/or cancelled classes.

5. Approaching faculty, staff or students in less than a professional manner and treating faculty, staff, peers and patients in a disrespectful and inconsiderate way (i.e. addressing a faculty member without the appropriate title during professional activities). Respect and consideration are also expected when addressing a faculty member, staff, student, or patient that chooses to be called by their first name.”

Specific Power Issues

- If a student is abusing power, these issues should be reported to myself first, and then possibly the Department Chair.
- But note the subtlety here. The professor or other person in power may have the right to assign work, assign a grade or other tasks that you don't agree with, but if they do so in a professional and respectful manner, then it is acceptable to do so.
- Yelling, the use of derogatory and/or offensive language or other demeaning actions would be grounds for reporting, **not the assigned task by itself.**

Specific Power Issues

- The amount of time that you spend in a lab or a clinical site is at least partially under the discretion of the supervising faculty.
- There are specific constraints imposed on supervising faculty by Federal Regulators such as OSHA, but NDSU policies are relatively vague on this issue. They tend to focus on details or specific instances of inequities.
 - Ex. NDSU Policy 213: If you work for more than 4 hours, you get a rest break.
 - Ex. NDSU Policy 134.1, 135: Allowances for childbirth or other family and medical issues (if paid by NDSU).
 - Ex. NDSU Policy 166: You cannot be forced to work in an unsafe lab, classroom or clinical site.
- In such cases, first go to the supervising faculty, then the Chair and myself.

Specific Power Issues

- I also want to say a word about consensual relationships between individuals with different levels of power.
- NDSU Policy 162: http://www.ndsu.edu/fileadmin/policy/162_1.pdf
 - If the relationship isn't consensual, it is both prohibited and illegal.
 - The relationship should be reported to myself and the Department Chair (or the supervisor of the alleged instigator).
 - It should stop immediately!

Specific Power Issues

- NDSU Policy 162.1

http://www.ndsu.edu/fileadmin/policy/162_1.pdf

- If the relationship is between a client and a professional, it is a conflict of interest and is prohibited.
 - Otherwise, it is not prohibited, but it is frowned upon.
 - If a relationship develops, it must be reported (by the person with the most power) to that individual's supervisor.
 - That person may be reassigned to alleviate conflicts of interest.
- The policy is designed to force the person in the relationship who holds more power to proactively eliminate any power imbalance.

Specific Power Issues

- Lastly, I want to address a pair of related issues which probably are most germane to you as you work towards your graduate degree.
- These issues also deal with power differentials and vague policies, but in a slightly different manner than our previous topics.
- If they occur and you are found responsible, they can also be the most damaging to your career.

Specific Power Issues

- **Plagiarism**: The theft of ideas, or inappropriately taking credit for writing, ideas or other intellectual property you did not create yourself.
- Plagiarism can be:
 - Direct: copying and pasting entire sentences, paragraphs or entire papers from other works and representing that work as your own
Note: paying someone to be a ghost writer is also direct plagiarism!
 - Indirect: word-smithing someone else's paper and failing to cite the original work
 - Induced: not citing someone enough (one citation at the beginning or end of a very long paragraph)

Specific Power Issues

- Direct plagiarism is obvious, and has no excuse!
- Most people, when found responsible for plagiarism, are found responsible for the second two types.
- Why?
 - Not being careful (writing late at night or near pending deadlines)
 - Not understanding the expectations of the discipline (different disciplines have different rules for citing and summarizing others' works)
 - Not understanding copyright laws (in some instances, you can be found responsible for plagiarizing yourself)

Specific Power Issues

- Plagiarism is a power issue because the accuser may be anonymous, and may or may not be correct in making the accusation.
- However, once you are accused (even if not responsible of the action), your reputation may suffer.
- The process for handling plagiarism is specific to the College's Policy Manual, the University's Code of Student Conduct, and the Graduate School Policy Manual.
 - You are held accountable to all three simultaneously
 - Better to avoid the issue altogether

Specific Power Issues

- So what can you do to avoid plagiarism issues?
<http://www.ndsu.edu/academichonesty/>
- Write everything yourself.
- Try not to directly “recycle writing” specific parts of papers.
- Give yourself plenty of time to write before a deadline.
- Error on the side of caution and over-cite.
- Read the Graduate School policies about using published articles in your dissertation/thesis and follow them.
- Use the “Turn It In/Safe-Assign” feature in Blackboard before you submit any project or paper.
- Aside: Hiring a professional editor is fundamentally different than hiring a ghost writer, because they are not writing the paper for you. They are only suggesting changes.
 - But if they suggest a change that is essentially plagiarism, you are responsible!

Specific Power Issues

- **Scientific Misconduct:** Deliberately distorting or falsifying the assumptions, processes (including laboratory methods) or outcomes of the research process.
- Scientific misconduct is different from plagiarism in that it is essentially lying, as opposed to theft. However, the root causes are generally the same:
 - Not being careful about one's research
 - Not understanding the expectations of the discipline
 - Binding time or resource constraints

Specific Power Issues

- The power differential is also the same. Some people intentionally falsify their research, which is akin to direct plagiarism. This is a very small minority of cases.
- Others take shortcuts or make improper assumptions which can be interpreted by others as misconduct.
- Still others are simply accused, even though they are blameless.
- Once accused, the damage is, in many cases, irreversible.

Specific Power Issues

- You are held accountable to all three sets of policies (NDSU's, the College's and the Graduate School's), and the procedures for investigation are analogous to those of plagiarism.
- Please exercise caution and double check your work!

General Thoughts

- Professionalism is not difficult, one must simply be cognizant and respectful of others.
- If you always try to conduct yourself in a manner that is honest, accountable, ethical and respects the confidentiality and rights of others, you generally will be considered a person who acts professionally.
- If you ever have questions, you may contact me or consult the policies we discussed previously.
- If you ever feel pressured by anyone to do something that is unprofessional, please see me. Such meetings will always be treated in a confidential manner.

CPNAS Conduct Policy

- Having gone through the elements of professional behavior, we may now discuss the specifics of College Policy 3.01.
- Students are required to report any citations, incidents or court convictions to the Associate Dean for Student Affairs and Faculty Development, Dr. Dan Friesner, within 7 days of the violation.
- Failure of the student to report convictions to the Dean's Office within the required time could result in immediate expulsion from the program in which they are enrolled.
- Each student in the College is asked to read and sign the Conduct Policy on an annual basis.
- You may keep the first part, and we collect the signature page.