

**Proposed Indiana University of Pennsylvania College of Osteopathic Medicine
(Proposed IUPCOM—Candidate Status—Seeking Accreditation)**

COCA Pre-Accreditation Element 5.3: Learning Environment
Pre-Accreditation Submission 5.3-1: Safety, Health, and Wellness Policy

Description

Osteopathic medical students, staff, and faculty often face unique health and safety challenges due to the demands of the profession, including maturing learning opportunities, expanding clinical responsibilities, teaching, research, and administrative tasks. To address these challenges, IUPCOM will prioritize a comprehensive approach to physical and mental health, safety, wellness, and fatigue mitigation. The College will work in cooperation with IUP and its educational community partners to apply, inform, reinforce, and adopt policies that address safety, physical and mental health, fatigue mitigation and wellness considerations for its constituents at all locations operated by IUP. IUPCOM shall provide further guidelines for the safety of its students at remote sites.

General – IUP has established policies and procedures aimed at promoting the health, safety, and wellness of its faculty, staff, and students. These efforts are managed by the [IUP Office of Environmental Health and Safety \(EHS\)](#) and the [IUP Office of Emergency Management](#). The policies include measures for prevention, responses to exposures, and continuous education for all faculty, staff, and students. Safety, health, wellness, and fatigue mitigation will be accounted for in IUPCOM’s medical education settings and stewardship, including attention to the following, in general:

- Due to the intense nature and rapid learning expectations of a medical education program, IUPCOM will educate students, faculty, and staff about the signs of fatigue, burnout, and disillusionment in a supportive and collegial environment, both on- and off-campus.
- Training experiences and modules for IUPCOM constituents located both on- and off-campus in evaluating safety data, exposures, risks and mindfulness in addressing the safety of all.
- Effective mitigation for constituent exposure to infectious and environmental hazards, provision of education on prevention of such exposure, and procedures for care and treatment after such exposure shall be provided.
- Reinforcing existing and instituting new relevant programs encouraging optimal medical students, faculty, and staff physical and mental well-being.
- For [Clery-reportable crimes](#), constituents will be trained to complete the IUP [Campus Security Authority Reporting Form](#).

I. Physical Health and Safety, and Prevention Education (including exposure to infections and environmental hazards)

- A. Students – IUPCOM will address safety consideration for its learners to mitigate health hazard exposure through:
1. **Standard Precautions:** IUPCOM will emphasize the importance of following [Standard Precautions](#), a set of infection prevention practices that apply to all patients, regardless of their suspected or confirmed infection status. These include training in:
 - **Hand hygiene:** Proper handwashing before and after patient contact toward reducing the risk of infection dissemination.
 - **Personal Protective Equipment (PPE):** Using appropriate PPE such as gloves, gowns, masks, and eye protection.

- Sharps safety: Safe handling and disposal of needles and other sharp objects to prevent percutaneous injuries.
 - Respiratory hygiene/cough etiquette: Covering coughs/sneezes and performing hand hygiene afterward as crucial components of infection control.
2. Vaccinations and Immunizations: Students will be required to comply with IUPCOM and community partner site immunization policies; this will be handled through the Office of Clinical Affairs and GME.
 3. Occupational Health and Safety: IUPCOM will provide training and guidance on various occupational hazards students might encounter in research and clinical settings, including:
 - Exposure to hazardous materials: Including chemical spills and radiation safety training.
 - Infectious diseases: Understanding and implementing precautions against infectious diseases transmitted via contact, sharps, or respiratory means.
 4. Personal Safety: IUP and IUPCOM will provide guidelines and resources to address students' personal safety, including:
 - Secure access: Providing secure lockers and on-call rooms for students.
 - Travel: Promoting safe travel between clinical sites and parking/public transportation.
 - Working in isolated or remote situations: Establishing policies and procedures for student safety when working in isolated settings, including home visits or after-hours work.
 - Workplace violence and harassment: Training students on the prevention, management, and reporting of workplace violence, harassment, and intimidation.
 5. Student Responsibilities: Students also play an active role in maintaining safety by:
 - Following safety protocols: Adhering to all occupational health and safety policies and procedures of their IUPCOM academic and clinical training sites.
 - Using PPE correctly: Appropriately utilizing personal protective equipment as required.
 - Reporting concerns: Promptly reporting any safety concerns to their supervisors.
 - Participating in training: Attending and engaging in required safety sessions and training programs provided by IUP and IUPCOM.

