

ACADEMIC POLICY

SCHOLARS PROGRAM

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PENNSYLVANIA COLLEGE OF OPTOMETRY

ACADEMIC POLICY – SCHOLARS PROGRAM

1. INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

- 1.1 This Academic Policy applies to all Doctor of Optometry degree students enrolled in the Scholars Program and is published for the Scholars Program students, faculty, administration, and staff, all of whom are held responsible for reading and adhering to this Policy.
- 1.1.1 Much of the Academic Policy for the Scholars Program is consistent with the Academic Policy for the traditional Doctor of Optometry degree program.
- 1.1.2 Some Academy Policy components contained herein reflect a change from the traditional Doctor of Optometry degree program Academic Policy as necessitated by the uniqueness of the Scholars Program.
- 1.2 The faculty and administration of the Scholars Program and the Pennsylvania College of Optometry, in conjunction with the Salus University Educational Policy and Curriculum Committee and the Office of Academic Affairs, have developed this policy to uphold the educational standards of the College for all students enrolled in the Scholars Program.
- 1.3 Unless otherwise stated, the Dean of the College is the individual charged with rendering final interpretations of the Scholars Program Academic Policy and for deciding whether to grant exceptions to the Policy.

2. ADMINISTRATIVE RESPONSIBILITIES

- 2.1 The Dean is the chief academic officer of the College and, in conjunction with his/her College staff, is charged with the oversight of the Scholars Program curriculum, development of educational policy, and other academic matters. The Scholars Program administration and faculty, in conjunction with the Dean and the Salus University Educational Policy and Curriculum Committee, creates and modifies the curriculum. The Vice President of Academic Affairs is the chief academic officer of the University and is responsible for final decisions concerning the curriculum and educational policy for all colleges and programs.
- 2.2 The Associate Dean of the Scholars Program and his/her staff are charged with the administration and oversight of all aspects of the Scholars Program curriculum. He/she is charged with the integration of the Scholars Program didactic curriculum in conjunction with the Associate Dean for the Foundations of Optometric Medicine and the integration of the clinical curriculum in conjunction with the Director of Clinical Education of the Scholars Program and the Director of the Externship Program as appropriate.
- 2.3 The Associate Dean for the Foundations of Optometric Medicine and his/her staff are charged with the administration and integration of the basic science and clinical science module/blocks and curriculum in the traditional program, including faculty and student schedules.

- 2.4 The Director of Clinical Education of the Scholars Program and the Educational Program Coordinator for the Practice of Optometric Medicine are charged with the management of the educational operations of the clinics, including faculty and student schedules. The Director of Clinical Education is also charged with administration of the clinical educational programs in The Eye Institute clinical network and at all off-campus sites in conjunction with the Office of the Externship Program.
- 2.5 The Associate Dean of the Scholars Program is responsible for monitoring the progress of students in the Scholars Program and developing modified programs when it is deemed necessary to promote a student's continuing academic success within the Scholars Program.
- 2.5.1 The Associate Dean of the Scholars Program, in conjunction with the Associate Dean for the Foundations of Optometric Medicine and the Director of Clinical Education of the Scholars Program, is responsible for developing modified programs to transition a student from the Scholars Program to the traditional program when it is deemed necessary for academic or personal reasons.
- 2.6 The Salus University Dean of Student Affairs is charged with the administration of matters related to admissions, counseling, and student life on campus. This office has the responsibility for advising students in personal matters impacting academics, tutoring services, and special events. Under the auspices of the Salus University Office of Student Affairs, the Office of the Registrar is responsible for maintaining students' permanent records. The University's Dean of Student Affairs oversees the Center for Personal and Professional Development, the Office of the Registrar, Financial Aid, and the Office of Admissions.
- 2.7 The Salus University Vice President of Clinical Operations is responsible for all patient care/business operations of The Eye Institute clinical network, including patient scheduling, patient care, maintenance of records, patient fees and insurance payments, compliance with infection control protocols, and other related issues.

3. ADMISSIONS PREREQUISITES

- 3.1 Specific admissions prerequisite requirements are found in the Scholars Program section of the College component of the Salus University website.
- 3.2 Successful completion of prerequisite courses is required, in all instances, before a student may matriculate into the Scholars Program.
- 3.3 Successful completion of the prerequisite courses, acceptable transfer of credit from another institution, or satisfactorily passing an exemption examination may fulfill prerequisite requirements.

4. ENROLLMENT

- 4.1 The College expects that all candidates for degrees will be enrolled full-time during consecutive academic periods (years, terms, or months depending on the year of the program) until the requirements for the degree program have been completed.

5. ACADEMIC CALENDAR AND CLASS SCHEDULES

- 5.1 The University Calendar provides the beginning and ending dates for each term as well as University holidays. The Office of the Dean distributes the College's Academic Calendar(s) in the spring term prior to the subsequent academic year. Important dates are listed, such as the beginning and ending dates for each term, academic holidays, academic breaks, study days, University closing dates, and examination dates.
- 5.2 Any travel or other commitments scheduled on days reserved for academic activities are made at the student's own risk in the event that these dates become necessary to be used for mandatory classes, laboratories, examinations or other educational activities.
- 5.3 The Scholars Program Class Schedule is distributed during the current term for the subsequent term.
- 5.4 Both the College's Academic Calendar(s) and Scholars Program Class Schedules are subject to change due to unforeseen circumstances (e.g., faculty illness or inclement weather).
- 5.5 Instructors need prior approval from the appropriate Associate Dean to change the Class Schedule.

6. ATTENDANCE

- 6.1 A syllabus will be published, either electronically or in printed form, for each course/block and will describe the course/block requirements, grading policy and attendance policy.
- 6.2 It is the policy of the College that student attendance at all lectures is expected but not mandatory unless specified by the course instructor, and that students should attend every lecture for which the student is scheduled.
- 6.3 The instructor will describe details of his/her attendance requirements in the course/block syllabus. An instructor has the option to require attendance at lectures that students enrolled in the Scholars Program attend and are delivered in the traditional Doctor of Optometry degree program; however this requirement may only be implemented after approval by the Associate Dean of the Scholars Program.
- 6.4 Attendance is mandatory for all examinations, laboratories, internal and external clinical assignments, Community-Based Activities (CBA), Integrated Decision Making sessions (IDM), Problem Solving Sessions (PSS), faculty mentoring sessions, and, when specified, seminars, grand rounds, conferences, and meetings.
- 6.5 The consequences of unexcused absences will be determined by the instructor, approved by the Associate Dean, and described in the course/block syllabus. Consequences will be dependent upon the activity from which the student was absent.
- 6.6 A student who is not in good academic standing (see sections 14.8 and 14.9) may be required to attend all lectures within a specified course/block. In this event, written notification to the student and the course coordinator of the specified course/block, will be sent from the Office of the Associate Dean of the Scholars Program.
- 6.7 A student should inform the Associate Dean of the Scholars Program of anticipated family or medical situations that may qualify for excused absences (see sections 6.10 – 6.12) and/or result in extended absences (see section 18).
- 6.8 In the event of extremely harsh weather conditions or other emergency situations, information will be provided about the cancelation of University courses, clinics, or

operations through an emergency alert from Salus University via landline, cell phone, email, and/or text message. Information about course cancellation will also be broadcast on AM radio KYW 1060. Students should consult the Student Handbook for additional information regarding an unanticipated University closing. If any questions or problems arise, contact the Human Resources Department at Salus University.

- 6.8.1 In the event of a University-wide or area related emergency, students will receive an emergency alert from Salus University via landline, cell phone, email, and/or text message. If any questions or problems arise, contact the Human Resources Department at Salus University.

6.9 Guidelines and Allowances for Attendance and Absences in Patient Care Activities

- 6.9.1 The student's obligations to the clinical program and his/her patients are paramount and reflect professionalism, therefore, permission to be absent will only be given when clearly appropriate.
- 6.9.2 Absences from patient care activities occurring the day or week of examinations or during orientation weeks will be excused only for substantive urgent issues such as a serious illness documented by a physician's note, unexpected documented transportation failure, or death of an immediate family member (students must follow absence guidelines listed in sections 6.10.3 and 6.11.7).
- 6.9.3 Guidelines for scheduling NBEO Part III - Clinical Skills Examination (CSE) must be followed as specified in the Professional Practice Syllabi or Scholars Program distributed policies.
- 6.9.4 Make-up patient care time or a project/assignment is required for students with excused absences as referenced in section 6.11.9.
- 6.9.5 Make-up time for a student whose absences comply with the Academic Policy will be equal to the number of days missed. Should the absence be deemed predictable and elective in nature, the Associate Dean of the Scholars Program may identify the absence as "unexcused" (refer to sections 6.13 and 6.14).
- 6.9.6 The maximum number of allowable excused absences per term is listed below.
- | | |
|-----------------------------|---|
| 1st year: | summer = 1; fall = 1; winter = 1; spring = 1 |
| 2nd year: | summer = 1; fall = 1; winter = 1; spring = 1 |
| 3rd year: | summer = 2; fall = 2; winter = 2; spring = 2 |
- 6.9.7 Departments may modify these absence guidelines for due cause in consultation with the Associate Dean of the Scholars Program.
- 6.9.8 Anticipated or extended absences may not be approved in cases where the maximum number of allowable excused absences per term has been exceeded. In addition, absences may not be approved if performance is sub-standard clinically, or if the student's absence substantively impacts patient care activity.
- 6.9.9 Should a student require excused absences in excess of this guideline, the Associate Dean of the Scholars Program may recommend he/she take a Leave of Absence (see section 19).

