COMMONWEALTH INSTITUTE of Funeral Service

Student Handbook

2026 - 2027

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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.

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 outcomes:

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.

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 hour. To be counted as 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 campus student who accumulates absences of more than 10%, of their scheduled class hours in a quarter, will have their enrollment with CIFS 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 Title IV funding.

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 log in 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

Leaves of absence may be granted only in emergency situations and for military service obligation. A leave of absence may not exceed twelve school days (on campus) or 3 consecutive weeks (online), and only two leaves of absence are permitted for the duration of an academic program. A student requesting a leave of absence must do so in writing. An official Leave of Absence Form is available upon request. The request must contain the specific start and return dates and a reason for the requested leave. If a student fails to return from leave as scheduled, then their enrollment will be terminated, and a proper refund will be made in accordance with the refund policy of CIFS; if any refund is due. All exams and make-up work must be completed within seven class days upon returning from leave. An approved leave of absence, after the 8th week of the academic term, may not extend past the end of the quarter.

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 to 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 another entity, the National Museum of Funeral History. The middle reception area (visitor's entrance) between the school and the museum is reserved for security personnel.

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. **These policies apply to e-cigarettes and vapes too.**

STUDENT PARKING
Ample student parking is provided on the east side and in back of the school complex. The parking lot on the west side of the building is reserved for museum guests. Students are also prohibited from parking in the row of spaces between the guard shack and the school van's portico, adjacent to the back entrance. These spaces are marked "STAFF" and reserved for faculty and staff only. Automobiles are to be parked only in designated parking spaces. Unauthorized cars parked in handicapped spaces or along curbs will be towed at the owner's expense.

STUDENT LOUNGE
Eating or drinking is permissible in the student lounge ONLY. Food, drink, chewing gum, etc. 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. The lounge containers a student kitchen (fridge, coffee pot, microwave), vending machines, games, updated furnishings, and student lockers (see next section). Please note that all food and drink items must be cleared out of the fridge on a regular basis. This is the responsibility of the student!

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 concerns and to prevent waste accumulation.
2. Safety, health, welfare, and fire prevention.
3. For recovery of stolen or missing property.
4. For prevention/confiscation 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 usage is strictly prohibited in the classroom during class. 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. These policies apply to smart watches and similar technologies as well.

HOURS OF OPERATION
Commonwealth Institute is open and available to students Monday through Friday from 8:00 AM to 4:30 PM, except during designated holidays. Campus lecture classes are scheduled Monday through Thursday during the following times:

First Hour……8:00 - 8:50 AM
Second Hour…9:00 - 9:50 AM
Third Hour…10:00 - 10:50 AM
Fourth Hour..11:00 - 11:50 AM
Fifth Hour….12:00 - 12:50 PM

**Embalming laboratory sessions for campus students are held from 1:00 to 4:30 PM, Monday through Thursday during the designated academic term, and on Friday as necessary. Every effort is made to complete lab by 4:30 PM; however, this may vary depending on the individual case(s). Online student embalming laboratory sessions follow a different schedule (See Externships & Labs).*

ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICES
The administrative office area is restricted to CIFS staff and faculty only. If you should need to meet with a staff or faculty member, then please set up an appointment or ask the front window attendant if the person with whom you need to meet is available.

At CIFS, we do 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.

SECURITY & CAMPUS GUESTS
The entire complex is monitored by 24-hour security personnel on site. All activity is monitored and recorded by surveillance cameras as well. The school and adjacent museum facilities have restricted access. Students are given a campus ID/keycard to access the school facilities during their tenure. Campus students receive this during orientation, and online students receive this during their lab week. The ID card is REQUIRED to enter the campus building. Enrolled students arriving without their ID card will be denied access. The fee to replace a lost, damaged, or stolen ID card is $25. ***All visitors will be required to check in with the security desk and receive a temporary visitor's badge.***

For legal and safety reasons, CIFS cannot assume responsibility or liability for non-students on the campus premises. Additionally, given the highly sensitive and professional nature of our mortuary science curriculum, course content is strictly intended for enrolled students only. Thus, guests (e.g. children, parents, friends, etc.) are prohibited from physically accompanying an enrolled student.

