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# COMMONWEALTH INSTITUTE

*of Funeral Service*



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## *Student Handbook*

### *2020 - 2021*

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Houston, Texas 77090  
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281-873-0262  
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## Table of Contents

Board of Regents.....	4
Administration, Faculty & Staff.....	5
Introduction .....	7
Mission Statement.....	7
Vision Statement .....	7
Learning Objectives.....	7

### **Section 1 - Attendance**

On campus Attendance Policy.....	9
Online Attendance Policy.....	9
Appeal Procedure for an Attendance Termination.....	10
Leave of Absence.....	10

### **Section 2 – General Information**

Building, Furniture & Grounds.....	11
Smoke-Free Building.....	11
Student Parking.....	11
Student Lounge.....	11
Student Lockers.....	12
Cellular Telephone Policy.....	12
Cellular Telephone Lockers.....	12
Hours of Operation.....	12
Administrative Offices.....	13
Photocopying Machine.....	13
Guests/Non-Currently Enrolled Persons.....	13
Posting Announcements in Common Areas.....	13
Required Meningitis Vaccine.....	13
Library Books.....	13
Student Organizations.....	14
Tuition.....	14
Books.....	14
Transcripts.....	14
Disclosure of Student Information/FERPA.....	15
License Examinations.....	17
1098-T Form.....	17
Lost and Found.....	17

### **Section 3 – Student Behavior**

Purpose.....	18
Student Conduct and Prohibited Behavior.....	18
Alcohol and Drugs Policy.....	21
Computer & Internet Usage.....	22
Testing Center Policy.....	22
Security of Personal Property.....	22
Commencement.....	22
Commencement Dress Code.....	23

### **Section 4 – Dress Code**

Purpose.....	24
General Rules.....	24

### **Section 5 – Embalming Lab Program**

Purpose.....	25
Scheduling.....	25
Laboratory Time.....	25
Coordination.....	25
Embalming Process.....	25
Student Embalming Reports.....	26
Safety.....	26
Dress Code.....	26
Labs for Online Students.....	26
Health Services.....	26

### **Section 6 – Intellectual Property Protection and Ownership**

Purpose.....	28
Copyright Protection.....	28
Use of Institutional Information Technology Resources.....	28

### **Section 7 – Policy Against Harassment & Discrimination**

Purpose.....	30
Sexual Harassment.....	30
Notice of Nondiscriminatory Policy Regarding Students.....	31
Summary of Possible Sanctions.....	31
Grievance Procedure (Right to Appeal).....	32
Student Complaint Policy.....	33
Who to Ask.....	34
Acknowledgement Page.....	36

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## **CIFS BOARD OF REGENTS**

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*Director of Special Projects, Service Corporation International*

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*Chief Executive Officer, Commonwealth Institute of Funeral Service*

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*Independent Consultant, Family & Trust Investments*

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**THOMAS L. RYAN, MEMBER**

*Chairman of the Board and Chief Executive Officer, Service Corporation International*

**STAN SZAFRAN, MEMBER**

*Director of Trust Investments, Service Corporation International*

**SUMNER JAMES WARING, III, MEMBER**

*Senior Vice President, North American Operations, Service Corporation International*

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## ADMINISTRATION

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M.S.ED National University, San Diego  
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## FACULTY & STAFF

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Admissions Office**

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Clinical Lab Coordinator**

A.A.S. Commonwealth Institute  
of Funeral Service  
Professional Licensure: Texas

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Welcome to Commonwealth Institute of Funeral Service. Your success during your tenure at Commonwealth Institute is based on a partnership between the Institute and yourself. Commonwealth Institute will be responsible for providing you with an appropriate learning environment, as well as information and material, to help you become a successful member of the funeral service profession. You are responsible for compliance with the rules and regulations of the Institute; for treating other students, faculty, and staff of Commonwealth Institute with respect; and for conducting yourself as a positive member of the funeral service profession.

In order to provide you with a proper learning environment and to meet the objectives of Commonwealth Institute, various rules and regulations exist. This handbook will provide you with those rules and regulations and will supplement policy and procedures outlined in Commonwealth Institute's Catalog.

### **MISSION STATEMENT OF COMMONWEALTH INSTITUTE OF FUNERAL SERVICE**

Commonwealth Institute of Funeral Service is a vocational, postsecondary teaching institution with its primary purpose being to educate individuals interested in the subjects comprising the curriculum for licensure and a career in funeral service.

### **VISION STATEMENT OF COMMONWEALTH INSTITUTE OF FUNERAL SERVICE**

Commonwealth Institute of Funeral Service will be recognized by the funeral service professionals and beyond for excellence in its capacity (a) to prepare new funeral service practitioners for a profession that sustains valued traditions and pursue unlimited possibilities; (b) to foster appreciation of the funeral culture as it is represented by the families we serve; and (c) to produce graduates who are valued by those they serve and by those who oversee their work because of their integrity, honesty, ethics, innovation and a deep sense of reverence towards all cultures, faiths and beliefs.

### **MOTTO OF COMMONWEALTH INSTITUTE OF FUNERAL SERVICE**

Dream Boldly ~ Study Vigorously ~ Serve Humbly

### **LEARNING OBJECTIVES OF COMMONWEALTH INSTITUTE OF FUNERAL SERVICE**

The central objective of Commonwealth Institute of Funeral Service is to educate students in every phase of funeral service so that graduates are prepared for entry-level employment in funeral service. In support of this objective, Commonwealth Institute of Funeral Service has adopted the following learning objectives:

Upon completion of the accredited program, students will be able to:

- Explain the importance of funeral service professionals in developing relationships with the families and communities they serve;

- Identify standards of ethical conduct in funeral service practices;
- Interpret how federal, state, and local laws apply to funeral service in order to ensure compliance;
- Apply principles of public health and safety in the handling and preparation of human remains;
- Demonstrate technical skills in embalming and restorative art that are necessary for the preparation and handling of human remains;
- Demonstrate skills required for conducting arrangement conferences, visitations, services, and ceremonies;
- Describe the requirements and procedures for burial, cremation, and other accepted forms of funeral disposition of human remains;
- Describe methods to address the grief-related needs of the bereaved;
- Explain management skills associated with operating a funeral establishment; and
- Demonstrate verbal and written communication skills and research skills need for funeral service practice.

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# Section 1 Attendance

## **ON CAMPUS ATTENDANCE POLICY**

CIFS's attendance policies are based on students being present and participating in class activities during the scheduled class meeting time. Instructors check and record attendance in each class. To be counted present, the student must be in attendance for the entire period. Students arriving late or leaving early will be marked absent. Absences are NOT classified as excused or un-excused. The daily attendance is transferred weekly to the Master Attendance Record. Any AAS student who accumulates absences of more than 10% of their scheduled classes in a quarter, will be terminated from their enrollment by CIFS. Any Certificate of Funeral Directing student who is absent for more than 10% of the total course hours will have their enrollment terminated.

Students enrolled under various Veterans' programs or other funding agencies will be required to meet the requirements for attendance of the sponsoring organization. Additionally, a negative attendance record can affect most forms of financial aid.

## **ONLINE ATTENDANCE POLICY**

Students enrolled in online courses must meet certain attendance standards. All students enrolled in online courses at CIFS are expected to maintain ongoing course engagement in order to uphold positive academic standing with the college. In an online environment, "attendance" is more than just logging into a course. Online attendance is measured by students' academic engagement with the course content, course tools, course instructor, and with other students in the course.