- 6.9.10 A grade of Incomplete (“I”) or Deferred (“R”) will be recorded, as appropriate, for the clinical activity for any work that has not been completed by the end of an academic term.
- 6.9.11 A grade of Incomplete (“I”) or Deferred (“R”) must be resolved no later than the end of the subsequent academic term.
- 6.9.12 The Associate Dean of the Scholars Program may grant an extension period beyond the end of the subsequent academic term if written documentation is provided by the student that “extenuating circumstances” exist.

6.10 Excused Absences: Non-Patient Care

- 6.10.1 Any student who plans to be absent from a mandatory activity must complete an absence-approval request form prior to his/her absence. He/she must submit this form as well as the required documentation to the Associate Dean of the Scholars Program. These forms may be obtained from the Office of the Associate Dean of the Scholars Program.
- 6.10.2 In order for an unanticipated absence to be excused, a student is required to submit proper documentation within 48 hours following his/her return to educational/program activities.
- 6.10.3 Absence excuses may include, but are not limited to, the following:
 - 6.10.3.1 A statement from a physician that, at the time of the mandatory activity, the student was under the physician’s care and too ill due to (state diagnosis) to participate in the mandatory activities.
 - 6.10.3.2 A statement from a physician that a member of the student's immediate family (state relationship) was seriously ill and required the student's presence.
 - 6.10.3.3 A death in the student's immediate family. The relationship of the deceased to the student and the date of the death must be provided.
 - 6.10.3.4 Documented failure of normal or auxiliary means of transportation under extenuating circumstances.
 - 6.10.3.5 A substantive personal event such as student's wedding.
 - 6.10.3.6 Childbirth (Leave of Absence Policy as referenced in section 18 takes precedence).
 - 6.10.3.7 Educational or professional activities, e.g., attendance at a professional meeting. The Associate Dean of the Scholars Program must grant approval for the absence. As part of the approval process, the Associate Dean of the Scholars Program will determine the length of time the student may be away from the Program. These requests must be made at least two weeks prior to the desired event.
 - 6.10.3.8 Students will be considered for an approved absence for educational or professional activities if they are in good standing both academically and clinically (e.g., performing at a clearly passing level with no significant clinical absences or late arrivals).
- 6.10.4 The determination of whether an absence not specifically covered above is considered to be excused shall be decided by the Associate Dean of the Scholars Program.
- 6.10.5 For an anticipated absence that may qualify as an excused absence, a student is required to submit appropriate documentation at least three weeks prior to his/her absence.

- 6.10.6 All work missed during an excused absence must be completed to the satisfaction of the course/block instructor prior to receiving a grade for the course/block. All work must be completed within a period of time designated by the Associate Dean of the Scholars Program, in consultation with the course/block instructor.
- 6.10.7 If the number of absences is determined to be excessive based upon the timing of the amount of instructional activities missed, a student may be required to take a Leave of Absence as referenced in section 18.

6.11 Excused Absences: Patient Care Activities During Internship

- 6.11.1 Attendance is mandatory at all patient care activities. Students are expected to arrive at least 15 minutes prior to the first scheduled patient.
- 6.11.1.1 Students arriving late for more than two (2) patient care activities in a given quarter will be given an unexcused absence.
- 6.11.2 A student must immediately inform his/her clinical supervisor of any absence unless he/she is physically unable to communicate. Students should refer to the Professional Practice Syllabi for specific contact information.
- 6.11.3 All absences (excused and unexcused) will be reported to the Office of the Associate Dean of the Scholars Program by the Scholars Program clinical faculty.
- 6.11.4 For an absence to be excused, an explanation must be submitted in writing internally to the Associate Dean of the Scholars Program or his/her designee.
- 6.11.5 For an unanticipated absence, a student is required to submit proper documentation for consideration of approval within 48 hours following his/her return to campus activities and upon return to the site for external rotations.
- 6.11.6 For an anticipated absence, a student is required to submit documentation at least three weeks prior to his/her absence. Students should refer to the Professional Practice Syllabi for the anticipated absence policy and procedure.
- 6.11.7 Acceptable reasons for an "excused" absence may include the following:
- 6.11.7.1 Illness of the student. A statement is needed from the treating physician that, at the time of the mandatory activity, the student was under his/her care and too ill due to (state diagnosis) to participate in patient care activities. Students are expected to report all symptoms indicating contagious illnesses such as fever, flu-like, or any other communicable infection immediately to the Director of Clinical Education of the Scholars Program. In these cases, students will be asked to refrain from patient care.
- 6.11.7.1.2 Serious illness of an immediate family member. A statement is needed from the treating physician that a member of the student's immediate family (state relationship) was seriously ill and required the student's presence.
- 6.11.7.1.3 A death in the student's immediate family. The name of the deceased, relationship to the student, and the date of death must be provided.
- 6.11.7.1.4 Documented failure of normal and auxiliary means of transportation.
- 6.11.7.1.5 A substantive personal event. Use of personal/professional days is required.

- 6.11.7.1.6 Childbirth. (Leave of Absence Policy as referenced in section 18 takes precedence)
- 6.11.7.1.7 Educational or professional activities, (e.g., attendance at a professional meeting). The Associate Dean of the Scholars Program, in conjunction with the Dean, must grant approval. As part of the approval process, the Associate Dean of the Scholars Program will determine the length of time the student may be away from the Program. These requests must be made at least two weeks prior to the desired event.
- 6.11.7.1.8 Students will be considered for an approved absence for educational or professional activities if they are in good standing both academically and clinically (e.g., performing at a clearly passing level with no significant clinical absences or late arrivals).
- 6.11.8 Any excuse not specifically covered above will be addressed and resolved internally by the Associate Dean of the Scholars Program.
- 6.11.9 All work missed during the absence must be completed to the satisfaction of the supervising faculty member of the Scholars Program prior to the student receiving a grade for the course/block.
- 6.11.10 All work must be completed within a period of time designated by the Director of the Externship Program in conjunction with the Associate Dean of the Scholars Program as appropriate.
- 6.11.11 A student may appeal to the Office of the Dean if he/she feels that the policy is not being honored or equitably enforced.
- 6.11.12 Should a student require excused absences in excess of the maximum allowable excused absences, the Associate Dean of the Scholars Program may recommend he/she take a Leave of Absence (see section 18).

6.12 Excused Absences: Community-Based Clinical and Screening Programs

- 6.12.1 Attendance at all assigned external community-based clinical and screening programs is mandatory.
- 6.12.2 All excused absences from Community-Based Activities must be made-up.
- 6.12.3 The specific method for making up an absence will be based upon recommendations from the instructor with the final approval of the Associate Dean of the Scholars Program.
- 6.12.4 Make-up for excused absences may consist of participating at a future date in activities similar to those that occurred during the absence. This includes weekend and evening activities.
- 6.12.5 Students who notify the instructor prior to an expected absence and find a consenting student replacement for his/her patient care duties will be required to make-up the absence on a time equivalent (e.g., one-for-one) basis for the activity 'traded' with that student replacement.
- 6.12.6 Unless otherwise unavoidable due to an emergent situation, notification of an instructor must occur at least forty-eight (48) hours prior to the scheduled activity.

- 6.12.7 The student must notify the instructor by e-mail and copy the e-mail message to his/her consenting student replacement.
- 6.12.8 If the consenting replacement student does not arrive for the assignment, the replacement student will receive with an unexcused absence if this protocol has been followed. The original student will receive an unexcused absence if the protocol has not been followed.

6.13 Unexcused Absences: Non-Patient Care Activities

- 6.13.1 An “unexcused absence” is any absence that does not meet the criteria for being an excused absence, as outlined in sections 6.10, 6.11 and 6.12.
- 6.13.2 Unless otherwise specified in a course/block syllabi an unexcused absence from educational/program activities will result in a Failure (F) for any academic activities that occur during the period of the unexcused absence.

6.14 Unexcused Absences: Patient Care Activities

- 6.14.1 An "unexcused absence" is any absence that does not meet the criteria for being an excused absence, as outlined in sections 6.10, 6.11, and 6.12.
- 6.14.2 Unexcused absences including lateness, early departures or other absences from patient care will not be permitted. See course syllabi for specific course-dependent consequences.
- 6.14.2.1 A student who demonstrates a pattern of behavior exceeding three (3) unexcused absences may be referred by the Associate Dean of the Scholars Program to the University Judicial Committee.
- 6.14.2.2 The consequences of this referral may include dismissal from the Scholars Program and Salus University for unprofessional conduct.
- 6.14.2.3 All unexcused absences must be made up as assigned by the Associate Dean of the Scholars Program and may include assignments on Saturdays, academic/institutional holidays or vacation periods, or other hours as assigned.

6.15 Tardiness and Unauthorized Early Departure

- 6.15.1 Students are expected to arrive on time, as defined by the appropriate syllabi for class and clinical schedules, and to stay in the assigned area/service until released by faculty/professional staff. Failure to follow schedules and attendance policies may result in unexcused absences (see section 6.13 and 6.14).

6.16 Attendance and Absences: Externship Program

- 6.16.1 Attendance at Externship sites is mandatory. The syllabus for the Externship Program describes the attendance policy in detail.
- 6.16.2 The hours and days of office and patient care activity are determined at the discretion of the externship preceptor, consistent with the College's Externship Program calendar and policies.