B. Staff and Faculty

1. Standard precautions training with adherence to established safety protocols is essential, particularly for those involved in clinical environments. This includes, but is not limited to, the precautions provided for students, above, and the following additional recommendations:
 - Safe injection practices: Use of self-sheathing needles and/or needleless systems, proper disposal of sharps in puncture-resistant containers.
 - Hand hygiene: Effective hand washing with soap and water or alcohol-based hand rub.
 - Respiratory hygiene/cough etiquette: Covering the mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing, disposing of tissues promptly, and performing hand hygiene afterward.
2. Hazardous materials: Faculty and staff, especially those in laboratories or clinical settings, may be exposed to hazardous materials. Institutions must ensure:
 - Proper disposal procedures for hazardous materials in compliance with regulations.
 - Education and training on the safe handling and disposal of such materials.

3. Workplace safety: Institutions need to comply with [Occupational Safety and Health Administration \(OSHA\) standards](#) to protect employees from hazards, including those in older buildings, labs, or with specialized equipment.
4. Fitness for duty: Professionals must assure their own fitness for duty and be aware of factors that may affect alertness.
5. [IUP Environmental Health and Safety](#): This department is committed to providing quality services to the university campus community while supporting the collective effort to provide a safe environment in which to work, teach, and learn. University employees can opt in to receive text alerts in the case of an emergency through the [Emergency Notification System](#). They are available to assist the IUP community in the anticipation, recognition, evaluation, and control of physical and health hazards in the IUP educational and work environment:
 - Minimize health and safety risks to university employees, students, and the public
 - Encourage appropriate environment, health, and safety practices
 - Monitor compliance with federal, state, and local environmental, health, and safety regulations
 - Investigate accidents and incidents
 - Instill safe work practices
6. Additional IUP environmental health and safety resources:
 - [Material Data Safety Sheet Resources](#) – Information on Material Data Safety Sheets (MSDSs) used to convey hazard information
 - [Fire Prevention](#) – Fire safety and prevention on the IUP campus
 - [Anthrax or Suspected Biological Incident](#) – What to do and whom to contact.
 - [Accident and Illness Prevention Program](#) – The Accident and Illness Prevention Program is designed to identify and correct potential accidents and unsafe acts that may take place on our campus.
 - [Accident Prevention Training](#) – The University provides various types of training to address workplace safety and environmental hazards.
 - [Accident Investigation](#) – The Office of Environmental Health and Safety conducts investigations in response to all accidents.
 - [Appendices: Accident & Illness Prevention Policy – IUP Office of Human Resources](#)
 - [University Emergency Operations Plan - Emergency Management at IUP](#) – IUP provides information regarding what to do in an emergency.
 - Hazard Mitigation Plan: [Indiana County 2018 Hazard Mitigation Plan](#)
 - Chemical Waste: [Chemical Waste Disposal - Office of Human Resources - IUP](#)
 - Safety Inspections: [Inspections - Office of Human Resources - IUP](#)
 - Industrial Health Services: [Industrial Health Services - Office of Human Resources - IUP](#)
 - Emergency Operations Plan Summary: [University Emergency Operations Plan - Emergency Management at IUP](#)
 - State Employee Assistance Program (SEAP): [SEAP on IUP Campus - IUP](#)
 - These documents outline safety protocols, prevention strategies, exposure response procedures, and mental health and wellness supports.

7. Reporting concerns: Encouraging a culture where faculty and staff feel comfortable reporting safety concerns, including observed fatigue in colleagues, is crucial.