During the first week of class, all online students are expected to login to their courses, view each course syllabus and pertinent messages, and become familiar with course layouts, schedules, and due dates. Throughout the academic quarter, all CIFS students are expected to maintain an ongoing online presence in their online courses by participating in course related activities. This may include, but is not limited to the following:

- Reading announcements
- Submitting assignments
- Taking examinations or quizzes
- Posting to discussion boards or forums
- Contacting instructors with questions about material
- Carrying out any other requirements set forth by an instructor

An online student may be terminated if they have more than two consecutive assignments missing in a single online course and/or they have missed all scheduled assignments for a single week in all of their enrolled courses combined.

Federal regulations require that online students establish attendance/participation in coursework each term to be eligible for federal financial aid. CIFS verifies student attendance in accordance with this regulation. Students who have not established attendance/participation in online courses may have their federal financial aid eligibility adjusted.

#### **APPEAL PROCEDURE FOR AN ATTENDANCE TERMINATION**

A student may appeal an attendance termination. Documentation supporting medical or family emergencies must be submitted to the Dean of Academics within three business days of termination notification.

#### **LEAVE OF ABSENCE**

Please see the Catalog for the complete policy regarding official leaves of absence.

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## Section 2 General Information

### **BUILDING, FURNITURE, AND GROUNDS**

Students of CIFS take great pride in the care of their building and equipment. Students are reminded that others will follow them in the use of the same buildings and property, and those who follow will appreciate the care that has been given their school.

Students are urged to cooperate to the maximum possible extent in keeping the building and grounds clean. Please do not sit or lie in the hallways. This causes an obstruction to fellow students or visitors to CIFS and could be dangerous in the event of an emergency.

CIFS shares the educational complex at 415 Barren Springs Drive with two other entities, the National Museum of Funeral History and the Service Corporation International Training Center. The main reception area between the school and the training center is reserved for guests of the museum and training center.

### **SMOKE-FREE BUILDING**

The school complex is a smoke-free building. Therefore, smoking is not permitted anywhere inside the building. Smoking is permitted only in designated areas. Students are asked to dispose of cigarettes in the receptacles provided for them and not on the school grounds.

### **STUDENT PARKING**

Ample student parking is provided on the side and in back of the school complex. The parking lot in front of the building is reserved for museum guests. Automobiles are to be parked only in designated parking spaces. Unauthorized cars parked in handicapped spaces, will be towed at the owner's expense. Respectful and lawful driving behavior is expected in the parking lot area. Safe driving, pedestrian courtesy, and noise management (like stereo volume) are expected from all students.

### **STUDENT LOUNGE**

Eating or drinking is permissible in the student lounge **ONLY**. Food, drink, chewing gum, tobacco and tobacco products are prohibited in all other areas of the building, including the hallways. The student lounge is for student use and will be open during regular business hours. All trash should be disposed of in the containers provided. Food and drink are **NOT** allowed in the classrooms.

## **STUDENT LOCKERS**

Student lockers are provided as a convenience for limited purposes. These lockers belong to Commonwealth Institute. Administrators and their representatives have a duty and right to inspect student lockers whenever they consider it appropriate. While a specific reason for a locker inspection is not required, the following may result in inspections:

1. Cleanliness and healthy environment.
2. To prevent waste accumulation.
3. Safety, health, welfare and fire prevention.
4. For recovery of stolen or missing property.
5. For prevention of unauthorized, illegal or dangerous items such as weapons, drugs, narcotics, drug paraphernalia or alcohol.

If administrators conduct an unscheduled inspection of a specific locker, the locker will be opened in the presence of two witnesses. Generally, however, reasonable effort will be taken to notify the student in advance, inform him or her of the grounds for the inspection, and allow an opportunity to be present during the inspection.

Students must advise the front office staff as to which locker they are using. There is a charge of \$50.00 for a lost key. Commonwealth Institute of Funeral Service is not responsible for lost or stolen items.

## **CELLULAR TELEPHONE POLICY**

Cellular telephones and/or pagers are strictly prohibited in the classroom. If a violation occurs during an exam, at a minimum the instructor will dismiss the student and assign a “0” grade for that exam. Further disciplinary action may be taken depending on the severity of the situation. Under no circumstances are any electronic devices – cellular phones, cameras, pagers, computers, etc., allowed in the preparation room.

## **CELLULAR TELEPHONE LOCKERS**

Cellular telephones, cameras, and electronic communication devices of any type are never allowed in classrooms, laboratories, or the testing center. A student who chooses to bring any of the aforementioned items/devices to campus must plan as to how these items will be securely stored. Small lockers are available for such items. A key may be checked out from the front desk in order to access the locker. All electronic devices must be turned OFF prior to storing in the locker. There is a charge of \$50.00 for a lost key. In any event, CIFS is not responsible for lost or stolen items.

## **HOURS OF OPERATION**

CIFS is open and available to students Monday through Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. C.S.T., except during designated holidays (see *Calendar*, [www.commonwealth.edu](http://www.commonwealth.edu)). Lecture classes are scheduled Monday through Thursday during the following times:

First Hour.....	8:00 - 8:50 a.m.
Second Hour.....	9:00 - 9:50 a.m.
Third Hour.....	10:00 - 10:50 a.m.
Fourth Hour.....	11:00 - 11:50 a.m.
Fifth Hour.....	12:00 - 12:50 p.m.

*\*Embalming Laboratory sessions for classes may be scheduled from 1:00 to 4:30 p.m. Monday through Thursday, and from 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. on Friday. Other times for laboratory session will be determined on an at-need basis. Every effort is made to complete lab by 4:30 p.m., however this may vary depending on the individual case.*

### **ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICES**

The telephone in the administrative office is a business phone and is for SCHOOL USE ONLY. The office will not disturb scheduled classes unless the telephone call for the student is an emergency. Messages of an important nature will be posted on the door of the classroom.

At CIFS, we value you as a student and take care to listen to your suggestions and/or concerns. We have placed a suggestion box in front of the administrative offices for this purpose.

### **PHOTOCOPYING MACHINE**

Students are asked to use the photocopying machine in the hallway for their photocopying needs.

### **GUESTS/NON-CURRENTLY ENROLLED PERSONS**

Students may not invite any non-currently enrolled persons, including children or other family members, to any class without prior approval from the administration. **Visitors must check in/out at the front office and obtain a visitor's badge.**

### **POSTING ANNOUNCEMENTS IN COMMON AREAS**

Bulletin boards are located in the student lounge as well as in both classrooms. They are provided for the posting of announcements of general interest to the student body of CIFS. Prior authorization must be received from the campus administration prior to posting.

### **REQUIRED MENINGITIS VACCINE**

Texas Senate Bill 1107, effective November 1, 2012, requires all new students, under the age of 22 entering a public, private, or independent institution of higher education in Texas to provide documentation that they have had a bacterial meningitis vaccine or booster within the past 5 years. Students without proof of vaccination must submit a notarized Medical Exemption Affidavit form.

### **LIBRARY BOOKS**

All checked-out library materials must be turned in prior to final exams. If books or other materials are not turned in prior to finals, then the student will not be allowed to enroll in the next academic quarter.

Students will be responsible for all checked out library materials. If the books or other materials are damaged or lost, then the student will be charged and responsible for paying for the item(s). Holds will be placed on the student's final grades if the balance is not paid in full.

## **STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS**

The National Funeral Service Honor Society is represented on campus. The purpose of the Honor Society is to offer service and leadership to CIFS as well as promote academics and fellowship among all students enrolled at CIFS. The Honor Society members sponsor study groups and assist as hosts at graduation, college functions, and other activities. See the Catalog for eligibility requirements.

All CIFS students have the ability to participate in campus-wide activities and events. Student representatives will be selected for the CIFS Advisory Board at the beginning of each enrollment quarter. All campus events are open to currently enrolled CIFS students. CIFS Advisory meetings are also open to all currently enrolled CIFS students.