- 6.16.3 Policies regarding excused and unexcused absences relating to patient care activities apply while students are on externship rotations (see sections 6.11 and 6.14). The Director of the Externship Program, in conjunction with the Associate Dean of the Scholars Program, will determine all final decisions regarding excused or unexcused absences.
- 6.16.4 If illness, preceptor vacations, or other circumstances prevent students from maintaining their clinical schedule, the Office of the Externship Program should be notified within 24 hours (refer to the Externship Program Syllabus).
- 6.16.5 The Director of the Externship Program, in consultation with the preceptor and the Associate Dean of the Scholars Program, will determine how and when student absence(s) will be made-up.
- 6.16.6 All absences not made up to the satisfaction of the preceptor and/or the Director of the Externship Program by the end of a term will result in an Incomplete grade (I) being registered as the student's grade for the term.
- 6.16.7 Make-up of these absences must be completed by the end of the fourth week of the subsequent academic term.
- 6.16.8 The Incomplete ("I") or Deferred ("R") grade will be removed only when all externship activities are completed to the satisfaction of the Director of the Externship Program.
- 6.16.9 The Associate Dean of the Scholars Program via the Director of the Externship Program may grant an extension period if written documentation is provided by the student confirming that "extenuating circumstances" exist.
- 6.16.10 Awarding of the Doctor of Optometry degree will be withheld until the externship activity is satisfactory and completed.

7. ELECTIVE COURSES

7.1 Elective Course: Registration and Enrollment

- 7.1.1 Successful completion of (2) elective courses is required within the Scholars Program.
- 7.1.2 Scholars Program students may only enroll in elective courses during their TEI rotation in the last year of the Program.
- 7.1.3 Individual registration is required through the Office of the Registrar for enrollment in each elective course.
- 7.1.4 Students will be permitted to register during the University registration period for the term the elective course is offered.
- 7.1.5 After registration closes, students will not be permitted to register for any elective course unless their originally requested elective module course is canceled.
- 7.1.6 Elective course credit will not be granted to any student who has not properly registered.
- 7.1.7 Enrollment in elective courses with limited enrollment is on a first-come, first-served basis.
- 7.1.8 An elective course offered in any of the other colleges at the University may be taken to meet the elective requirements for the Scholars Program. Application, admission, and other fees (including tuition) may apply. These elective courses may require passage of examinations or completion of other scholarly requirements.

7.2 Elective Course: Withdrawal

- 7.2.1 Students will not be permitted to withdraw from an elective course after the fourth (4th) clock hour of instruction.
- 7.2.2 All weekend elective course withdrawal requests must be submitted to the Office of the Registrar by 4 PM on the Friday before the elective begins.
- 7.2.3 Non-compliance with these procedures will result in a failure (F) for the elective course.

7.3 Elective Course: Cancellation

- 7.3.1 The Director of Electives and Advanced Studies and the Dean reserve the right to cancel any elective course with less than the minimum required enrollment. Students will receive notice from the Office of the Registrar if an elective for which they have registered has been canceled and will have two (2) days to re-register for a replacement elective.

7.4 Elective Course: Grading

- 7.4.1 The grading system for elective courses is: Pass (P) / Failure (F).
- 7.4.2 Certain elective module/blocks may include an examination, a research project, or other requirements for grading purposes, which will be indicated in the elective module/block description and syllabus.
- 7.4.3 All grades of Failure (F) received in elective courses will be computed into the term and cumulative grade point averages and will remain on the transcript.
- 7.4.4 No credit will be awarded for any elective course for which a grade of Failure (F) is received.
- 7.4.5 A “failing” grade in an elective course falls under the jurisdiction for the Scholars Program Academic Progress and Standards Committee [APSC] (refer to section 13).

7.5 Elective Course: Attendance

- 7.5.1 Attendance is mandatory for each elective.
- 7.5.2 Attendance sheets must be completed and verified by the responsible instructor for each elective class session. Attendance information and grades will be forwarded to the Office of the Registrar.
- 7.5.3 Students not attending 100% of lectures [80% with excused absence(s)] will automatically receive a Failure (F).
- 7.5.4 A student not attending a weekend elective course for which he/she is registered will be permitted to “late withdraw” from the elective if an excused absence is granted by the Associate Dean of the Scholars Program (see sections 6.10).

8. STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES REGARDING ELECTRONIC MAIL

- 8.1 Students are expected to check their Salus University e-mail account twice daily, as some correspondence from instructors and administrators may be time-sensitive. Any students with unresolved academic matters (e.g., incomplete grades) must also check their e-mail twice daily until the matter is resolved. In addition, all students are expected to regularly check their Salus e-mail account during weekends, breaks, holidays, and other unassigned times for the duration of the life of the account.
- 8.1.1 Letters and related communications regarding student academic standing (e.g., Academic Warning, Probation, and Dismissal) will be sent electronically to student salus.edu e-mail addresses as PDF e-mail attachments.
- 8.2 Students are required to use their Salus University e-mail account when communicating with faculty, staff and administrators at Salus University. Administrators, faculty, and staff of Salus University are not responsible for reading or responding to any e-mail sent by a student that is not sent from his/her Salus University account.

9. CLASSROOM CONCERNS

- 9.1 Classroom concerns should be initially discussed with the instructor and, if necessary, the Associate Dean of the Scholars Program.
- 9.2 In the event that the Associate Dean is the course instructor or is otherwise a direct participant in the concerns, the situation should be discussed with the Dean.
- 9.3 Classroom discrimination or sexual harassment concerns should be brought to the attention of the Salus University Affirmative Action Officer or the Dean of Student Affairs.

10. STUDENT CLINICAL PRIVILEGES

- 10.1 Students are expected to read The Eye Institute Practice Manual provided by the Office of the Department for the Practice of Optometric Medicine and the Office of the Vice President of Clinical Operations.
- 10.2 Student clinical privileges may be withdrawn for any of the following reasons:
- 10.2.1 Decision of the PCO Scholars Program Academic Progress and Standards Committee for academic and/or clinical deficiencies.
- 10.2.2 Decisions of the Judicial Committee regarding a violation of the Student Code of Conduct and/or conduct unbecoming of a professional.
- 10.2.3 Decision by an officer of the University for non-payment of tuition and fees or any other matter deemed appropriate.

11. EXAMINATIONS

11.1 General Policies

- 11.1.1 Examinations provide the opportunity for instructors to assess students and for students to demonstrate academic progress and competence.
- 11.1.2 Rules for Taking Examinations are distributed to students and posted on Blackboard. Each student is responsible for understanding these Rules. Questions or concerns should be directed to the Associate Dean of the Scholars Program or the Salus University Dean of Student Affairs.
- 11.1.3 Infractions of the Rules for Taking Examinations are considered serious offenses. These matters will be referred to the Salus University Judicial Committee for review and potential action. Students determined to be guilty of infractions will be penalized in an appropriate manner, including the possibility of expulsion from the University.
- 11.1.4 Examination policies and procedures for a course/block will be included in the course/block syllabus, which will be posted or distributed at the beginning of each term.
- 11.1.5 The relative weights to be given to various examinations and assessment tools used in determining the final grade will be included in the course/block syllabus.

11.2 Schedules

- 11.2.1 Examination schedules are established and issued by the Office of the Dean or his/her designee, or the University's Office of Academic Affairs.
- 11.2.2 Examination schedules are subject to change for unanticipated reasons (e.g., inclement weather).
- 11.2.3 In the event of extremely harsh weather conditions or other emergency situations, information will be provided about the cancelation of University courses, clinics, or operations through an emergency alert from Salus University via landline, cell phone, email, and/or text message. Information about course cancellation will also be broadcast on AM radio KYW 1060. Students should consult the Student Handbook for additional information regarding an unanticipated University closing. If any questions or problems arise, contact the Human Resources Department at Salus University.

11.3 Attendance

- 11.3.1 As noted in section 6.4 students are required to sit for examinations as scheduled. If a student is ill and unable to sit for the examination, he or she must notify the Associate Dean of the Scholars Program prior to the examination and have his/her physician submit a written report of the illness. In cases of other emergencies (e.g., death of immediate family member), the Associate Dean of the Scholars Program should be notified and may authorize absence from the examination. Unexcused absences will result in a grade of zero (0) for the exam (see section 6.13).
- 11.3.2 A student must be registered for any given course/block before he or she may take the course/block examinations. No credit will be received for any course/block for which the student is not formally registered. The Registrar's Office is responsible for ensuring that only registered students receive a grade in a particular course/block.

11.4 National Board of Examiners in Optometry (NBEO) Examinations

- 11.4.1 Passage of the National Board of Examiners in Optometry (NBEO) is not required for graduation. However, passage of Part I - Applied Basic Science, Part II – Patient Assessment and Management, and Part III – Clinical Skills Examination is required in most states for licensure. Therefore, it is recommended that all students register and sit for the NBEO examinations if they plan to practice in the U.S.
- 11.4.2 A student should consult the NBEO website www.optometry.org for general information about exam content and registration procedures. Students are responsible for registering for the NBEO examinations by the deadlines posted on the NBEO website. All other questions should be directed to the Office of the Registrar.
- 11.4.3 Students in the Scholars Program are first eligible for each Part of the NBEO according to the following schedule:
- 11.4.3.1 Part I – Applied Basic Science Examination: August administration during Year 3
- 11.4.3.2 Part II – Patient Assessment and Management Exam: November/December administration during Year 3
- 11.4.3.3 Part III – Clinical Skills Examination: After September 1 during Year 3
- 11.4.4 Each Scholars Program student is required to authorize the NBEO to release his/her scores to the College since these scores provide information vital to the Program's ongoing student and curriculum assessment efforts.