II. Mental Health and Wellness

1. Students – IUPCOM will address health and wellness self-care in its learners, including:
 - a. Efforts to enhance the meaning that each medical student finds in the experience of being a medical learner, including protecting time with patients, minimizing non-educational obligations, providing administrative support, promoting progressive and self-directed learning, and enhancing professional and personal relationships.
 - b. Formal training and instruction on self-care, wellness, emotional resilience, and fatigue mitigation during orientation week, as a formal class at the beginning of the first academic year, will be reinforced throughout the four-year curriculum on behavioral health.
 - c. Ongoing evaluation of scheduling and work intensity/compression impacting well-being.
 - d. Providing the opportunity to attend medical care, mental healthcare, and dental care appointments. While attendance is required for all scheduled academic events, exceptions to this policy can be granted in advance for the above on a case-by-case basis.
 - e. Monitoring medical students for burnout, depression, and substance abuse. IUPCOM will educate faculty members, staff and medical students in identifying symptoms of burnout, depression, and substance abuse, including means to assist those who experience these conditions. Medical students shall also be educated to recognize those symptoms in themselves and how to seek appropriate care. IUPCOM will accomplish this by:
 - Encouraging its students to alert the IUPCOM administration, faculty advisors, or attending physicians when they are concerned that another person may be displaying signs of potential burnout, depression, substance abuse, suicidal ideation, or violence.
 - Providing access to appropriate tools for self-screening.
 - Ensuring access to confidential, affordable mental health assessment, counseling, and treatment, including access to urgent and emergent care at all times.
 - f. IUP Health Service
 - Skilled, competent, and caring health professionals at the IUP Health Service provide patient education and medical services to students. As members of both the IUP and health care communities, the health service staff works collaboratively to identify and advocate for student needs and to provide appropriate high-quality, cost-effective responses. The Service provides patient care Monday-Thursday from 8:00 a.m.-4:30 p.m., Fri. 10:00 a.m.-4:30 p.m. Center for Health and Well-Being, Suites on Maple East, 901 Maple Street, Indiana, PA 15705, Phone: 724-357-2550, Administration: 724-357-6475, Fax: 724-357-6212, health-inquiry@iup.edu
 - Emergency Care – [Indiana Regional Medical Center](#) or call 911 (9-911 if on campus). There is a blue emergency phone at both ends of the [Center for Health and Well-Being](#). Here are [other non-emergency locations](#).
 - For emergency mental health care, call Indiana County Crisis Hotline at 877-333-2470 24hr/7d or IUP Campus Police at 724-357-2141.
2. Staff and Faculty – Resources and support for IUPCOM faculty and staff, in addition to those provided for students, above, will be provided in the following areas:
 - Well-being resources: Access to resources and support programs designed to promote well-being and combat burnout in themselves and those they supervise and mentor.
 - Mental health support: Providing access to readily available and confidential mental health

and substance use care and reducing the stigma associated with seeking such help.

- Flexible work arrangements: Exploring options like flexible scheduling and backup care programs to help alleviate work-life conflicts.
- Cultivating resilience: Fostering resilience through support groups, mentorship programs, and workshops can help faculty and staff better manage stress and prevent burnout.
- Promoting healthy habits: Encouraging physical activity, healthy eating, and stress management techniques important for overall well-being.

3. Other Resources for Staff and Faculty

- [SEAP](#) is a free assessment and referral service for PASSHE State System employees and their family members regardless of where they live. Services are available 24/7 by calling the hotline, 800-692-7459. IUP employees may contact their Human Resources Office for questions about SEAP. The services provided by SEAP are strictly confidential - employers will not be notified unless given written consent.
 - [SEAP on IUP Campus](#)
 - Access to this benefit here: www.liveandworkwell.com; access code: *Pennsylvania*