## **TUITION**

The amount of tuition and fees can be found in the Catalog. The payment policy for tuition is also explained in the Catalog. The student is responsible for the payment of tuition and fees regardless of any financial assistance that may be involved. The student is required to pay any difference between received financial assistance and tuition by the established due dates set by administration. Online student tuition must be submitted two weeks before classes start to ensure timely delivery of books and log-on information.

Students who leave CIFS owing a tuition balance must pay the balance in full 30 days prior to re-enrollment. A payment plan for tuition will not be available for these students therefore; they will have to pay the quarter's tuition in full at the beginning of each quarter.

For checks that are returned, a fee of \$50.00 will be added to the balance of the tuition. Students that have checks returned will be required to pay future tuition by cash, money order, credit card or cashier's check.

For graduating students, all tuition must be paid in full 30 days prior to graduation.

Fees for licensure examinations are not included in CIFS's fees. The student will be responsible for payment of these fees, to the appropriate agency, when required.

## **BOOKS**

All required textbooks are included in the cost of tuition. All students who pay tuition are entitled to one set of textbooks as required by classes. Books will not be released to any student until tuition is paid. CIFS is not responsible for textbooks that have been stolen, lost, or damaged. Students will be directed on how to purchase additional textbooks in such cases. On campus students may pick up their books on the first day of each quarter or sooner if tuition and academic requirements have been met. Online students' books will be mailed to the address we have on file no earlier than two weeks prior to the start of the quarter. It is the student's responsibility to ensure we have current mailing address on file. All books are sent via **UPS/ Signature Required**. If you would like your books delivered to your work address, then you must contact the school in writing at least 3 weeks before the start of the quarter. Textbooks that are returned to CIFS will be held for pick up or will be mailed again at the student's expense.

## **TRANSCRIPTS**

A student is entitled to an official or unofficial transcript of his or her record upon written request by the student. The payment of appropriate fees will be required before the transcript can be given. Each student

receives one complimentary copy of the official transcript after graduation. For more information, please refer to the Catalog.

## **DISCLOSURE OF STUDENT INFORMATION**

Documents submitted by the student in support of admission will become part of their permanent file and property of Commonwealth Institute. These documents will not be returned to the student upon graduation or withdrawal nor can they be sent to another educational facility. The Institute does not release academic records to parents, or anyone else, without written permission of the student. Academic records are not mailed to other colleges or universities without written permission of the student and payment of appropriate fees if applicable.

### ***The Institute complies with the “Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974.”***

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) affords eligible students certain rights with respect to their education records. (An “eligible student” under FERPA is a student who is 18 years of age or older or who attends a postsecondary institution at any age.) These rights include:

1. The right to inspect and review the student’s education records within 45 days after the day Commonwealth Institute of Funeral Service (“Institute”) receives a request for access. A student should submit a written request that identifies the record(s) the student wishes to inspect to the Registrar. The appropriate Institute official will make arrangements for access and notify the student of the time and place where the records may be inspected. If the records are not maintained by Institute official to whom the request was submitted, that official shall advise the student of the correct official to whom the request should be addressed.
2. The right to request the amendment of the student’s education records that the student believes is inaccurate, misleading, or otherwise in violation of the student’s privacy rights under FERPA.

A student who wishes to ask the Institute to amend a record should write the Registrar, clearly identify the part of the record the student wants changed, and specify why it should be changed.

If the Institute decides not to amend the record as requested, the Institute will notify the student in writing of the decision and the student’s right to a hearing regarding the request for amendment. Additional information regarding the hearing procedures will be provided to the student when notified of the right to a hearing.

3. The right to provide written consent before the Institute discloses personally identifiable information (PII) from the student’s education records, except to the extent that FERPA authorizes disclosure without consent. The Institute discloses education records without a student’s prior written consent under the FERPA exception for disclosure to Institute officials with legitimate educational interests. An Institute official typically includes a person employed by the Institute in an administrative, supervisory, academic, research, or support staff position (including law enforcement unit personnel and health staff); or a person serving on the board of regents. An Institute official also may include a volunteer or contractor outside of the Institute who performs an institutional service of function for which the Institute would otherwise use its own employees and who is under the direct control of the Institute with respect to the use and maintenance of PII from education records, such as an attorney, auditor, or collection. An Institute official typically has a legitimate educational interest if the official needs to review an education record in order to fulfill his or her professional responsibilities for the Institute.

4. The right to file a complaint with the U.S. Department of Education concerning alleged failures by the Institute to comply with the requirements of FERPA. The name and address of the office that administers FERPA is:

Family Policy Compliance Office  
U.S. Department of Education  
400 Maryland Avenue, SW  
Washington, DC 20202

### **Disclosure Without Consent**

FERPA permits the disclosure of PII from students' education records, without consent of the student, if the disclosure meets certain conditions found in § 99.31 of the FERPA regulations. Except for disclosures to Institute officials, disclosures related to some judicial orders or lawfully issued subpoenas, disclosures of directory information, and disclosures to the student, § 99.32 of FERPA regulations requires the institution to record the disclosure. Eligible students have a right to inspect and review the record of disclosures. A postsecondary institution may disclose PII from the education records without obtaining prior written consent of the student in the following circumstances:

- To other Institute officials, including teachers, within whom the Institute has determined to have legitimate educational interests. This includes contractors, consultants, volunteers, or other parties to whom the Institute has outsourced institutional services or functions, provided that the conditions listed in § 99.31(a)(1)(i)(B)(1) – (a)(1)(i)(B)(3) are met. (§ 99.31(a)(1))
- To officials of another higher learning institute where the student seeks or intends to enroll, or where the student is already enrolled if the disclosure is for purposes related to the student's enrollment or transfer, subject to the requirements of § 99.34. (§ 99.31(a)(2))
- To authorized representatives of the U. S. Comptroller General, the U.S. Attorney General, the U.S. Secretary of Education, or State and local educational authorities, such as a State postsecondary authority that is responsible for supervising State-supported education programs. Disclosures under this provision may be made, subject to the requirements of §99.35, in connection with an audit or evaluation of Federal- or State-supported education programs, or for the enforcement of or compliance with Federal legal requirements that relate to those programs. These entities may make further disclosures of PII to outside entities that are designated by them as their authorized representatives to conduct any audit, evaluation, or enforcement or compliance activity on their behalf. (§§ 99.31(a)(3) and 99.35)
- In connection with financial aid for which the student has applied or which the student has received, if the information is necessary to determine eligibility for the aid, determine the amount of the aid, determine the conditions of the aid, or enforce the terms and conditions of the aid. (§ 99.31(a)(4))
- To organizations conducting studies for, or on behalf of, the Institute, in order to: (a) develop, validate, or administer predictive tests; (b) administer student aid programs; or (c) improve instruction. (§ 99.31(a)(6))
- To accrediting organizations to carry out their accrediting functions. (§ 99.31(a)(7))
- To parents of an eligible student if the student is a dependent for IRS tax purposes. (§ 31(a)(8))
- To comply with a judicial order or lawfully issued subpoena. (§ 99.31(a)(9))
- To appropriate officials in connection with a health or safety emergency, subject to § 99.36. (§ 31(a)(10))
- Information the Institute has designated as "directory information" under § 99.37. (§ 99.31(a)(11))
- To a victim of an alleged perpetrator of a crime of violence or a non-forcible sex offense, subject to the requirements of § 99.39. The disclosure may only include the final results of the disciplinary proceeding with respect to that alleged crime or offense, regardless of the finding. (§ 99.31(a)(13))
- To the general public, the final results of a disciplinary proceeding, subject to the requirements of § 99.39, if Institute determines the student is an alleged perpetrator of a crime of violence or non-forcible sex offense and the student has committed a violation of Institute rules or policies with respect to the allegation made against him or her. (§ 99.31(a)(14))

- To parents of a student regarding the student’s violation of any Federal, State, or local law, or of any rule or policy of Institute, governing the use or possession of alcohol or a controlled substance if Institute determines the student committed a disciplinary violation and the student is under the age of 21. (§99.31(a)(15))

### **Directory Information**

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) permits the public release of what is termed “directory information.” For the Institute’s purposes, this information includes the following:

- student name
- all addresses (including email) and telephone listings
- date and place of birth
- any photographs
- cohort
- number of hours registered
- class standing
- participation in officially recognized activities
- dates of attendance
- degrees awarded and total hours earned
- special honors and awards
- the most recent previous educational agency or institution attended by the student

A request for nondisclosure of the “directory information” must be filed with the Registrar, and will be honored by the Institute until the student asks to have it removed, whether or not the student is currently registered. Upon the death of a student, all privacy holds are removed.