12. STUDENT ASSESSMENT AND GRADING

12.1 Didactic Grading and Evaluation

12.1.1 At the conclusion of a didactic course/block or term (usually within three [3] business days), as determined by the Office of the Registrar), grades are rendered for each enrolled student.

12.1.2 Unless otherwise specified in a course/block syllabus, the default Scholars Program grading scale is:

<u>Grade</u>	<u>Range</u>	<u>Interpretation</u>	<u>Grade Points Earned/Term Hour</u>
A	93.00 -100.00	(EXCELLENT) Indicates exceptional achievement	4.00
A-	90.00 - 92.99		3.70
B+	87.00 - 89.99		3.30
B	83.00 - 86.99	(GOOD) Indicates superior achievement	3.00
B-	80.00 - 82.99		2.70
C+	77.00 - 79.99	(SATISFACTORY) Indicates acceptable achievement	2.30
C	73.00 - 76.99		2.00
C-	70.00 - 72.99	(POOR) Credit earned but below desired standards	1.70
F	≤ 69.99	(FAILURE) No Credit Earned	0.00

Other Designations (carrying no Grade Points):

F	(FAILURE) Unsatisfactory performance Remediation of the module/block is required	0.00 (no credits earned)
H	(HONORS) Indicates outstanding performance	0.00 (credits earned)
P	(PASS) Indicates performance meets all competencies or requirements	0.00 (credits earned)
CR	(CREDIT) Credit is given but no grade is assigned	0.00 (credits earned)
AU	(AUDIT)	
I	(INCOMPLETE)	
R	(DEFERRED)	
IP	(IN PROGRESS)	
W	(WITHDRAWAL)	
EX	(EXEMPT)	

12.1.3 The choice to round or curve is at the discretion of the faculty member and will be addressed in the course syllabus.

12.2 Failing Grades (F)

- 12.2.1 A failure (“F”) in a required course/block will remain on a student transcript, and must be remediated.
- 12.2.2 All failures (“F”s) must be successfully remediated prior to beginning externship clinical rotations.

12.3 Clinical Grading and Evaluation

12.3.1 **Internship Program Clinical Grades:** At the conclusion of a clinical course/block, grades are rendered for each enrolled student as follows:

12.3.1.1 The grades of Honors (H), High Pass (P+), Pass (P), Low Pass (P-), or Failure (F) will be utilized for all patient care course/blocks evaluations received by the students; including Professional Practice course/blocks.

<u>Grade</u>	<u>Interpretation</u>	<u>Grade Points Earned per Term Hour</u>
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H	(HONORS) Indicates outstanding performance in all expected competencies or requirements	0.00 (with credits earned)
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P+	(HIGH PASS) Indicates performance exceeding most expected competencies or requirements	0.00 (with credits earned)
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P	(PASS) Indicates performance meets expected competencies or requirements	0.00 (with credits earned)
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P-	(LOW PASS) Indicates performance that inconsistently and/or minimally meets expected competencies or requirements.	0.00 (with credits earned)
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****Students earning a Low Pass during the final quarter of internships will not be allowed to begin their externships off-campus.****

F	(FAILURE) Indicates performance below expected competencies or requirements. Re-enrollment in the module/block is required	0.00 (no credits earned)
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I (INCOMPLETE)

R (DEFERRED)

IP (IN PROGRESS)

12.3.1.2 Students must receive Honors (H), High Pass (P+), or Pass (P) in the evaluation they receive in the professional practice course/block in the term prior to the start of externship training.

12.3.1.3 For the Internship Program, achieved clinical grades will be recorded on the transcript as Honors (H), High Pass (P+), Pass (P), Low Pass (P-), or Failure (F).

- 12.3.1.4 The grades of Honors (H) and Pass (P) will not be converted to grade points and, therefore, will not be calculated into the grade point average. However, the grade of Failure (F) will carry zero grade points and will be computed in the grade point average.
- 12.3.1.5 No arbitrary percentage of the class will be designated to receive any particular grade category.
- 12.3.2 **Clinical Evaluations:** Two evaluations will be completed for each student. The first will be at mid-term and the second will occur at the conclusion of a clinical course/block or rotation. A narrative evaluation summary form concerning the quality of the student's work will be rendered.
- 12.3.2.1 The narrative evaluation summaries are used in counseling students concerning clinical strengths and weaknesses and in the preparation of letters of evaluation/recommendation.
- 12.3.2.2 Narrative evaluation summaries are rendered on standard forms. These forms are provided by the Director of Clinical Education for the Scholars Program in collaboration with the Associate Dean of the Scholars Program.
- 12.3.2.3 Narrative evaluation summaries are not considered a part of the student's Permanent Record File maintained in the Office of the Registrar, but may be reviewed by the student in the Office of the Associate Dean of the Scholars Program.
- 12.3.2.4 In clinical rotations, the principal parameters used for evaluation are defined in the Professional Practice syllabus.
- 12.3.3 **Externship Program Clinical Grades:** At the conclusion of a clinical course/block, grades are rendered for each enrolled student as follows:
- 12.3.3.1 The grades of Honors (H), Pass (P), or Failure (F) will be utilized for all externship clinical rotations.

Grade	Interpretation	Grade Points Earned	per Term Hour
H	(HONORS) Indicates outstanding performance in all expected competencies or requirements	0.00	(with credits earned)
P+	(HIGH PASS) Indicates performance exceeding most expected competencies or requirements	0.00	(with credits earned)
P	(PASS) Indicates performance meeting expected competencies or requirements	0.00	(with credits earned)
P-	(LOW PASS) Indicates performance that inconsistently and/or minimally meets expected competencies or requirements.	0.00	(with credits earned)
F	(FAILURE) Indicates performance below expected competencies or requirements. Re-enrollment in the course is required	0.00	(no credits earned)

I (INCOMPLETE)

R (DEFERRED)

IP (IN PROGRESS)

12.3.3.2 For the Externship Program, achieved clinical grades will be recorded on the transcript as Honors (H), Pass (P), or Failure (F).

12.3.3.3 The grades of Honors (H) and Pass (P) will not be converted to grade points and, therefore, will not be calculated into the grade point average. However, the grade of Failure (F) will carry zero grade points and will be computed in the grade point average.

12.3.3.4 No arbitrary percentage of the class will be designated to receive any particular grade category.

12.4 Incomplete Grade (I)

12.4.1 The temporary designation Incomplete (I) may be used when an assessment cannot be rendered because course work is not complete due to a student-centered reason, such as being granted an excused absence due to illness and/or personal urgency, and when the student's work is otherwise of passing quality.

12.4.2 Incomplete grades must be resolved by the end of the subsequent academic quarter.

12.4.2.1 The Associate Dean of the Scholars Program may grant an extension for resolution of the Incomplete if written documentation is provided by the student confirming that "extenuating circumstances" exist.

12.4.2.2 All Incomplete (I) grades must be removed prior to beginning external clinical rotations. In this instance, the start date or end date of the clinical rotation may be delayed.

12.4.3 If the student fails to remove the Incomplete (I) grade within the time allowed, the course/block instructor, with the approval of the Associate Dean of the Scholars Program, will authorize the Office of the Registrar to change the grade to a Failure (F). The student, course/block instructor, the appropriate Associate Deans, and the Dean will be notified in writing of this grade change.

12.4.4 Once the student has completed the required course work the course/block instructor will submit the student's final grade.

12.4.4.1 The course/block instructor with the approval of the Associate Dean of the Scholars Program will authorize the Office of the Registrar to change the grade from Incomplete (I) to the final grade based upon the course syllabus grading policy.

12.5 Deferred Grade (R)

12.5.1 A Deferred grade (R) may be given when the work in a course is not completed due to a program-centered reason beyond a student's control, such as a change in schedule/instructor availability or technology challenges associated with remote instruction. All deferred grades (R) must be resolved within 45 days, unless an exception is made through the APSC (see **Section 13**). It is not appropriate for the instructor to assign a Deferred Grade when the assignment of a substandard grade is indicated due to substandard performance.

12.6 Withdrawal (W)

- 12.6.1 **Withdrawal from a Required Course:** A student may not withdraw from a required course(s) or the entire curriculum without the approval of the Dean of Student Affairs and the subsequent approval of the Associate Dean of the Scholars Program and the Dean. The attempt to avoid a sub-standard grade is not an acceptable reason for withdrawal from a course/block.
- 12.6.2 **Withdrawal from an Elective Course:** A student who drops an elective course by completing a course withdrawal form in the Office of the Registrar before the fourth (4th) clock hour of instruction (or before 4 PM on the Friday before a weekend elective begins) will receive a "W."
- 12.6.2.1 A student may not withdraw from an elective course without the approval of the Associate Dean of the Scholars Program beyond these specified dates.