III. Fatigue Mitigation

1. All individuals – Fatigue is a significant concern for both medical students, faculty, and staff impacting teaching, learning, performance, and patient safety. In general, the following considerations pertain to all IUPCOM constituents:
 - a. Prioritize sleep and sleep hygiene: Practice healthy sleep habits, including maintaining a regular sleep schedule (even on days off), create a restful sleep environment, avoid caffeine and alcohol before bed, and limit screen time before sleep.
 - Aim for 7-9 hours of sleep nightly.
 - Establish a consistent sleep schedule (going to bed and waking up at the same time, even on days off). Learn to identify personal signs and symptoms of fatigue, such as abnormal sleepiness, difficulty focusing, irritability, and reliance on caffeine.
 - Organize and plan effective time division between academics, clinical responsibilities, and personal activities, to avoid procrastination and overwhelming workloads.
 - Avoid heavy meals, caffeine, and alcohol within a few hours of bedtime.
 - Create a relaxing bedtime routine in a conducive sleep environment (dark, quiet, etc.).
 - If possible, nap strategically (20-30 minutes) to improve alertness. Take short naps to improve alertness and performance; avoid longer naps that can lead to grogginess or difficulty sleeping at night.
 - b. Manage diet and hydration:
 - Eat nutritious meals and avoid heavy meals close to bedtime.
 - Stay hydrated throughout the day.
 - c. Engage in regular physical activity:
 - Exercise regularly but avoid heavy exercise within three hours of bedtime.
 - d. Practice stress management techniques:
 - Mindfulness, meditation, or deep breathing exercises.
 - Find hobbies and interests outside of work.

- e. Set boundaries and seek support:
 - Know your limits and communicate them effectively.
 - Don't be afraid to ask for help from colleagues, supervisors, or mentors.
 - Utilize mental health resources available through [IUP](#) and [AACOM](#).
 - f. Self-monitor and recognize fatigue:
 - Pay attention to your own alertness and performance levels.
 - Learn to recognize the signs of fatigue in yourself and others.
 - g. Build resilience through:
 - Developing coping strategies: Learning and incorporating evidence-based coping mechanisms for managing stress and adversity, such as mindfulness, deep breathing exercises, and relaxation techniques.
 - Fostering a supportive environment: Building strong social connections with peers, mentors, and loved ones to reduce feelings of isolation and receive support during challenging times.
 - Setting realistic expectations: Learning to set attainable goals and break down large tasks into smaller, manageable milestones to avoid feeling overwhelmed and prevent burnout.
 - Engaging in self-care activities: Prioritizing activities that promote physical and mental well-being, including exercise, healthy eating, hobbies, and spending time in nature.
 - Reframing challenges: Learning to view difficult experiences as opportunities for growth and skill development, rather than dwelling on negative emotions or setbacks.
2. Students – Among other considerations, fatigue mitigation aimed to ensure medical students get home safely if fatigued after a rotation shift. Medical students will be provided with education including alternative transportation options and instructed not to drive if they are compromised by fatigue at the end of their shift. Medical students who work overnight, not in lieu of daytime responsibilities, shall be provided with a sleep room. In addition, students will be assigned to clinical rotation sites in pairs or larger groups to enhance collegial peer mental health support as well as provided opportunities to share transportation. There are circumstances in which medical students may be unable to attend class or clinical rotations including, but not limited to: fatigue, illness, and/or family emergencies. The policies at IUPCOM will be implemented in such a matter that students shall not fear negative consequences to care for themselves or their families. IUPCOM will:
- a. Educate medical students to recognize the signs of fatigue and sleep deprivation in themselves and others and ensure that they can demonstrate their understanding and personal role in protecting peers and patients.
 - b. Educate medical students on their responsibility to report and intervene when others show signs of fatigue and sleep deprivation.
 - c. Educate medical students in alertness management and fatigue mitigation processes.
 - d. Encourage medical students to use fatigue mitigation processes to manage the potential negative effects of fatigue on learning and patient care.
 - e. IUPCOM will ensure continuity of patient care, consistent with policies and procedures, in the event that a student may be unable to perform their patient care responsibilities due to excessive fatigue. IUPCOM will ensure adequate sleep facilities at major participating training sites and transportation options for students too fatigued to return home safely.