All other student educational record information, including the student’s course schedule, are NOT considered directory information and are protected under FERPA.

### **LICENSE EXAMINATIONS**

It is the student’s responsibility to complete the application for the National Board Examination, practice National Board, Texas Mortuary Law Examination, and any other licensure exams along with the correct fee and within the necessary time frame. Additional information can be found at [www.theconferenceonline.org](http://www.theconferenceonline.org) for National Board information and at [www.tfsc.state.tx.us](http://www.tfsc.state.tx.us) for questions about the Texas Law Examination.

### **1098-T FORM**

Students are responsible for keeping a valid address on file with the school. For 1098-T purposes, changes of address will not be accepted after December 1<sup>st</sup>. IRS form 1098-T will be mailed to students and postmarked no later than January 31<sup>st</sup> of each year.

### **LOST AND FOUND**

Lost and found articles should be taken to the front office. Articles found and left with the front office will be inventoried, dated, and held for a period of forty-five days. During this time, these articles may be claimed upon proof of ownership. After forty-five days, CIFS will automatically dispose of unclaimed articles.

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## Section 3 Student Behavior/Code of Conduct

### **PURPOSE**

CIFS recognizes that students are both citizens and members of the academic community. Upon enrolling at the Institute, each student assumes an obligation to conduct himself/herself in a manner compatible with Commonwealth's function, missions, and goals. Students are expected to obey the penal and civil statutes of local, state, and federal government along with Commonwealth Institute's policies, regulations, and administrative rules.

### **STUDENT CONDUCT AND PROHIBITED BEHAVIOR**

All students shall obey the law, including all federal/state/local statutes and all CIFS rules/policies, show respect for properly constituted authority, and observe correct standards of conduct. In addition to activities prohibited by law, conduct which adversely affects the student's suitability as a member of the academic community includes but is not limited to the following:

- Harassment of students or employees of Commonwealth Institute whether it be on the basis of race, color, religion, gender identity, gender expression, national origin, age, disability, sex, sexual orientation, or Veteran status. Sexual assault which includes any unwanted sexual advances or contact. Violation of such may result in disciplinary action as well as prosecution under state, federal, and local laws.
- Stalking. Stalking refers to harassing or threatening behavior that an individual engages in repeatedly such as following a person, appearing at a person's home or place of business, making harassing phone calls, leaving written messages or objects, or vandalizing a person's property. Online stalking (cyberstalking) may involve harassment of a target through unsolicited emails, disturbing private or public messages on bulletin boards or in chat rooms, and communiqués or actual threats of harm. Online stalkers may pose as the victim online in order to incite others to harass and threaten the victim. Online stalking may lead to other forms of stalking.
- Respect and maturity from each student enrolled at Commonwealth Institute is expected at all times. Disruptions in the classroom or any place in the facilities will not be tolerated. If such a disruption happens, then the student may be asked to leave the classroom or the campus and will be expected to do so immediately.
- As a courtesy to other students, please do not distract the class by entering late or leaving while class is in session. If you leave class prior to its completion, then you will be considered absent.
- Classes will not be interrupted except for legitimate emergency reasons.
- Theft, defacing, damaging, or destruction of CIFS property. A student is held responsible for the breakage or destruction of classroom and/ or laboratory equipment

- Please do not sit on the writing surface of the desks nor deface the desktops by writing on them. Do not place your feet on any of the furniture.
- Inability or unwillingness to work in harmony with other students, faculty, and administration.
- Failure to pay a debt to CIFS or writing an "insufficient funds" check to CIFS.
- Obstruction or disruption of teaching, research, administration, or other Commonwealth activities. Disorderly conduct shall include any verbal or physical abuse, intimidation, or the subjection of another person to inappropriate, abusive, threatening, or demeaning actions.
- Forgery, alteration, falsification, or misuse of Commonwealth Institute documents, records, admission forms, identification, etc.
- Theft, fraud, and gambling.
- Carrying or possessing weapons or explosives of any kind.
- Riotous behavior such as property destruction, disturbing the peace, or risking bodily injury to students or employees of Commonwealth Institute.
- Disorderly conduct which shall include any verbal or physical abuse, intimidation or the subjection of another person to inappropriate, abusive, threatening or demeaning actions on property owned or controlled by the Institute or at Institute-sponsored functions. Students who behave in a disorderly fashion may be required to leave the premises, withdraw from a club or organization, or withdraw from the Institute.
- Holding rallies, demonstrations, or any other form of public gathering without prior approval of the Dean of Students, or conducting an activity that causes CIFS officials to interrupt their scheduled duties to intervene, supervise, or observe activities in the interest of maintaining order.
- Failure to comply with directions of Commonwealth Institute officials acting in the performance of their duties (including uniformed security personnel).
- Exhibiting behavior that gives reasonable cause to question, in the opinion of the Institute, whether the student is able to satisfactorily function in institutional programs or institutional activities in which the student is engaged.
- Conspiring to participate or participating in hazing with or without the consent of a student. A violation of that prohibition renders both the person inflicting the hazing and the person submitting to the hazing subject to appropriate discipline. Initiations by organizations may include no feature that is dangerous, harmful, or degrading to the student; a violation of this prohibition renders the organization subject to appropriate disciplinary action.
- Fireworks, firearms, ammunition, or weapons of any sort are prohibited on property and/or activities sponsored or controlled by Commonwealth Institute.
- Failure to comply with OSHA and/or EPA rules and regulations.

- Dressing in a manner which does not observe health and safety regulations and appropriateness to a learning environment. Students shall be informed of special dress requirements for any particular course or program. Students failing to comply with such requirements may be subject to disciplinary action. In cases where a student's dress or hygiene interferes with learning, the appropriate Institute official shall conduct initial counseling with the student. (see Dress Code).
- Unauthorized solicitation and distribution of literature or products. Students must get permission from the administration prior to posting any notices or distributions of literature or products.
- Unauthorized access, reconfiguration, modification, copying or misuse of Institute or other students' computer files, including inappropriate use of e-mail, data or software. Violation may lead to disciplinary action.
- Using tobacco or tobacco products inside any Institute building. No smoking within 20 feet of any building entrance.
- The illegal use, possession, transmission, and/or sale of alcohol, drugs (not prescribed by a physician), or narcotics, as those terms are defined by the Texas Controlled Substances Act. Drug paraphernalia is also prohibited. See the **ALCOHOL AND DRUGS POLICY** section for complete policy details.  
NOTE: Certain criminal convictions can prohibit a student from participating in Title IV.
- Violations of the penal Statutes of Texas, or of the United States, occurring on Institute property or in connection with Institute-sponsored activities may also constitute violations of the Institute's rules and regulations when such violations affect the educational process and goals of the Institute.
- Academic dishonesty ("Cheating"), including but not limited to:
  1. Looking on and/or copying from another student's paper during a test or examination or communicating in any way with anyone other than the test administrator.
  2. Accepting or providing unauthorized assistance in the preparation of assignments or taking of any tests and examinations.
  3. Submitting as your own work essays, term papers, lab reports, or other projects which have been prepared by others.
  4. Plagiarism. "Plagiarism" shall be defined as the appropriating, buying, receiving as a gift, or obtaining by any means another's work and the unacknowledged submission or incorporation of it in one's own written work.
  5. Using test materials not authorized by the person administering the test.
  6. Knowingly using, buying, selling, stealing or soliciting in whole or in part, the contents of a pending test.
  7. The unauthorized transporting or removal, in whole or in part, of the contents of a pending test.
  8. Substituting for another student, or permitting another student to substitute for one's self, to take a test.
  9. Bribing another person to obtain a pending test.
  10. Collusion. "Collusion" shall be defined as the unauthorized collaboration with another person in preparing written work for fulfillment of course requirements.