12.7 Grade Mediation and Adjudication

- 12.7.1 A student who has a concern about a reported grade in a course/block should first discuss the course/block grading policies and determinations with the instructor. If the student does not receive a response from the course instructor within **2 business days**, the student may approach the Associate Dean of the Scholars Program. If the student does not receive a response from the Associate Dean of the Scholars Program within **2 business days**, the student may approach the Dean.
- 12.7.2 The student may then appeal the grade decision, in writing, to the Associate Dean of the Scholars Program.
- 12.7.2.1 The Associate Dean's decision on a grading dispute is final. There is no further appeal within the College.
- 12.7.2.2 In the event that the Associate Dean teaches the course/block in question, the student's written appeal is made to the Dean.
- 12.7.3 Any challenge of a grade must be made within one week of the grade being posted by the Office of the Registrar.
- 12.7.4 The original grade assigned by the instructor remains on the student's record while the appeals process is in progress, and will be changed only when, and if, the appeal is successful.
- 12.7.4.1 Any grade change will be recorded in accordance with section 12.9 of this policy, "Change of Grade".
- 12.7.5 Copies of sequestered exams, reports, and/or presentations submitted by students are required to be retained by the course/block instructor for a period of one calendar year from the end of the term in which the grade was earned.

12.8 Change of Grade

- 12.8.1 Once submitted to the Office of the Registrar, no grade, except that of Incomplete "I", Deferred "R", or In Progress "IP", may be changed without the mutual written consent of the course/block instructor and the appropriate Associate Dean.

12.9 Grade-Point Average (GPA)

- 12.9.1 A student's cumulative grade-point average (GPA) is the weighted mean value of all grade points earned by the student in all course/blocks taken for letter grades within the College.
- 12.9.2 Grades are converted to grade points by multiplying the number of credits for each course/block by the specified formula assigned to the letter grade as noted in Section 11.1. Thus, an A in a four-credit course/block earns the student 16 grade points (4 x 4.0), a B in a four-credit course/block earns 12 grade points (4 x 3.0), and so on.
- 12.9.3 The total number of grade points divided by the total credits used to calculate the grade points equals the grade-point average.
- 12.9.4 The cumulative grade-point average is calculated utilizing only course/blocks taken within the Scholars Program.

12.10 Credit (CR)

- 12.10.1 A grade of Credit (CR) may be utilized for required course/blocks and electives if approved by the module/block instructor, the Associate Dean of the Scholars Program, and the Dean.
- 12.10.2 A grade of Credit is not computed in the student's term or cumulative grade point average.

12.11 Credit by Examination (CR)

- 12.11.1 Any student judged qualified by the course/block instructor may receive academic credit for a course/block within the curriculum by satisfactory performance on special examinations administered by the appropriate academic department within the College. A fee is charged for the examination.
- 12.11.2 Upon satisfactory completion of the examination and approval by the Associate Dean of the Scholars Program and the Dean, a grade of Credit (CR) will be given and recorded during the term in which the examination was taken.

12.12 Credit by Transfer (CR)

- 12.12.1 Credit by transfer may be accepted for any course/block(s) within the curriculum when it is determined the transfer course/block is substantially equivalent to that offered by the College. This equivalency will be determined by the course/block instructor, and approved by the Associate Dean of the Scholars Program and the Dean.
- 12.12.2 Only courses/modules/blocks in which the student received a grade of C, P (Pass), or above will be considered for transfer.
- 12.12.3 No more than 6 credits in the Doctor of Optometry Degree Program can be completed by credit for prior.
- 12.12.4 A Fee will be assigned for credits transferred to the University.

12.13 Audit (AU)

- 12.13.1 A student may elect to officially audit any course/block within the curriculum by obtaining written permission from the course/block instructor and the Associate Dean of the Scholars Program and registering for the course/block.
- 12.13.2 The student is required to provide the Office of the Registrar with written approval from the course/course instructor no later than the fifth (5th) business day of the term.
- 12.13.3 This non-credit registration is recorded as "Audit" on the student's transcript.
- 12.13.4 A course/block audit fee will be applied.
- 12.13.5 The Office of the Registrar will notify the course/block instructor and the Associate Dean of the Scholars Program when a student has approval to audit a module/block.
- 12.13.6 A course/block taken on an audit basis will not count toward the fulfillment of degree requirements.
- 12.13.7 Since the credit hours attempted and grade points will not be awarded for an audited course/block, it will not affect the student's grade point average.

12.14 Exempt (EX)

- 12.14.1 The designation of Exempt (EX) will be used in the instance when a student produces evidence of proficiency for a required component of the academic program (e.g., CPR certification).
- 12.14.2 The student is exempt from the course/block.

13. PENNSYLVANIA COLLEGE OF OPTOMETRY (PCO) SCHOLARS PROGRAM ACADEMIC PROGRESS AND STANDARDS COMMITTEE (APSC)

13.1 Roles and Responsibilities of the APSC

- 13.1.1 **Review student performance.**
- 13.1.1.2 The opportunity to remediate a course/block failure is granted by the APSC. The criteria considered by the APSC to offer this opportunity include, but are not limited to a student's:
 - 13.1.1.2.1 Academic status entering the term in question.
 - 13.1.1.2.2 Past academic performance.
 - 13.1.1.2.3 Special circumstances that contributed to poor performance.
 - 13.1.1.2.4 Efforts toward self-help and adherence to recommendations made at midterm progress meetings.

13.1.2 **Review student requests for leaves of absence (see Section 18).**

13.1.3 **Recommend general academic policy within the Scholars Program to the Dean.**

13.2 Composition of the Scholars Program Academic Progress and Standards Committee

13.2.1 This standing Committee is composed of six faculty members appointed by the Dean, all with voting privileges with the exception of the Chair. In order for a vote to occur, there must be a quorum of at least three voting members. In the event of a tied vote, the chair will provide the tie-breaking vote.

13.2.1.1 At least one of the appointed faculty members must have substantial involvement (core or constructive faculty) within the Scholars Program.

13.2.1.2 An alternate Committee member may be appointed by the Dean in the event of illness or unavailability of a named Committee member, or where a Committee member has recused himself/herself.

13.2.2 Representatives from the office of the Scholars Program, the Office of the Dean of Student Affairs, the Office of the Registrar are *ex-officio*, non-voting members of the Committee.

14. ACADEMIC PROGRESS EVALUATION

14.1 The performance of all students registered within a course/block will be evaluated by the instructors of record at the end of each term, in conjunction with the Associate Dean of the Scholars Program. During this meeting, the instructors of record or their designee will review the performance of the Scholars Program students based upon data compiled by the office of the Registrar. At the completion of this meeting, faculty will make recommendations to the APSC Chair for academic standing determination. ASPC will then meet to review all recommendations and determine the final academic standing for the Scholars Program students. For Categories of Academic Standing, see section 14.8 and 14.9.

14.2 The name of any student who has been evaluated as “poor” or “failing” in course/block or “low pass” or “failing” in a clinical course/block will be provided to the Office of the Registrar.

14.2.1 The Office of the Registrar will compile this information and present it at the End of Term Academic Progress meeting for the Scholars Program.

14.2.2 The Associate Dean of the Scholars Program will serve as Chair of the meeting.

14.3 Following the Academic Progress meeting, the Office of the Associate Dean of the Scholars Program will notify the student in writing that his/her performance is “poor” or “failing”. If the student is in poor academic standing, at the completion of this meeting, faculty will make recommendations to the APSC. For Categories of Academic Standing, see section 14.8 and 14.9.

- 14.4 If the student has not already done so on his/her own initiative, once notified, the student is **required** to meet with a member of the Center for Personal Professional Development and is **required** to speak with his/her course/block coordinator or his/her designee.
- 14.5 A student is expected to take action to resolve his/her academic difficulties with the assistance of the individuals and services available to him/her.

14.7 Satisfactory Academic Progress and Academic Advancement

- 14.7.1 **Satisfactory Academic Standing** – A student is in satisfactory academic standing when he/she is attaining a term grade point average AND a cumulative grade point average (GPA) greater than or equal to 2.30.
- 14.7.2 A student enrolled in the Scholars Program is considered to be making satisfactory academic progress unless notified otherwise.
- 14.7.3 A student who is experiencing academic difficulty should, at his/her earliest opportunity, speak with the course/block instructor or coordinator, or Scholars Program clinical faculty or service chief, regarding their performance.
- 14.7.3.1 Additional tutoring assistance may be made available at the discretion of the course/block instructor, the Associate Dean of the Scholars Program, or at the student's request while any course/block is in progress.
- 14.7.4 The student should contact the Center for Personal and Professional Development (CPPD) regarding tutorial support, personal counseling opportunities, or other related needs.
- 14.7.4.1 In order to help students improve their learning experiences, the CPPD will coordinate tutoring assistance. CPPD will also communicate with the Associate Dean of the Scholars Program when a student is utilizing tutoring services.
- 14.7.5 Satisfactory academic progress is an eligibility criterion for all students who receive Title IV student financial assistance. Students must carry a minimum of nine (9) credit units when enrolled in a quarter to possess full time student status for financial aid purposes. A course/block not taken for a grade (i.e. audit) is not counted for these purposes.
- 14.7.6 Under normal circumstances, all Scholars Program didactic course/block and clinical requirements will be completed in 36 months and no more than 48 months, inclusive of potential approved Leaves of Absence. A course of study longer than 48 months must be approved by the Associate Dean of the Scholars Program, in consultation with the Dean and the APSC as deemed appropriate.
- 14.7.7 A passing grade in each course/block as well as a term and cumulative grade point average of at least 2.30 are required for advancement to each subsequent term in good academic standing.
- 14.7.8 A cumulative grade point average of at least 2.30 is required for unconditional advancement to the subsequent Academic Year of the Scholars Program. Any student receiving a failing grade will be referred to the APSC who will determine the best course of corrective action.