NOTE: Please report a lost, stolen, or missing ID card to the school office immediately! Also, entering the building by using someone else's badge is strictly PROHIBITED and may result in disciplinary action!

POSTING ANNOUNCEMENTS IN COMMON AREAS
Bulletin boards and/or dry-erase 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 from the date of enrollment. 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 take final exams or 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 may be placed on the student's transcript and enrollment status if the balance is not paid in full.

STUDENT COUNCIL & HONOR SOCIETY

Commonwealth encourages student participation in campus governance through the Commonwealth Institute Student Council. Student representatives, from each class cohort, are selected by each class to participate in the campus wide committee. The Student Council organizes various campus/community activities throughout the year and also gives the student body a collective voice to address concerns and issues.

The National Funeral Service Honor Society is also represented on the 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 Commonwealth.

The Honor Society members sponsor study groups, assist as hosts at graduation and other college functions, and assist Commonwealth's recruiting efforts. Membership is by invitation and open to students who are enrolled fulltime, with a GPA of 3.5 or higher for any grading period. Dues and other criteria are set by the honor society itself.

A faculty member is assigned as an advisor to each the Honor Society and the Student Council. Activities vary from year to year, and events are planned with the student body's interest and schedules in mind. All activities planned by the Honor Society or Student Council are coordinated through the faculty sponsors with approval from the administration.

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, and forthwith, they will have to pay the quarter's tuition in full at the beginning of each quarter.

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 tuition and/or 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 student 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 a current mailing address is 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
Official transcripts may be ordered using the transcript request form on the school website and submitting the required fee. Any academic quarter for which an outstanding balance is owed to the college may be excluded from the transcript until the balance is paid.

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, 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 for National Board information and at www.tfsc.state.tx.us for questions about the Texas Mortuary 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 1st. IRS form 1098-T will be mailed to students and postmarked no later than January 31st 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 held for a period of thirty days. During this time, these articles may be claimed upon proof of ownership. After thirty days, CIFS will automatically dispose of unclaimed articles.

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 statues 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.

- Disrupting the classroom environment or any place in the facilities. This 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.

- Distracting 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.

- Interrupting classes, labs, etc. 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.

- Sitting on the writing surface of the classroom tables and/or defacing the tops 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/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 face termination from the Institute.

- Holding rallies, demonstrations, or any other form of public gathering without prior approval of the President, 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.

- Failing 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.

- Failing to comply with OSHA 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.

- 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 and also make them ineligible for funeral service licensure.

- Violations of the Penal Codes/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 test items or information.
    10. Collusion. "Collusion" shall be defined as the unauthorized collaboration with another person in preparing written work for fulfillment of course requirements. Additionally, the term collusion may be applied to campus and online students sharing assessment items, material, etc.
    11. Using notes, books, resources, etc. during a quiz or exam; especially in an online course. Such usage is generally prohibited.
    12. Misleading online proctors or falsifying information given to such proctors.
    13. Manipulating technology for nefarious purposes.

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

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. ***Drug dogs and law enforcement may sporadically inspect the campus facilities.***
- 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 termination 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 and funeral service licensure.

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 a violation of any computer usage guidelines, posted in the computer lab, exists. Printing in the library is restricted to assignments only and must be requested/coordinated through the college librarian. Students may jeopardize their academic standing if violations are committed. Computers may be allowed in the classroom only for the purposes of taking notes and reviewing course materials. Such usage is also at the sole discretion of the individual course instructor. Additionally, the CIFS Computer lab offers stations for student device usage and charging.

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. All activities within the testing center are monitored by video surveillance. CIFS staff are prohibited from "holding" any student items during testing or at any other time.