A student charged with any of the aforementioned violations, and depending on the severity of the transgression, may be suspended by the President or Dean, pending a hearing on the charges as soon as is practical, when deemed in the best interest of Commonwealth Institute.

### **ALCOHOL AND DRUGS POLICY**

Students are expected to comply with federal, state, and local laws with regard to controlled substances and the possession and use of all prescription medication. All prescription medication must be stored in the original container with the original label affixed by the pharmacist showing all details including patient's name, name of medication, and directions for use. Any other storage of prescription drugs found may be considered abuse or intent to distribute.

- The unlawful manufacture, distribution, dispensation, possession, or use of illegal drugs or controlled substances by Commonwealth Institute students on property or as part of any Commonwealth Institute activities is strictly prohibited.
- The unlawful possession, use, or distribution of alcohol by students on Commonwealth Institute property or as part of any Commonwealth Institute activities is strictly prohibited. Violation of this policy will result in suspension or expulsion from the Institute.
- Institute standards do not allow alcoholic beverages, including empty containers, on campus.
- Possession of drug-related paraphernalia is considered a violation of this policy.
- Additionally, being under the influence of illicit drugs and/or alcohol is considered a violation of this policy. Intoxication on campus or at Institute-sponsored events is prohibited.
- Commonwealth Institute is recognized by Texas Health & Safety Code §481.134 as a Drug-Free Zone. Commonwealth Institute is also within 1000 yards of a public elementary school.
- Commonwealth Institute recognizes its responsibility to maintain and support civil laws and therefore will cooperate fully with law enforcement agencies by providing information and assisting in the prosecution of illegal use, possession, distribution, and sale of illegal drugs.
- Violations of the above policies may affect financial aid.

### **Parent Notification**

The Higher Education Amendment of 1998 (H.R.6, Sec. 952) permits higher education institutions to notify parents or legal guardians when a student has committed a disciplinary violation with respect to use or possession of alcohol or a controlled substance and the student is under the age of 21. When the consequences for violations of the alcohol and drug policy indicate that a student's parents will be notified, a copy of the student's disciplinary letter citing the infraction and consequences for the infraction will be sent to the student's permanent, legal home address.

## **COMPUTER AND INTERNET USAGE**

Computers for student use in the Institute computer lab are for educational purposes only. The Institute monitors computer (including internet) use to determine if violation of any computer usage guidelines, posted in the computer lab, exist. Students may print a maximum of 5 school related pages per day unless otherwise approved by CIFS staff. Students may jeopardize their academic standing if violations are committed.

Computers may be allowed in the classroom; however, your full attention is expected while in class. You may only use your laptop computer in the classroom to take notes and review course materials unless instructed otherwise. Students using a laptop are required to sit within the front 5 rows of the classroom. All computers must be muted and set up prior to the start of class to avoid distracting other classmates. **You may not surf the web, read email, or "chat" while in class.** Students who abuse this privilege will not be allowed to use their computers in class and will have their participation grade reduced.

## **TESTING CENTER POLICY**

Only authorized test takers are permitted in CIFS testing center. Students may ask the front desk for a temporary locker in which to place personal belongings. Cell phones, watches, blue tooth devices, hats, hoodies, scarfs, jackets, blankets or personal belongings are strictly prohibited in the testing center.

## **SECURITY OF PERSONAL PROPERTY**

The Institute cannot be responsible for personal property or assume responsibility for the protection of vehicles and their contents. The Institute recommends that students conceal books, supplies, and other valuables in an area out of sight, or keep valuables in their possession at all times. Items such as purses, handbags, book bags, and knapsacks should not be left unattended.

## **COMMENCEMENT**

The administration and staff at Commonwealth Institute of Funeral Service believe very strongly that Commencement must be a dignified ceremony. Commencement exercises are optional. If students choose to participate, then they must follow school guidelines, and they will be held accountable for any violation. Candidates are expected to conduct themselves in a decent, respectful, and civilized manner during Commencement activities.

### **This includes:**

- Arriving on time (at least 30 minutes prior to the start, if not sooner). Once the processional has started, no student will be allowed to enter the procession.
- Wearing all approved academic regalia (cap and gown) until the end of the event and the recessional has ended.
- Refraining from disruptive behavior during Commencement. Yelling, talking, walking out, use of cellular devices, chewing gum, etc. is prohibited. The use of alcohol or other mind altering substances is strictly prohibited. If it is even suspected that you may be under the influence, then you will be asked to leave immediately from the premises.
- Being respectful and attentive to all speakers throughout the program.

## COMMENCEMENT DRESS CODE

Graduating students are expected to reflect the image of the Institute in the attire that is worn during the Commencement Ceremony. Students wearing jeans, t-shirts, shorts, sneakers or flip-flops will **not** be allowed to participate in the Commencement Ceremony. It is suggested that at a minimum, business casual attire be worn. After all, it is expected that candidates understand the importance of presentation as you are about to enter the field of funeral service.

All candidates participating in the Commencement ceremony will be required to wear the academic regalia significant to CIFS. Students do not wear regalia, honor cords, or academic cords from previously attended colleges or universities.

- Traditional black regalia will be worn by all graduates and may not be altered, modified, or decorated in any way. In keeping with the dignity of the ceremony, no additions to the regalia will be allowed. Candidates with altered regalia will not be allowed to participate in the ceremony.
- Only the top of the mortar board (cap) may be decorated, please practice discretion when decorating.
- CIFS issued stoles, medallions, and honor cords may be worn at the Ceremony.
- **Use CAUTION** in selecting your graduation footwear. You will be required to stand for long periods of time, walk long distances, and use stairs/ramps.
- Information on purchasing cap, gown, and tassel will be provided. Stoles, Medallions, and Honor Cords for applicable candidates will be issued at the Ceremony.

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## Section 4 Dress Code

### **PURPOSE**

CIFS adopts the dress code to comply with its responsibility of upholding and promoting the values of funeral service to its students. The intent of this policy is to assist students in making choices in personal grooming and apparel which will be acceptable and appropriate for a professional school setting. Every student contributes to CIFS's image. While students will have the right to personal preferences in dress, the overall image will be one of professionalism. The Institute reserves the right to restrict dress for legitimate reasons relating to safety, hygiene, or environmental conditions.

CIFS expects you to take pride in your personal appearance. Personal grooming and a businesslike appearance are vital to each student's success. It is not the intent of the policy to be overly restrictive; it is designed to promote safety, order, and decency and to stress good grooming so that each individual student may be proud of his/her own appearance, as well as the appearance of the entire student body.

### **GENERAL RULES:**

Sunglasses are not to be worn in the building. Hats or caps are not to be worn in the building, laboratories, or classrooms. Modest jewelry is allowed. All tattoos must be covered while attending any CIFS sponsored activity.