14.7.9 A student must be in good academic standing prior to beginning an external clinical rotation.

14.8 Unsatisfactory Academic Progress

14.8.1 **Academic Warning** – An academic warning is an indication to the student that his/her academic performance is in danger of falling below the minimum acceptable academic expectations for the Scholars Program. A student may be placed on academic warning when:

14.8.2 His/her term GPA falls below 2.50 but is higher than 2.30 AND/OR his/her cumulative GPA falls below 2.50 but is higher than 2.30.

14.8.3 A Scholars Program student placed on academic warning is required to meet with the Associate Dean of the Scholars Program and/or his/her designee.

14.8.4 A student on academic warning who successfully resolves the conditions that placed him/her in this standing is removed from warning when the term and/or cumulative grade point average is 2.50 or higher. The student has then returned to the requisite acceptable levels of academic performance and is considered a student in good academic standing.

14.8.2 **Academic Probation** – A student may be placed on academic probation when:

14.8.2.1 His/her term GPA falls below 2.30 AND/OR his/her cumulative GPA falls below 2.30.

14.8.2.2 He/she is enrolled in a remediation program for a “failing” grade.

14.8.2.3 A Scholars Program student placed on Academic Probation is required to meet with the Associate Dean of the Scholars Program and/or his/her designee.

14.8.2.4 A student on academic probation who successfully resolves the conditions that placed him/her in this standing is removed from probation by the APSC. The student has returned to the requisite acceptable levels of academic performance and is considered a student in good academic standing.

14.8.3 **Academic Dismissal** – A student may be dismissed from the Scholars Program by the APSC when he/she:

14.8.3.1 Is not granted the opportunity to remediate a “failing” grade.

14.8.3.2 Received two (2) “failing” grades in the same academic term.

14.8.3.3 His/her term GPA falls below a 2.30 for two consecutive terms.

14.8.3.4 His/her cumulative GPA falls below 2.30 for two consecutive terms.

14.8.3.5 Fails a specified plan of remediation as described in section 15.

14.8.3.6 Fails to meet special performance criteria established by the APSC.

14.8.3.7 Fails to be promoted to the next academic year.

14.8.4 A student demonstrating unsatisfactory academic progress (e.g., Academic Warning, Academic Probation) for any reason should contact the Center for Personal and Professional Development immediately and is required to speak with course/block instructors as well as the Associate Dean of the Scholars Program and/or his/her designee.

14.8.5 No student will be promoted unconditionally to the subsequent academic year of the Scholars Program while on Academic Warning or Academic Probation.

14.9 Conduct of the APSC Meeting

14.9.1 When a student receives a notification letter of dismissal, the student will automatically be scheduled to meet with the APSC. The purpose of the meeting is for the student to identify any special circumstances impeding the student's academic performance that may justify reinstatement.

14.9.1.1 The meeting will be conducted in a manner as to provide a fair evaluation of the student's performance. The APSC chair will request any relevant information including, but not limited to the following, for consideration during the meeting:

14.9.1.1.1 Student transcripts and academic records

14.9.1.1.2 Clinical performance evaluations and grades

14.9.1.1.3 NBEO examinations scores (if applicable)

14.9.1.1.4 Summaries from faculty including academic, clinical, and professional development

14.9.1.1.5 Documentation of any previous appeals

14.9.1.1.6 Any additional documentation submitted by the student

14.9.1.1.7 Any and all information to be reviewed during the APSC meeting must be made available by the registrar 48 hours (2 days) before the scheduled meeting. The APSC members as well as the student will have access to this information until the meeting.

14.9.1.2 The meeting is not a formal legal proceeding but is a meeting regarding academic performance. However, a student may seek and retain legal counsel at the student's own expense, but the legal counsel may not actively participate in the APSC meeting.

14.9.1.3 The hearing shall be electronically recorded. The recording remains the property of the University and will be secured by the Office of the Registrar. If the student appellant wishes to obtain a transcribed copy of the hearing, a written request must be submitted to the Office of the Registrar. A fee will be charged to cover the transcription expense.

14.9.2 When meeting with APSC, the student should be prepared to:

14.9.2.1 Present a written appeal in advance of the committee meeting that outlines any extenuating circumstances. Verifiable evidence of such circumstances is required to be submitted to the Committee as part of the written statement of appeal. This may include, but is not limited to, letters from physicians or other health care providers, obituary notices, or a copy of a death certificate.

14.9.2.1.1 The student should realize that unsatisfactory performance based on poor or unwise judgment (e.g., spending too much time on strictly non-academic activities such as

working inside or outside the College, participation in student activities, and/or poor study habits) is not an acceptable explanation for poor academic performance.

- 14.9.2.2 Identify any steps toward self-help that the student has undertaken (see sections 14.4, 14.5, and 17.5).
- 14.9.2.3 Clarify what remediation plan of action the student would like the APSC to grant (see section 15).
- 14.9.2.4 State whether the student wishes to transition to the appropriate point in the traditional Doctor of Optometry degree program.
- 14.9.3 Written notification informing a student of a required APSC meeting or of a decision made by APSC will be sent to the student in PDF format by e-mail within 2 business days. The student is responsible for accessing this information in a timely manner as described in section 8.
- 14.9.4 Failure to appear before the APSC at a prescribed time results in forfeiture of the student's opportunity to meet with the APSC to discuss special circumstances.

15. REMEDIATION OF FAILING GRADES

- 15.1 Students are required to remediate any failing grade. The method of remediation will be designated by the APSC.
- 15.2 A student may be granted the opportunity to remediate a "failing" grade as follows:
 - 15.2.1 **Remediation by Directed Study** – This option, if offered, is reserved for students who entered the term in good academic standing and who prefer additional time to remediate and master course/block material.
 - 15.2.1.1 A student repeating credits through directed study is required to register for those credits with the Office of the Registrar.
 - 15.2.1.2 At the direction of the APSC, the course/block instructor develops a remediation plan under the supervision of the appropriate Associate Dean and including any special stipulations set forth by the APSC and will be responsible for grade submission.
 - 15.2.1.3 The course/block directed study requirements must be completed within the time frame set forth by the APSC, typically by the end of the subsequent term.
 - 15.2.1.4 The course/block directed study requirements must be completed prior to the start of external clinical rotations.
 - 15.2.1.5 The new grade earned by directed study in the course/block is recorded on the transcript along with the original course/block grade.
 - 15.2.1.6 A "failing" grade may be raised only to a grade of "C+" or "P" under this option if the student achieves a "passing" grade through remediation with directed study.
 - 15.2.1.7 In all cases, the original failing grade will remain on the student's transcript but will not be used to calculate the student's cumulative grade point average.
 - 15.2.1.8 Normal tuition and fees apply

- 15.2.2 **Remediation by Re-Examination** – This option, if offered, is reserved for students who entered the term in question in good academic standing.
- 15.2.2.1 The course/block instructor will prepare a re-examination within a time period specified by the APSC and will also be responsible for submitting the grade to the registrar.
- 15.2.2.2 The student is required to meet with the course/block instructor prior to the re-examination to review the examination format and receive academic counseling regarding the course/blocker-examination content.
- 15.2.2.3 A re-examination carries an associated fee.
- 15.2.2.4 This option is generally offered only once per course to a student during an academic year unless extenuating circumstances exist as identified to the APSC.
- 15.2.2.5 A “failing” grade may be raised only to a grade of “C+” or “P” under this option if the student achieves a “passing” grade on the re-examination.
- 15.2.2.6 Upon successful completion of a re-examination the student is placed on academic probation (AP) for the subsequent term, regardless of term/cumulative grade point average.
- 15.2.2.7 In all cases, the original failing grade will remain on the student’s transcript but will not be used to calculate the student’s cumulative grade point average.
- 15.2.2.8 Failure of a re-examination, except in extraordinary circumstances, results in a decision by the APSC of academic dismissal from the Scholars Program (refer to section 14.9.3).
- 15.2.3 **Remediation by Re-Enrollment** – The student continues in the Scholars Program and re-enrolls in the course/block he/she failed the next time the course/block is offered. The course/block instructor will be responsible for grade submission.
- 15.2.3.1 A student repeating credits through re-enrollment is required to register for those credits with the Office of the Registrar.
- 15.2.3.2 The grade earned during re-enrollment in the course/block is recorded on the transcript, along with the original course/block grade.
- 15.2.3.3 Normal tuition and fees apply.
- 15.2.3.4 The remediation of a “failing” grade by re-enrollment in a course/block may involve an additional time commitment beyond the normal thirty-six (36) month program.
- 15.2.3.5 In all cases, the original failing grade will remain on the student’s transcript but will not be used to calculate the student’s cumulative grade point average.
- 15.2.3.6 A “failing” grade may be raised only to a grade of “C+” or “P” under this option if the student achieves a “passing” grade with re-enrollment.
- 15.2.3.7 Should the re-enrollment process necessitate an extension of the professional program, tuition will be based upon the number of credit hours in which the student is enrolled.
- 15.3 Any student who attempts to circumvent an agreed upon remediation plan is subject to academic dismissal.