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 valuables in an area out of sight, or keep them in their possession at all times. Such items should not be left unattended.

COMMENCEMENT
Commencement must be a dignified ceremony. Participation in the 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 as stated in the information sent to candidates. Once the processional has started, no student will be allowed to enter the procession.

- Wearing approved cap and gown. **ONLY CIFS REGALIA MAY BE WORN - See below.**

- Refraining from disruptive behavior during commencement**.** Yelling, talking, walking out, use of cell phones/smart watches/Bluetooth devices, chewing gum, etc**.** is prohibited.

- Using alcohol or other mind-altering substances. This 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 professionalism in their attire. Students wearing jeans, t-shirts, shorts, or flip-flops will **not** be allowed to participate. At a minimum, business casual attire is suggested.

All candidates participating in the commencement ceremony will be required to wear the academic regalia significant to CIFS. Students can 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.
- Only the top of the mortar board (cap) may be decorated. Please practice discretion.
- CIFS issued 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. Honor Cords for applicable candidates will be issued at the ceremony.

Section
4
Dress Code

PURPOSE
CIFS adopts a 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 setting. While students will have the right to personal preferences in dress, the overall presentation must be one of professionalism. The Institute also 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:
Business casual attire is preferred, but semi-casual attire is allowed. Additionally, scrubs are allowed. However, use discretion with all attire and accessories. 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. Other prohibited attire specifics are listed below.

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. Proper field trip/guest attire is outlined below.

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/flip-flops, exposed mid-rifts, low-cut blouses, t-shirts, shorts, Capri or yoga pants, pajamas, and sweat suits/pants.

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/flip-flops, t-shirts, muscle shirts, shorts, pajamas, or sweat suits/pants.

Hair style should conform to a professional work environment.

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.

Section
5
Labs & Externships (A.A.S. Degree Students)

GENERAL INFORMATION

All A.A.S. degree students, campus and online, must complete the curricular labs and externships as a requirement for graduation. This translates the theoretical knowledge learned in the classroom into practical, hands-on experience. Included are the three following areas: funeral directing, embalming, and restorative art.

- **The Funeral Directing Externship** consists of two parts, activities and arrangements. The activities portion requires students to attend and observe 5 different types of live funeral services/ceremonies outside of the classroom. The arrangements portion involves students completing 5 arrangement conferences from first-call to contract – these may be completed in a mock setting on campus.
- **The Embalming Externship** may be completed wholly on campus. All students will actively participate in the embalming of at least 10 human remains. Competency in numerous embalming tasks will be assessed. No more than 2 Texas provisional licensees can claim credit for any single embalming case. A maximum of five (5) students will work together on each case. NOTE: As applicable, students must be currently working on their provisional licensure for CIFS to facilitate counting cases done on campus. CIFS will not facilitate the retroactive counting of campus embalming cases.

  (A strict duty of confidentiality and the utmost respect for the deceased will be practiced at all times. Releasing or discussing the details of any embalming case or the decedent are strictly prohibited.)
- **The Restorative Art Lab** consists of clinical instruction regarding wax restoration, feature modeling, and mortuary cosmetology. Students will use photographs to recreate an entire face; with a focus on facial proportions and the specific facial features. This lab must be completed on campus.

CAMPUS A.A.S.

In general, campus degree students will complete all lab and externship requirements on the CIFS campus. The only exception is the Funeral Directing Externship activities which cannot be completed in a mock setting and is an assignment in a 1st quarter specialized course. Embalming is done during the 3rd quarter of specialized courses – one afternoon per week according to a preset schedule. During the 4th quarter of specialized courses, campus students will complete both the Restorative Art Lab and the Funeral Directing Externship arrangements. These 4th quarter requirements typically take place during normal school hours.

ONLINE A.A.S.