On days of field trips and/or guest lectures, students are expected to dress in the mode of contemporary funeral service practitioners. If the dress is not appropriate, then the student will not be allowed to participate and will be marked absent for the time missed.

**Female students** - Dresses or suits, slacks, pant-suits, and dress or polo shirt. Proper dress shoes are expected. The following **are not** permitted: pants with holes, sandals, exposed mid-riffs, low-cut blouses, t-shirts, shorts, Capri or yoga pants and sweat suits.

**Male students** - Suits, sport coat or jacket, dress or sport trousers, dress or polo shirt, socks and shoes. The following **are not** permitted: pants with holes, sandals, t-shirts, muscle shirts, shorts, or sweat suits.

Hair style should conform to a professional work environment. Scrubs may be worn **ONLY** on the student's scheduled lab day.

Certain clothing is considered unacceptable and will not be permitted at CIFS. The aforementioned list is not inclusive. Therefore, a student may be informed by administration if their attire is not acceptable. Business casual attire is preferred.

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# Section 5 Embalming Lab Program

## **PURPOSE**

The embalming program at Commonwealth Institute is unique in comparison to any other such program in the country. At CIFS, students not only participate in the embalming process of human remains, but they may also voluntarily cosmetize, dress, casket, and participate in the funeral service under the Indigent Burial Program through Harris County. During his/her tenure, the student is required to actively participate in the embalming of ten (10) human remains.

## **SCHEDULING**

Each student is required to work in the embalming laboratory. Students are not scheduled for embalming labs in their first quarter of study in order for them to gain a theoretical background in Occupational Safety and Anatomy before they enter the clinical embalming program.

## **LABORATORY TIME**

The embalming lab is open from 8:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m. or until the last case has been completed. During the Embalming 2 course, students will select their lab day and work on a rotating team basis. Two teams of five students will be available to work in the laboratory from Monday to Friday; depending on class size.

## **COORDINATION**

Each day the number of embalming lab cases will be announced. No more than 5 students will be assigned to an embalming case. No more than 2 provisional licensees can claim credit for any single embalming case.

## **EMBALMING PROCESS**

The embalming process will vary from case to case, but several essential elements will be covered for each case. They are as follows:

1. Case Analysis to be conducted by the embalming instructor with input from the students.
2. Students will choose the embalming fluid, solution strength, index, and modifying agents with the approval of the embalming instructor.
3. Students will perform embalming under the direct supervision of the embalming instructor.
4. Utmost respect for the deceased will be practiced at all times.
5. Professionalism is required at all times.
6. The highest degree of concern for the safety of all.
7. Constant concern for cleanliness, disinfection, and health procedures.
8. Complete terminal disinfection of the decedent and work area.
9. A strict duty of confidentiality will be held by the student throughout his/her academic career. Releasing or discussing the details of any embalming case or the decedent are strictly prohibited.
10. A maximum of five (5) students will work together on each case.

## **STUDENT EMBALMING REPORTS**

The embalming instructor retains a student embalming report for each student which keeps track of all casework performed in the embalming lab. Each student is required to fill out his/her embalming report after completion of each case that he/she actively participated in. The report contains all aspects of the embalming process.

## **SAFETY**

A primary concern of the Institute is the safety of our students who are working in the embalming lab. Students are advised to consult with their personal physician concerning preventative vaccinations and any susceptibility testing. Health services are not provided by the Institute; however, students are directed to the Texas Department of Health and Human Services ([www.dshs.state.tx.us](http://www.dshs.state.tx.us)), Harris County Public Health and Environmental Services ([www.dshs.state.tx.us](http://www.dshs.state.tx.us)), or any local immunization clinic for further assistance in seeking proper vaccinations.

## **DRESS CODE**

To assure the safety of all students while embalming, the following articles of clothing are mandatory: Long pants (preferably jeans), slacks, or scrubs. No shorts, Capri pants, or short skirts may be worn. Closed-toe shoes, preferably leather tennis shoes worn with socks, are required. Hair longer than shoulder length should be pulled up in a clip or ponytail. Fingernail length should be kept appropriate to ensure that gloves fit properly and do not tear. Excessive jewelry is not permitted. All students are required to wear personal protective equipment (PPE) which is furnished by Commonwealth and included in the cost of tuition.

**Students are not allowed to take any personal items into the preparation room such as backpacks, purses, keys, cell phones, watches, recording devices, pagers, etc.**

## **LABS FOR ONLINE STUDENTS**

Students enrolled in the A.A.S. degree program must complete a minimum of 10 embalming cases and 10 Restorative Art Laboratory hours. Online students must schedule to come in and complete the required labs at the CIFS campus (NO EXCEPTIONS), located in Houston, Texas, during the last quarter of the program. Students will receive information on available dates, scheduled per week, for lab openings via email during the Embalming 2 course. Labs are scheduled on a first-come, first-serve basis. Students are responsible for the cost of travel, transportation, lodging, meals, etc. CIFS does not provide shuttle service. **Online students are expected to maintain coursework while attending labs.**

## **HEALTH SERVICES**

Health services are not provided by the Institute; however, students are encouraged to seek immunization assistance from the Texas Department of Health Services ([www.dshs.state.tx.us](http://www.dshs.state.tx.us)), Harris County Public Health and Environmental Services ([www.dshs.state.tx.us](http://www.dshs.state.tx.us)), or any local immunization clinic. Harris County Clinics in our area are as follows:

**Harris County Public Health Cypress Station WIC Clinic** – 221 FM 1960 A.

Phone: (713) 407-5800

Hours: Mon. – Thurs. 8 AM – 7 PM, Fri. 8 AM – 2 PM, Sat./Sun. CLOSED

**Harris County Public Health Humble Clinic** - 1730 Humble Place Drive.

Phone: (281) 446-4222

Hours: Mon. & Wed. 7 AM – 8 PM, Tues. & Thurs. 8 AM – 5 PM, Fri. 9 AM – 12 PM, Sat./Sun. CLOSED

**Harris County Public Health Antoine Clinic** - 5815 Antoine.

Phone: (713) 602-3300

Hours: Mon. & Wed. 8 AM – 7 PM, Tues. & Thurs. 8 AM – 5 PM, Fri. 8 AM – 12 PM, Sat. 9 AM – 1 PM,  
Sun. CLOSED

CIFS recognizes the importance of meeting the guidelines set forth by OSHA and the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) with regard to Universal Precautions and endeavors to comply with all regulations. These regulations are intended to keep individuals as safe as possible from infections resulting from the handling of human remains. Therefore, all human remains shall be handled as if they were infectious cases, and Universal Precautions are to be practiced on all cases.

Students are advised to consult their personal physician concerning preventative vaccination and susceptibility testing. Ask your physician about the HBV vaccine to protect you against infection by the Hepatitis B virus. The vaccine is available for individuals who might come into direct contact with blood or body fluids. This vaccine, administered prior to exposure to the virus, consists of a series of three injections given over a six-month period. Please refer to the earlier Suggested Enrollment Timetable or sign a waiver for the HBV vaccination at the time of enrollment. See the Student Handbook for more information.

**Emergency Procedures:**

If required to evacuate a classroom/building, students will proceed to a clear and safe area away from the evacuated building. As each student evacuates, they are reminded to leave their personal belongings and follow the evacuation directions that are posted in each designated teaching area. There will be *no* use of any communication device while attending any emergency procedure unless directed to do so. The use of additional communication devices by non-first responders interferes with the emergency response and can cause excessive confusion during said emergency.

If required to shelter in place, the students will follow the directions of the faculty member in the classroom and move quickly away from any door or window, sit on the floor and remain silent until such time that first responders deem it safe to evacuate the building/facility.