16. APPEALS OF THE DECISIONS BY THE PCO SCHOLARS PROGRAM ACADEMIC PROGRESS AND STANDARDS COMMITTEE

- 16.1 A student who is dismissed for academic reasons must notify the Office of the Dean in writing no later than three (3) business days if he/she wishes to appeal the dismissal.
- 16.2 The appeal should be addressed to the Dean and submitted to the Office of the Registrar.
- 16.3 Included in this letter should be a written explanation of why the student feels that his/her appeal for reinstatement should be considered and granted by the Dean.
- 16.4 The Dean will review the request for an appeal and schedule a meeting with the student if the Dean feels the appeal has merit.
- 16.5 When an appeal meeting is scheduled, a representative from the Office of the Dean for Student Affairs will be present.
- 16.6 The Chair of the APSC will also be consulted to assess if new information is being presented which was not presented in the original appeal hearing.
- 16.7 The Dean determines the final outcome of the appeal.
- 16.8 This decision is considered final in matters regarding the APSC process.

17. DISMISSAL FOR OTHER REASONS

- 17.1 In addition to the academic reasons for dismissal listed above, the College reserves the right to terminate the enrollment of any student at any time for what the Scholars Program faculty and administration may believe to be good and sufficient reasons.
- 17.2 These reasons may include, but are not limited to, his or her demeanor, character or any form of cheating, plagiarism or unprofessional conduct. Students are expected to read the Salus University Student Handbook for additional information.
- 17.3 The Scholars Program assigns great importance to self-discipline, the ability to work cooperatively with others, and the ability to conduct oneself in a professional manner. Demonstration of deficiencies in any of these qualities is viewed by the College as evidence that the student is not suited to a professional career, and constitutes adequate cause for dismissal regardless of academic performance.
- 17.4 All non-academic matters are referred to the Salus University Judicial Committee for review.

17.5 Counseling and Assistance Available to Students

- 17.5.1 The Salus University Dean of Student Affairs is available to:
- 17.5.2 Explain and clarify for students the actions of the APSC.

- 17.5.3 Explain and clarify for students the recommendations/decisions rendered during Academic Progress Meetings concerning “failing” academic performance and/or behavioral concerns, but will not attribute comments to specific faculty members.
- 17.5.4 Review with students the steps in the appeals process.
- 17.5.5 A member of the Center for Personal and Professional Development is also available to provide a student with counseling services.

18. LEAVE OF ABSENCE

The following sets forth policy guidelines for a student “Leave of Absence” from the College. The sections that follow describe policies and administrative actions to protect the interests of students and of the College. Unusual issues, not anticipated by these guidelines, will undoubtedly arise and will be evaluated and managed appropriate to the individual circumstances.

18.1 Notification of Absence

- 18.1.1 Students are obligated to promptly notify the Office of Student Affairs and the Associate Dean of the Scholars Program, of any illness or family emergency that necessitates any absence from the College.
- 18.1.2 When a student anticipates a prolonged absence (more than one week), or the student has recurring non-sequential absences during the same term, the student’s status must be clarified with the Office of the Registrar with respect to matriculation at the College.
- 18.1.3 The Office of the Registrar will notify the Associate Dean of the Scholars Program regarding the student’s matriculation status.

18.2 Request for a Leave of Absence

- 18.2.1 A student may request a Leave of Absence (LOA) if he/she is unable to continue studies because of substantive issues.
- 18.2.2 A student seeking a LOA must submit a written request to the Chair of the APSC with a copy to the Associate Dean of the Scholars Program. The reason for requesting the leave, and the requested time for the leave, must be clearly stated (e.g., family emergency, medical).
 - 18.2.2.1 A LOA request should be no longer than twelve (12) months.
 - 18.2.2.2 A student must request in writing an extension of a LOA beyond twelve (12) months. This request must be submitted to the Office of the Registrar.
 - 18.2.2.3 The Registrar will forward the LOA extension request to the Chair of the APSC.
- 18.2.3 The APSC, in conjunction with the Associate Dean of the Scholars Program, grants or denies a request for a Leave of Absence.
- 18.2.4 A student requesting a LOA should continue with his/her academic schedule until he/she receives a response from the Chair of the APSC.

- 18.2.5 The Salus University Dean of Student Affairs, in conjunction with the Center for Personal and Professional Development and the Associate Dean of the Scholars Program, may make an appropriate determination to grant an emergency LOA without APSC approval.
- 18.2.6 A student on LOA is considered a “visitor” and consequently must relinquish his/her Salus University Student ID at the time a LOA is granted.
- 18.2.7 The student on LOA must notify the Office of the Registrar in writing, with a copy to the Associate Dean of the Scholars Program, of his/her intent to return to the Scholars Program.
- 18.2.8 The conditions under which a student may return from a LOA will be specified in the letter from the Chair of the APSC at the time the request is granted.
- 18.2.9 The APSC’s decisions regarding a LOA request are final.

18.3 Administrative Leave

- 18.3.1 Reasons for requesting an Administrative Leave of Absence include, but are not limited to, educational endeavors at another institution of higher learning, financial hardship of a student necessitating full-time employment, or a need to handle business matters outside of the country.

18.4 Emergency Family Leave

- 18.4.1 Reasons for taking an Emergency Family Leave include, but are not limited to, the student is needed at home to assist with an ill family member, etc.

18.5 Medical Leave

- 18.5.1 A Medical Leave of Absence may be granted upon written request of the student and submitted written opinion of the student’s physician or other health care provider that a medical leave is necessary.
- 18.5.2 A Medical Leave of Absence may be granted if a student is unable to continue studies because of the student’s personal health issues. Maternity, paternity and adoption leaves are included in this section and will be processed in a manner consistent with the Medical Leave of Absence policy.
- 18.5.3 The student must notify the Office of the Registrar in writing of his/her intent to return to the College. Return to active student status from a Medical Leave of Absence must be supported by a letter from a physician or other health care provider.
- 18.5.4 The College reserves the right, at its own expense, to have the student examined by a physician to confirm the opinion of the student’s physician in requesting the Medical Leave of Absence, or upon the student’s request to return to the academic program.
- 18.5.5 If the student’s health does not permit resumption of studies at the end of two calendar years of approved leave, matriculation will be terminated. The student may then apply for re-admission at a later time. (See Section 20 – Re-admission).
- 18.5.6 If the student is accepted for re-admission following a medical leave, the Associate Dean of the Scholars Program or his/her designee will determine the student’s entry point into the curriculum.

18.6 Suspension / Medical Leave of Absence

- 18.6.1 In instances of serious illness, physical and/or mental, wherein members of the faculty or administration believe that a student should not continue studies, and wherein the student cannot or will not request a Leave of Absence, the Salus University Dean of Student Affairs may elect to suspend the student or place the student on a Medical Leave of Absence. A Suspension / Medical Leave of Absence should not exceed twelve (12) months.
- 18.6.2 A student who has been placed on such suspension or leave must make their request to return and re-enter the curriculum in writing to the Salus University Dean of Student Affairs and file this letter with the Office of the Registrar. The student must provide written verification from a physician or other health care provider, subject to approval by the Salus University Dean of Student Affairs and/or the Director of the Center for Personal and Professional Development, that the student's health permits him/her to resume his/her academic program.
- 18.6.3 Upon the written recommendation of the physician(s) and/or health care providers, the Dean of Student Affairs, in consultation with the Associate Dean of the Scholars Program or his/her designee, may extend this Leave for up to one additional twelve (12) month period.
- 18.6.4 If the student's health does not permit the resumption of studies at the end of the second full year, matriculation will be terminated. Application for re-admission may be made at a later time (see section 20, Re-admission).
- 18.6.5 If the student is accepted for re-admission, the Associate Dean of the Scholars Program or his/her designee will determine the student's entry point into the curriculum.
- 18.6.6 The College reserves the right, at its own expense, to have the student examined by a physician to determine the student's health status prior to granting the Suspension/ Medical Leave of Absence and/or upon the student's request to return to the academic program.

18.7 Leave of Absence Granting and Record

- 18.7.1 The student will receive a written notification in PDF format by e-mail within 10 business days from the Chair of the APSC whether his/her request for a LOA is approved/denied.
- 18.7.1.1 All the conditions outlined by the APSC must be agreed to by the student for the LOA to be granted.
- 18.7.2 A leave of absence becomes official when it is entered into the student's record retained in the Office of the Registrar.
- 18.7.3 Any conditions regarding the student's return from a LOA will be outlined in the letter of approval from the APSC. The student must acknowledge, in writing, the conditions if present.

18.8 Program Placement upon Return from a Leave of Absence

- 18.8.1 Upon returning from a Leave of Absence, **regardless of the type**, the student's permanent record and status is reviewed by the Associate Dean of the Scholars

Program. A repeat of module(s)/block(s) or portions of the curriculum previously completed successfully, or other academic and/or clinical conditions may be required or applied if deemed educationally necessary. Additional tuition/fees for repeated work may also apply.

19. WITHDRAWAL

- 19.1 The following sets forth policy guidelines for student “withdrawal” from Salus University. The sections that follow describe policies and administrative actions to protect the interests of students and of the University. Unusual issues, not anticipated by these guidelines, undoubtedly will arise and will be managed appropriate to the individual circumstances.
- 19.2 A student may withdraw voluntarily from Salus University at any time. A student who wishes to withdraw must personally meet with the Dean of Student Affairs, and must notify the and Dean of Student Affairs and the Associate Dean of the Scholars Program in writing of the withdrawal and indicate the reason(s) for doing so.
- 19.3 The official records of a student will not be released until the student has obtained the required signatures on the withdrawal form and returned the form to the Office of the Registrar.
- 19.4 A student who wishes to seek re-admission to a Doctor of Optometry program within Salus University must follow the procedures outlined in section 20 of this Policy Manual (Re-admission).
- 19.4.1 If the student is granted re-admission, the Dean of the College and/or his/her designee(s) in consultation with the Associate Dean of the Scholars Program will determine the content of the student’s academic program, entry point, conditions, and requirements pertinent to the readmitted student’s curriculum.

