A Transformational Challenge

Kindness needs to be more than an illusory ideal. It should be grounded in action, a part of the everyday lives of students, faculty and staff. The integrated four-year bioethics curriculum and an emphasis on student wellness help energize and promulgate the medical school’s kindness commitment.

Activities that enhance the school’s kindness mission

- The White Coat Ceremony during orientation week
- Ethics/Professionalism student forums during the first year of Pillar 1
- Healer’s Art Seminar (Pillar 1)
- Required on-line Clinical Ethics course (Pillar 2) that engages students and faculty in reflections on values/actions in clinical care
- Pillar 3 electives that include Advanced Studies in Bioethics; Ethical Foundations for Clinical Research; Ethics, Professionalism, and Leadership; Spirituality in Medicine
- Pillar 3 professionalism paper
- Student and faculty performance evaluations that highlight kindness
- Student wellness activities that emphasize self-care and professional collaboration
- Community outreach activities that include volunteer work with organizations like the Welcome Table and the Banquet
- Participation in free health care clinics for medically underserved groups
Students begin medical school with lofty ideals and noble expectations. The challenge at the University of South Dakota Sanford School of Medicine is to recognize and nourish those instincts as our students prepare for clinical excellence and leadership in health care.

In 2019, kindness became a unifying focus of the medical school’s strategic plan. This emphasis begins with new student orientation week and is interwoven throughout the four year curriculum.

Kindness belongs to all of us.
- patients/families
- students
- faculty
- staff

“An unwavering commitment to kindness is both an ordinary and bold declaration. Our medical school is unique in making kindness an overarching expectation of how patients, students and colleagues are to be treated. A culture of kindness places our medical school on the threshold of making an enduring impact on medical education.”

– Jerome W. Freeman, MD, FACP
Professor and Chair, Department of Neurosciences
John C. Sall, MD, Professor of Medicine