Students are informed about the campus safety procedures in the event of an emergency during orientation as well as in the Student Handbook.

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## Section

# 6

## Intellectual Property Protection and Ownership

### **PURPOSE**

CIFS respects intellectual property rights and ownership. These policies ensure against unauthorized use of copyrighted material and information technology systems and provide clear guidance as to ownership of intellectual property.

### **COPYRIGHT PROTECTION**

CIFS requires its students to respect the rights of others, including intellectual property rights. The Federal Copyright Act (17 U.S.C. § 101, et seq.) prohibits the unauthorized making and distribution of copyrighted material. Violations of the Copyright Act, including unauthorized peer-to-peer file sharing, may subject students to civil and criminal liabilities. These liabilities include, but are not limited to, actions by a copyright owner to recover actual damages, profits, or statutory damages, as well as reasonable attorneys' fees and costs, and federal criminal charges that may result in fines and imprisonment. Students found to be in violation of this policy may be suspended from using technology at the Institute. Any incident after the first violation will result in the student's dismissal from the Institute.

### **USE OF INSTITUTIONAL INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY RESOURCES**

CIFS provides its students with access to computer equipment, copier machines, printers, and the Internet, exclusively for educational activities. The Institute's students are prohibited from using any of the foregoing, or any of the other Institute's information technology systems, for the unauthorized copying or distribution of copyrighted materials, including but not limited to unauthorized peer-to-peer file sharing of copyrighted materials. Downloading, viewing, distributing, or sending pornographic or obscene materials are also prohibited. This prohibited conduct includes bookmarking any pornographic or obscene websites or websites intended or used for the distribution of unauthorized copies of copyrighted materials, or knowingly opening or forwarding any e-mail, fax, or voice mail messages containing unauthorized copies of copyrighted materials, or any pornographic or obscene materials. Any violation of these policies may result in disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal from CIFS.

Any communications by students via e-mail, instant messenger, voicemail, or fax that may constitute slander or defamation or may be considered abusive, offensive, harassing, vulgar, obscene, or threatening are prohibited. This content includes, but is not limited to, sexual comments or images, racial slurs, gender-specific comments, or any other comments that would offend someone on the basis of age, race, sex, color, religion, national origin, ancestry, physical challenge, sexual orientation, or veteran status. Any individual with a complaint about such communications should refer to the CIFS Policy of Nondiscrimination.

Students should not expect computer files, e-mail, voice mail, or Internet bookmarks to be either confidential or private. Students should have no expectation of privacy whatsoever related to their use of the Institute's systems. Even when a message or file is erased, it is still possible to recover the message or file, and therefore privacy of messages and computer files cannot be ensured to anyone. Any computer-generated correspondence, the contents of all computer hard drives on CIFS's premises, and saved voice mail messages are the sole

property of CIFS, may be considered business records, and could be used in administrative, judicial, or other proceedings.

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## Section

# 7

## Policy Against Harassment & Discrimination

### **PURPOSE**

It is the policy of CIFS to maintain learning and working environment that is free from race, color, religion, gender identity and gender expression, national origin, age, disability, sex, sexual orientation, or Veteran status discrimination. The Institute prohibits any and all of the above forms of discrimination.

It shall be a violation of this policy for any student, teacher, administrator, third party (present on the premises) or school personnel to harass a student, teacher, administrator, or school personnel through conduct or communication.

It shall be a violation of this policy for any student, teacher, administrator, third party (present on the premises) or other Institute personnel to discriminate, or attempt to discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, gender identity and gender expression, national origin, age, disability, sex, sexual orientation, or Veteran status.

CIFS will act to investigate all complaints, formal or informal, verbal or written, regarding harassment and/or discrimination, and to discipline or take appropriate action against any student, teacher, administrator, or other Institute personnel who is found to have violated this policy.

The Title IX Officers at Commonwealth Institute are the Dean of Students, Christopher C. Layton and the Admissions Specialist, René Altheimer. The Institute maintains a Title IX Complaint Form which is made freely available upon request.

### **SEXUAL HARASSMENT**

CIFS strictly forbids sexual harassment. Sexual harassment is unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature including: Unwelcome sexual advances; requests for sexual favors; and other verbal, nonverbal, or physical conduct of a sexual nature. These specified acts constitute sexual harassment for a Commonwealth Institute student when: (a) submission to such advances, requests, or conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of the individual's academic advancement, participation in Institute programs or activities, or is used as a basis for academic decisions affecting the individual; (b) rejection of such advances, requests, or conduct affects a term or condition of the individual's academic advancement, participation in Institute programs or activities, or is used as a basis for academic decisions affecting the individual; or (c) such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with the individual's academic performance, education, or participation in Institute programs or activities, or of creating an intimidating or hostile work or academic environment.

### **Examples of sexual harassment may include but are not limited to:**

- Repeated offensive sexual flirtations, advances, or propositions;
- Verbal abuse or innuendo of a sexual nature which is continued or repeated;

- Physical contact such as touching, hugging, patting, or pinching which is uninvited and unwanted by the other person;
- Offensive verbal comments of a sexual nature about an individual's body or sexual terms used to describe an individual;
- An open display of sexually suggestive objects or pictures if people find them offensive;
- Jokes or remarks of a sexual nature if people find them offensive; and
- Unwanted, prolonged, or apparent staring or leering at a person.

## **NOTICE OF NONDISCRIMINATORY POLICY REGARDING STUDENTS**

Commonwealth Institute of Funeral Service is committed to providing an educational climate that is conducive to the personal and professional development of each individual. CIFS does not discriminate and prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, gender identity and gender expression, national origin, age, disability, sex, sexual orientation, or Veteran status in employment or the rights, privileges, programs, and activities generally accorded or made available to students at the school, administration of its educational policies, admissions policies, scholarship and loan programs, and other school administered programs. To ensure compliance with Title IX and other federal and state civil rights laws, the Institute has developed policies and procedures that prohibit discrimination in all of its forms.

Commonwealth Institute of Funeral Service is committed to cultivating an environment free from inappropriate conduct of a sexual or gender-based nature including sex discrimination, sexual assault, sexual harassment, and sexual violence.

Christopher Layton, Dean of Students, and René Altheimer, Admissions Specialist, are designated as the Title IX Officers. All inquiries concerning CIFS policies, compliance with applicable laws, statutes, and regulations, and complaints may be directed to:

Christopher Layton  
415 Barren Springs Dr.  
Houston, TX 77090  
(281) 873-0262 or [c.layton@commonwealth.edu](mailto:c.layton@commonwealth.edu)

René Altheimer  
415 Barren Springs Dr.  
Houston, TX 77090  
(281) 873-0262 or [r.altheimer@commonwealth.edu](mailto:r.altheimer@commonwealth.edu)

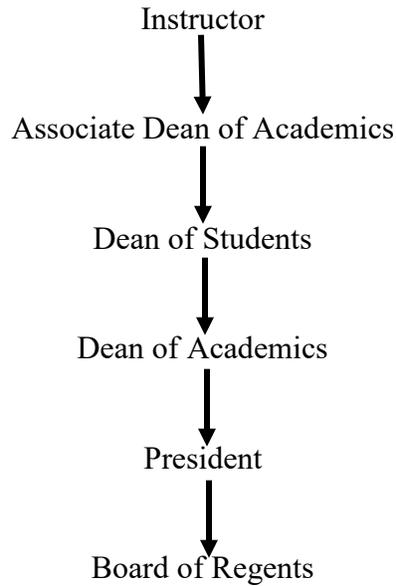
## **SUMMARY OF POSSIBLE SANCTIONS**

- Censure/Disciplinary Reprimand - Verbal warning or written notification to a student that he/she has violated an Institute rule or policy and that subsequent wrongful conduct will not be tolerated and may result in more severe disciplinary actions.
- Restitution - Reimbursement for damages to or misappropriation of property and/or compensation for injury. This may take the form of appropriate service or other compensation
- Dismissal/Suspension - Termination of student status for an indefinite period. A Dismissed/suspended student may not re-enroll at Commonwealth Institute unless and until his or her readmission is specifically approved by the President. Readmission after dismissal may be granted only under exceptional circumstances.
- Revocation of Degree – A student's degree may be revoked if it was obtained by fraud. If a degree is revoked, the student is barred from returning to Commonwealth Institute.