Online degree students may choose between two distinct paths to complete their lab and externship requirements. One path is intended to allow those students currently working in funeral service to complete a portion of their requirements at their place of employment (provided certain criteria are met), and the other path is designed for those who need to complete all requirements on campus.

During the Embalming II course (3rd quarter of specialized courses), students will officially select their path and sign up for their scheduled time on campus – 2 to 5 days depending on path. The available dates/weeks generally start around the beginning of the 4th quarter of specialized courses and run through the last week before final exams and exit exams. The two path options are outlined on the next page.

Path A - For those who DO NOT work in funeral service or cannot complete the requirements at their place of employment.

- You will come to the CIFS campus for all 3 lab/externship requirements.
- **You will be on campus for a full week (Monday - Friday).**
- Weekly groups in this path option will be limited to **5 students.**
- More information is sent with the signup calendar (dress code, times, etc.).

Path B - For those who DO work in funeral service and can complete some designated requirements at their place of employment.

- You will complete your funeral directing requirements at your funeral home - 5 first calls & 5 arrangement conferences (real OR simulated).
- You will complete AT LEAST 9 embalming cases at your funeral home (more is acceptable but 9 are required).
- The labs/externships (FD and Embalming) done at your funeral home must be completed under the supervision of a designated preceptor.
- PRIOR to starting any offsite labs, you will need to schedule and complete a physical or virtual site inspection and virtual/telephonic preceptor training (all in one session).
- Your place of employment must complete the CIFS affiliation agreement.
- You will also come to the CIFS campus to complete 1 embalming case and the restorative art lab hours.
- **You will be on campus for 2 days** (versus an entire week).
- Each group in this path option will be limited to **10 students**.
- More information (required documentation, preceptor requirements, etc.) will be discussed when scheduling your inspection.

NOTE: Online students are responsible for all costs associated with travel, transportation, lodging, food, etc.

Online students are not required to bring textbooks or other school supplies with them. However, online students coming to campus are expected to keep up with their online coursework – attending labs/externships on campus is NOT an excuse for missing assignments.

DRESS CODE

There is no required dress code for the funeral directing labs/externships other than the previously stated school dress code. For the Restorative Art lab, scrubs are allowed, and students should be mindful that wax and/or cosmetics may get on their clothing. 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.

HEALTH SERVICES

Students are encouraged to carry proof of insurance to facilitate hospitalization in the event of an emergency. Health services are not provided by the Institute. If desired, then local students are encouraged to seek immunization assistance from the Texas Department of Health Services (www.dshs.state.tx.us), Harris County Public Health and Environmental Services (www.dshs.state.tx.us), or any local immunization clinic. For students in the greater Houston area, Harris County Clinics are as follows:

Harris County Public Health Cypress Station (WIC) Clinic
221 FM 1960 West, Suite A, Houston, Texas 77090
(713) 407-5800

Harris County Public Health Humble Clinic
1730 Humble Place Drive, Humble, Texas 77338
(281) 446-4222

Harris County Public Health Antoine Clinic
5815 Antoine, Houston, Texas 77091
(713) 602-3300

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.

All students are encouraged to consult their personal physician concerning preventative vaccination and susceptibility testing. It is recommended to have the preventative HBV vaccination to protect you against infection by the Hepatitis B virus, the Meningococcemia vaccine to protect you from bacterial meningitis, and the Tdap vaccine to protect you from Tetanus and Diphtheria. The Hepatitis B 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 two or 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.

MENTAL HEALTH

CIFS cares about our students, their well-being, and their mental health. A list of mental health resources is available from the CIFS office. If a CIFS staff or faculty member is made aware of a credible suicidal threat by a student, either verbally or in writing, then the student's emergency contact may be notified.

MEDICAL EMERGENCY

If medical assistance is necessary for a student on campus, then emergency services will be notified along with the emergency contact person(s) designated in the student file. In these circumstances, a medical doctor's releases form must be provided to return to campus. An official leave of absence may be necessary to avoid attendance violations.

