To: First and Second Year Medical Students

From: Joycelyn Dorscher, M.D.  
Associate Dean for Student Affairs and Admissions

Subject: Procedure Regarding Excused Absences

Date: July 23, 2014

The success of students in their clinical years largely depends on active and consistent participation. One must be present in order to take full advantage of each learning opportunity. This is particularly true of those activities that depend on group process. Absence from these and other activities can significantly and negatively impact the academic success of the student. As a result, and consistent with the University of North Dakota School of Medicine and Health Sciences professional behavior policy as well as the Student-Learner contract, students are expected to consider attendance and participation in medical school activities mandatory.

Accordingly, the following procedure has been established:

I. Any student absent from clinical activities, either urgently or emergently must:
   A. Notify the Office of Student Affairs and Admissions (Cindy Stromme at 701-777-4214 or cindy.stromme@med.und.edu)
   B. Explain the reason for the absence
   C. Notify his/her PCL facilitator and group as soon as possible
   D. Make up any missed assignments as soon as possible as part of the student’s obligations to fulfill the requirements for the time of the absence

II. For absences that are anticipated, the student must:
   A. Document that the PCL group, facilitator and any other course directors involved in the curriculum during the student’s absence have been contacted and have approved the request. This does not include full class lectures that are made available by other means
   B. Request an excused absence from the Associate Dean for Student Affairs and Admissions (Dr. Joy Dorscher 701-777-4214 or joycelyn.dorscher@med.und.edu) and provide the supported documentation
   C. Make up any missed assignments as soon as possible (preferably prior to the absence) as part of the student’s responsibilities

When granting an excused absence the Associate Dean for Student Affairs and Admissions will notify the Block leader, PCL group facilitator, and other affected faculty for the student’s excused absence. The following may also be notified:
   1. Assistant Dean of Pre-clinical Education
2. Associate Dean of Clinical Education
3. Block Directors Year 1
4. Block Directors Year 2
5. Director of Simulation Center
6. Director of Assessment

III. There are some instances where an absence is appropriate and, although the final decision lies with the Associate Dean, typical events that would likely qualify as excused absences include but are not limited to:
A. Personal illness;
B. Death or serious illness of an immediate family member;
C. Illness of a dependent family member;
D. Certain unique life events (weddings, births, graduation, etc.) involving an immediate family member;
E. Certain and occasional transportation and/or weather-related obstacles;
F. National, regional or local meetings for which the student has official responsibility (such as an elected representative of the class);
G. Outside educational conferences or meetings of particular interest to certain students occur from time to time and may qualify, depending on the particular reasons brought forward by the student as well as his/her academic performance to date.

The granting or denial of a request for an excused absence may be related to the course content being presented that day and the ability of the individual to make up content on their own (either because of the importance of participation to understand the content or the academic ability of the student).

IV. Additionally, some issues, especially those regarding personal health and family concerns, may be relatively confidential in nature and the Associate Dean may use his/her judgment to make decisions regarding the indication for an excused absence as needed depending upon the individual circumstances.

V. Consequences of violation of this procedure:
A. The absence will be officially recorded as an unexcused absence/instance of unprofessional behavior and a letter to that effect will be sent to the student and a copy will go into the student's file;
B. The unexcused absence will effect eligibility for certain awards and offices;
C. May effect the student's grade for that particular block;
D. For those students who repeatedly abuse this policy, these actions may result in formal charges and investigation for unprofessional behavior through the policies and procedures set forth by the Medical Students Academic Performance Committee. This could lead to specific restrictions and requirements which could include probation or dismissal from medical school.

JAD/cms

cc: Year 1 & 2 Block Directors
Assistant Dean, Pre-Clinical Education
Associate Dean, Clinical Education