- Expulsion – A student may be dismissed from the Institute permanently. When a student is expelled from the Institute, the student may not re-apply for readmission.

### **GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE (RIGHT TO APPEAL)**

CIFS has an open-door policy. Therefore, students are welcome to visit directly with faculty and staff, as well as the college president. For course-related issues, students are encouraged to first address the matter with their instructor, if possible. If the problem is not resolved, then the student may proceed to the Associate Dean of Academics, Dean of Students, the Dean of Academics, and the CIFS President, **IN THAT ORDER**.



CIFS has established a grievance procedure to be used by students of CIFS to ensure their right to due process. This right to due process is administered without regard to race, creed, national origin, or sex. The grievance must be submitted in writing to CIFS within 30 days of the event. Failure to file any grievance within the specified time periods shall be deemed a waiver thereof.

The Dean of Academics or designee shall investigate the alleged grievance, and an attempt will be made to resolve the matter informally with the parties involved.

A member of CIFS's administration (Dean of Students or Associate Dean of Academics) shall serve as the hearing officer and may resolve the matter of alleged violation through an informal hearing. The legal rules of evidence do not apply at the informal hearing. Evidence that possesses probative value and is commonly accepted by reasonable people in the conduct of the affairs may be admitted. The student is presumed innocent of the alleged violation unless the hearing officer is convinced by the evidence that the student is guilty of the violation. The hearing officer may impose one or more of the following penalties, if the student is found guilty of the alleged violation: suspension of eligibility for extracurricular activities, letter of warning, suspension for up to the remainder of the current quarter, restitution for damages, denial of degree, or permanent severance from Commonwealth Institute.

A student is entitled to appeal the decision of the Associate Dean of Academics, Dean of Students, or Dean of Academics to the President of CIFS. The President shall review the matter and render the final decision in a timely manner. No reprisal of any kind will be taken by the Board, an administrator, or an employee of CIFS against any person bringing a grievance under this procedure.

Any grievances unresolved by CIFS may be forwarded to the Texas Workforce Commission, Proprietary Schools, 101 East 15th Street, Austin, TX 78778-0001, (512) 936-3100. Please see “Student Complaint Policy” in the Student Handbook.

## NOTICE STUDENT COMPLAINT POLICY

Dear Students:

This school has a Certificate of Approval from the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC).

The TWC-assigned school number is: S0477

The school’s programs are approved by TWC, as well as the following:

Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB)

American Board of Funeral Service Education (ABFSE)

**Students must address their concerns about this school or any of its educational programs by following the outline in the official grievance procedure.** Schools are responsible for ensuring and documenting that all students have received a copy of the school’s grievance procedures and for describing these procedures in the Institute’s published Catalog. If, as a student, you were not provided with this information, then please inform school management.

**Students dissatisfied with this school’s response to their complaint or who are not able to file a complaint with the school, can file a formal complaint with TWC, as well as with other relevant agencies or accreditors, if applicable.**

**Information on filing a complaint with TWC can be found on TWC’s Career Schools and Colleges Website at <http://csc.twc.state.tx.us/>.**

## THECB STUDENT COMPLAINT POLICY

**How to submit a student complaint:** After exhausting the Institute’s grievance/complaint process, current, former, and prospective students may initiate a complaint with THECB by sending the required forms either by email to [StudentComplaints@thecb.state.tx.us](mailto:StudentComplaints@thecb.state.tx.us), or by mail to the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, Office of General Counsel, P.O. Box 12788, Austin, TX 78711. Facsimile transmissions of the forms are not accepted.

All submitted complaints must include a student complaint form, a signed Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) Consent and Release form, and a THECB Consent and Agreement form. Submitted complaints regarding students with disabilities shall also include a signed Authorization to Disclose Medical Record information form.

Required forms and a description of complaint procedures may be located at:

<http://www.thecb.state.tx.us/index.cfm?objectid=051F93F5-03D4-9CCE-40FA9F46F2CD3C9D>

A link to the THECB and TWC complaint policy and procedures and forms may be located on our website (<http://commonwealth.edu>) under the “Accreditation/Approvals” section.

## **ABFSE STUDENT COMPLAINT POLICY**

The A.A.S. in Funeral Service program at Commonwealth Institute of Funeral Service is accredited by the American Board of Funeral Service Education (ABFSE), American Board of Funeral Service Education, 992 Mantua Pike, Suite 108, Woodbury Heights, NJ 08097 (816) 233-3747.  
Web: [www.abfse.org](http://www.abfse.org).

### Complaints about accredited program

Alleged Violations of the Standards of Accreditation may be brought to the attention of the Executive Director of the American Board by submission of notarized affidavits by persons or agencies. Such notification normally must be made within 3 months of the complainant becoming aware of the standard alleged to have been violated and after all available campus procedures have been pursued. The Committee on Accreditation will not consider alleged violations which can be and are more properly resolved within the institution's own system of due process and grievance or situations which are outside the accreditation standards. See page 8-3 Chapter VIII. G. of the ABFSE Accreditation and Policy Manual.

Please visit the ABFSE website: <http://abfse.org/html/committee.html#Complaints>

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## **WHO TO ASK**

If you have questions or concerns about a particular course, then please consult the course instructor first. If there are other issues that arise, then please consult the following individuals.

- Admission and transcript questions.....René Altheimer, Admissions Specialist  
OR  
Victoria Bower, Admissions Counselor
  
- Tuition payment questions.....Patricia A. Moreno, Registrar
  
- Financial Aid questions.....Marlene Perry, Financial Aid Advisor
  
- Attendance questions.....Cody L. Lopasky, Associate Dean of Academics
  
- Clinical Embalming Program questions.....Stuart Moen, Dean of Academics  
OR  
David Taylor, Clinical Embalming Coordinator
  
- Title IX questions.....Christopher C. Layton, Dean of Students  
OR  
René Altheimer, Admissions Specialist

**PLEASE NOTE:** The contents of this handbook, all or in part are subject to change without notice. The information contained within this Student Handbook is true and correct to the best of my knowledge. All students should review and become familiar with the Catalog as well as the handbook. Failure to read the Student Handbook does not excuse students from the policies and procedures described herein.

*Glenn A. Bower*

Glenn A. Bower, CFSP, President

*Effective January 1995; Revised August 1996, February 1997, May 1997, August 1997, February 1997, May 1997, August 1997, February 1998, August 1998, August 1999, May 2000, August 2001, November 2001, August 2002, February 2003, January 2004, April 2004, July 2004, June 2005, September 2005, December 2006, March 2010, June 2010, September 2011, March 2013, September 2016, May 2017, July 2018, January 2020*

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**ACCEPTANCE OF STUDENT HANDBOOK**  
**(Turn into the CIFS Office)**

I, the undersigned, have read the student handbook for the Commonwealth Institute of Funeral Service and fully understand them.

I am fully aware that it is my responsibility to abide by the CIFS policies as stated in the CIFS catalog and student handbook and accept the consequences for my actions.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Printed Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

*Please return this completed form to the CIFS office via fax (281-873-5232), email: [information@commonwealth.edu](mailto:information@commonwealth.edu) or in person to the campus office.*