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, bookmarking, or sending pornographic or obscene materials are also prohibited. 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.

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, present third-party, or other 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 Officer at Commonwealth Institute is 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.

René Altheimer is designated as the Title IX Officer. All inquiries concerning CIFS policies, compliance with applicable laws, statutes, and regulations, and complaints may be directed to:

René Altheimer
415 Barren Springs Dr.
Houston, TX 77090
(281) 873-0262 or 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.

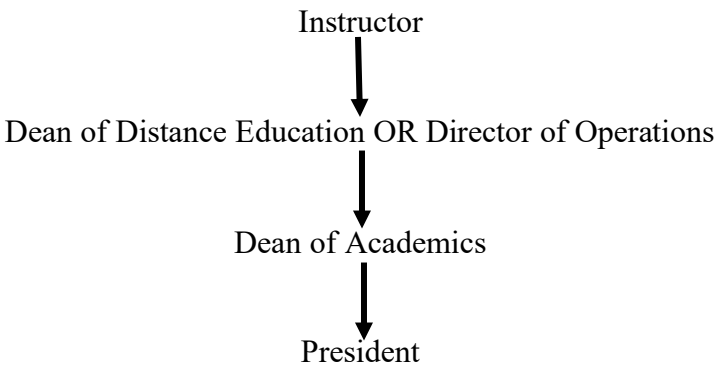
- Revocation of Degree – A student's degree may be revoked if it was obtained by fraud. If a degree is revoked, the student is barred from returning to Commonwealth Institute.

- 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.

Section
8
Grievances, Complaints, & Questions

GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE

CIFS has an open-door policy. Therefore, students are welcome to visit directly with faculty and staff. 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 Dean of Distance Education OR Director of Operations, the Dean of Academics, and the CIFS President, **IN THAT ORDER**.



CIFS has established a grievance procedure to be used by our students to ensure their right to due process. This right to due process is administered without regard to race, color, religion, gender identity and gender expression, national origin, age, disability, sex, sexual orientation, or veteran status. 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.

If the grievance reaches the level of the Dean of Academics, he/she 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 Academics) may act as the hearing officer and 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 of 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 of Funeral Service.

A student is entitled to appeal the decision of the hearing officer 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 of Regents, an administrator, or an employee of CIFS against any person bringing a grievance under this procedure.

TWC 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 CIFS or any of its educational programs by following the outline in the official grievance procedure. CIFS is 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 CIFS'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, 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).

ABFSE STUDENT COMPAINT POLICY

Commonwealth Institute of Funeral Service (CIFS) and the Funeral Service associate degree program offered by CIFS are accredited by the American Board of Funeral Service Education (ABFSE), 992 Mantua Pike, Suite 108, Woodbury Heights, NJ 08097 (816) 233-3747. Web: 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

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.

-Admissions & Enrollment questions…….…….....Mr. Roldan, Admissions Counselor
OR
Ms. McElligott, Admissions Counselor

-Tuition & Transcript questions……..…….....Ms. Altheimer, Registrar

-Financial Aid questions……..…….....Mrs. Perry, Financial Aid Advisor
OR
Ms. Howell, Financial Aid Advisor

-Academic advising questions……...Mr. Robinson, Dean of Academics

-Attendance questions…….....Mr. Robinson, Dean of Academics

-Online Program/Course questions……..…….....Mrs. Register, Dean of Distance Education

-Lab & Externship questions……..…….……..Mr. Taylor, Clinical Coordinator
OR
Ms. Dynamite, Instructor

-Title IX questions/complaints…….……..Ms. Altheimer, Registrar

-Library & Research questions……..……...Mr. Guttery, Librarian

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 this handbook. Failure to read the Student Handbook does not excuse students from the policies and procedures described herein.

Cody L. Lopasky, MA, CFSP
President
Commonwealth Institute of Funeral Service

Effective April 2026