- f. Review and assess and alter schedules and service demands as necessary to mitigate fatigue.
3. Staff and Faculty – trainings and considerations, in addition to those above for learners, include:
 - a. Education and awareness: Faculty and staff will be educated on the [signs and symptoms of fatigue and sleep deprivation and their impact on performance and patient safety](#).
 - b. Workload management: Training in managing and addressing issues like workload, work intensity, and long work hours will be provided to reduce fatigue and burnout.
 - c. Adequate rest breaks and sleep: Implementing schedules that allow for frequent rest breaks and sufficient nighttime sleep.
 - d. Healthy lifestyle: Maintaining a consistent sleep routine, eating a healthy diet, exercising regularly, and avoiding stimulants before bedtime toward better sleep and reduced fatigue.
 - e. Support systems: Putting mechanisms in place for fatigued faculty and staff to report their condition and arrange for alternative transportation or rest facilities.

Procedure Step/Task	Responsible Party
1. IUP and IUPCOM will assure campus-wide distribution of all related safety, health, and wellness policies through IUP's website and via email.	IUP Academic Affairs, IUP Student Affairs, IUPCOM Dean's Office
2. IUPCOM will provide students with a list of required immunizations or proof of immunity to commonly encountered infectious agents prior to matriculation.	IUPCOM Student Affairs, IUPCOM Clinical Affairs
3. Students, through simulation and other training methods, will be provided with information and techniques intended to decrease the risk of exposure to biological hazards.	IUPCOM Clinical Affairs
4. IUPCOM will instruct students during orientation and preparation for clinical rotations regarding procedures to follow in the case of exposure to biological hazards, including the proper notification of such incidents, the need for evaluation, and follow up care.	IUPCOM Clinical Affairs
5. Students will be provided with a current list of physical and mental health facilities in the location where they are learning, including rotations sites affiliated with IUPCOM.	IUPCOM Clinical Affairs, IUP Student Affairs
6. IUP will ensure that all students are aware of and have access to 24-hour mental health hotlines.	IUPCOM Clinical Affairs, IUP Student Affairs
7. IUPCOM will participate in training of all personnel who may have contact with infectious and biohazardous materials.	IUPCOM Pre-Clinical Affairs, IUP Academic Affairs, IUP Environmental Health and Safety
8. IUPCOM will provide direction to all students regarding infection control procedures while participating in clinical experiences including procedures in the event of inadvertent contact. Those procedures shall be distributed to all participating affiliated teaching sites.	IUPCOM Clinical Affairs
9. Students, Clinical Coordinators and affiliated clinical education sites will be provided with instructions for students in the event of biological, infectious or environmental exposures.	Assistant Dean for Clinical Affairs
10. Students experiencing a biologic, infectious or environmental exposure should complete the Student Exposure Notification Form and submit it to Clinical	Clinical Coordinators, IUPCOM Clinical Affairs

Coordinator for the rotation site.	
11. IUPCOM will provide students with recurrent education during pre-clinical and clinical years on the effects of fatigue and sleep deprivation, the responsibility toward peers and patients, and methods of identifying and mitigating fatigue.	IUPCOM Student Services, IUPCOM Clinical Affairs
12. IUPCOM will provide fatigue mitigation guidelines to students, faculty (including preceptors) and clinical site leadership.	IUPCOM Clinical Affairs
13. Faculty, staff and medical students will report indicators of excess fatigue and sleep deprivation to supervisors and others who oversee peers and patient safety.	IUPCOM Student Services, IUPCOM Clinical Affairs

Policy/Procedure Details	
Policy Owner	Director of Student Affairs Associate Dean of Clinical Affairs Associate Dean of Pre-Clinical Affairs
Effective Date	08/29/2025
Last Reviewed	08/29/2025
Review Frequency Requirements	4 Years
Related Policies and Documents	1. Campus Security Authority Reporting Form 2. Accident & Illness Prevention Policy 3. Environmental Health and Safety Policy 4. IUP's Security and Public Safety Policies 5. Security, Safety, and Emergency and Disaster Related Policies and Procedures on Campus and at all Clinical Sites (4.2-1)
Reviewed and Approved by Dean's Leadership Council	08/29/2025
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