20. RE-ADMISSION

20.1 Student Dismissed for Academic Reasons/Student Who has Withdrawn

- 20.1.1 A student in either of these categories who wishes to be re-admitted to the Pennsylvania College of Optometry should re-apply to the Salus University Office of Admissions in the same way as any new applicant. Application procedures are outlined in the College catalog.

20.2 Student Dismissed for Non-Academic Reasons

- 20.2.1 A student in this category should submit his/her application to the Salus University Office of Admissions and the application will be forwarded to the Dean of the College.

21. STUDENT RECORDS

21.1 Student Records and Files

- 21.1.1 The Office of the Registrar is responsible for maintenance of all official academic records of students. Salus University’s policy regarding creation and maintenance of student

records is based upon practices recommended by the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers. In addition, the school's policy is governed by regulations affecting educational institutions, written by the Department of Health and Human Services, the Department of Education or any other government agency. Students may review a copy of these policies in the Office of Student Affairs.

- 21.1.2 Salus University maintains a Permanent Record File on each student. Included in a student file are the original application form, the undergraduate college record, and the letter of acceptance. Subsequent to the enrollment of the student at Salus University, the student file contains course/block enrollment/remediation forms, grades, letters of correspondence concerning the student, letters indicating actions of APSC, communications concerning scholarships, and other correspondence relating to the student's education at Salus University.
- 21.1.3 In addition to written material kept in the student file, Salus University maintains computerized general information about each student, course/blocks taken, grades, summary statements of academic action, and enrollment information.
- 21.1.4 It is institutional policy that the material contained in the student records is confidential, with transfer of such information within the school permissible only for legitimate academic purposes. The school complies with the provisions of the Federal Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 and as subsequently amended.

21.2 Examination of Student Records

- 21.2.1 A student, by means of oral or written request to the Dean of Student Affairs and the Registrar, may examine his or her student records at Salus University. These records shall be made available to the student for review as promptly as possible. The records shall be examined in the office in which they are kept, under observation of administrative personnel, and shall not be altered, destroyed, or removed from the office. Material in records which relate to more than one individual will not be made available for direct review, but the student will be told the information on such records which relates to him or her. Former students have the same access to their records as those currently enrolled. However, certain information will not be retained on a permanent basis by Salus University (e.g., admissions materials, registration forms, and course withdrawal forms). All persons must sign the written form kept within the record and indicate the date and the reason for the review.
- 21.2.2 A student may obtain a copy of his/her student record. The costs of photocopying or duplicating records shall be borne by the student.
- 21.2.3 Students may challenge the accuracy of information contained in a record or may challenge that information if a record represents an undue invasion of privacy. In the case of a challenge, the student should meet with the faculty member or administrative official responsible for the information being questioned. The faculty member or administrative official may, through discussions with the student, concur with the challenged points and correct or delete the information accordingly. Those corrections or deletions must be made in writing. If a change in grade is submitted, the faculty member must indicate in writing the reason for doing so and complete the appropriate change of grade form. If the faculty member is unwilling to amend the academic record, the student may appeal to the appropriate Associate Dean in which the course/block is offered.
- 21.2.4 Any review of information in the file by faculty members and administrative officers, other than by those persons responsible for keeping the records, requires the dated signature of the faculty member or administrative official on a written form kept within the records.

The reviewer must include a brief statement indicating the reason for review of the record.

21.3 Transfer of Student Information

21.3.1 The student will be notified of the transfer of any information within the student file to persons or institutions other than those associated with or affiliated with PCO. Such information may be transferred only:

21.3.1.1 By reason of a valid subpoena or judicial order of a court;

21.3.1.2 To federal or state educational agencies providing the agency requests the information in writing and specifies the purpose for acquiring the information;

21.3.1.3 To organizations responsible for the accreditation of the Pennsylvania College of Optometry;

21.3.1.4 Upon written request of the student to persons he or she designates (e.g., educational institutions, hospitals, and licensing boards, etc.).

21.3.1.4.1 It must be noted that the College is not permitted to send to other agencies or individual copies of non-PCO transcripts, Optometry Admission Test scores, or National Board of Examiners in Optometry score results, or other non-PCO score reports or information. Requests for copies of those transcripts or scores must be made directly to the organizations, which originally provided such information.

21.3.2 The Office of the Registrar will prepare transcripts of optometry students, based upon information in the student file. Upon the receipt of a written request, the student must identify the persons, institutions, hospitals, or licensing boards to which the letters or transcripts are to be sent. The student may also request a copy of the transcripts and may challenge the accuracy of the information to be transmitted. The initial challenge should be made to the Registrar, who prepares the letter or transcript with the ultimate appeal to the Dean of Student Affairs.

21.3.3 Letters of clinical evaluation are the responsibility of the Director of Clinical Education of the Scholars Program in conjunction with the Associate Dean of the Scholars Program.

21.3.4 The records of students shall be kept under the name used for admission to the Pennsylvania College of Optometry, unless the student files a change-of-name form with the Office of the Registrar while in attendance at the University. Names cannot be modified after the student's graduation.

21.4 Release of Information (Grades, Tests, Scores, etc.)

21.4.1 Official grades can be transmitted from Salus University to another institution only through the Office of the Registrar. Departments may not transmit grade information on behalf of the Office of the Registrar or the College to another institution, department, individual faculty member, Registrar, etc.

21.4.2 If a student requests a letter of recommendation, the individual faculty member may state only the grade received in the course/block as well as a narrative.

21.4.3 Copies of examinations with or without answers may be made available to students at the instructor's discretion. Curves, distribution, etc., may be posted if desired. However, any posted scores must contain a statement to the effect that they do not constitute a grade.

21.4.4 Federal and State Laws prohibit the posting of scores, grades, etc., that can in any way identify a student. When a faculty member posts grades, they should do so using the assigned Test Identification Number so that no student is easily identifiable.

21.4.5 Scores on examinations may be given to students on an individual basis (i.e., placed in the student's mailbox or posted/distributed electronically by departments in a confidential manner).

21.5 Transcripts

21.5.1 Only final grades appear on transcripts. If the student receives a substandard grade in a course/block, the original grade appears on the transcript as well as the re-examination, remediation, and/or reenrollment grade(s) (see Section 15). The final transcript grades issued at graduation cannot be modified or challenged except for clerical errors.

22. GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS

22.1 Graduation and the awarding of the Doctor of Optometry degree are contingent upon the satisfactory completion of both academic and behavioral/professional requirements.

22.2 The student must satisfactorily complete the entire required and elective curriculum in the Scholars Program with a cumulative grade point average of 2.50 or higher. The student must also satisfactorily pass all didactic courses and satisfactorily complete all required clinical activities.

22.3 The student must demonstrate to the satisfaction of the faculty the professional attributes necessary for the practice of optometry, consistent with the trust that society places in health-care providers.

22.4 The student must have demonstrated professionalism and honesty through their personal behavior. Student misconduct such as cheating on examinations, falsifying clinical data, or activities constituting criminal behavior may result in the denial of the Doctor of Optometry degree even though the individual has satisfactorily completed the academic program.

22.5 The University reserves the right to place on probation, suspend or expel from the institution any student who willfully violates any rule or regulation of the College/University or the laws of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, or other state, Federal, or local government whether or not convicted in a criminal court.

22.6 Upon satisfactory completion of the above academic and professional standards set by the College/University, along with the optometry curriculum, the faculty and Dean of the College of Optometry will recommend candidates to the Vice-President of Academic Affairs for the degree of Doctor of Optometry.

22.7 Students are responsible for understanding all requirements for graduation and completing them within the time dictated by the professional curriculum

22.8 Graduation with Honors

22.8.1 Honors for exceptional work by a student after completion of the academic and clinical program is indicated by the designation of the award of the Doctor of Optometry degree with Highest Honor (3.75 GPA), High Honor (3.5 GPA), or Honor (3.25 GPA) for exceptional academic/clinical work throughout the period of optometric education. In addition to the stated grade point averages for academic performance to receive the

above designations, students must have also demonstrated superior clinical performance by having receiving the following:

- 22.8.2 Graduation with Honors may also be awarded for achieving a grade of Honors (H) in the majority of the professional practice courses/externships, beginning with the second professional year. The lowest grade awarded in any of the remaining quarters should be no less than a Pass (P) to achieve an Honors (H) grade.
- 22.8.2.1 In a split professional practice term (if one exists), e.g., Primary Care / Pediatrics, Primary Care / Vision Rehabilitation, the combined services comprise the professional practice. Therefore Honors (H) must be earned in both services in order for the term to be counted toward the criteria mentioned above.

23. STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

- 23.1 The University complies with federal and state regulations regarding students with disabilities. The University policy pertaining to Students with Disabilities is detailed in the Academic Affairs section of the Student Handbook.
- 23.2 Salus University is committed to and follows the guidelines of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), the ADA Amendment Act of 2008, and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. This process is designed to ensure that reasonable, appropriate accommodations are provided to all qualified students in a timely manner. Reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities are adjustments to policies, practices, or procedures that facilitate equal access and opportunity to Salus University programs, activities and services.
- 23.3 The Office for Academic Success (OAS) works in cooperation with the student, faculty and staff to ensure that university opportunities at Salus University are accessible and equally available to all qualified students.