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## Group rates Florida medical schools' ties to pharmaceutical firms

BY JOHN DORSCHNER

[jdorschner@MiamiHerald.com](mailto:jdorschner@MiamiHerald.com)

The University of Florida medical school has received an F on a scorecard designed to measure ethical policies concerning professors' relationship with the pharmaceutical industry, the Pew Prescription Project announced Tuesday.

The Gainesville school received the grade because it refused to provide information to the 2009 American Medical Student Association PharmFree Scorecard.

The University of Miami received a B on the scorecard, as did Florida State. Nova Southeastern's College of Osteopathic Medicine got a D. The University of South Florida received a C.

The AMSA PharmFree Scorecard -- available at [www.amsascorecard.org](http://www.amsascorecard.org) -- includes categories measuring policies for gifts and meals from industry to doctors, paid promotional speaking for industry, acceptance of free drug samples, interaction with sales representatives and industry-funded education.

For UM Miller School of Medicine, the scorecard said there are "strong, clearly organized policies on individual conflicts of interest. These policies could be made stronger with a complete ban on gifts, tighter restrictions on samples and a stronger firewall between industry funding and on-site educational activities."

The scorecard said UM's limits on meals 'may not significantly curb on-site or off-site [restaurant] meals. Provisions to be occasional, informational and 'modest by local standards' are not significant disincentives for meals."

The report praised UM for "exemplary language" in its ethics on consulting relationships. "This policy requires a formal contract for all consulting relationships, including the nature of services to be rendered and the amount of compensation for those services, which must be reasonable. Importantly, all such arrangements must be approved by the department chair or the dean."

The scorecard also praised UM for "a strong policy which requires employees to recuse themselves from purchasing decisions when either they or a close relation (family member, partner, close personal friend) have a financial interest in the business being considered. However, the policy does allow these same individuals to contribute to

discussions surrounding the decision (without taking part in the actual vote), which risks undue influence on the outcome."

The Scorecard said Nova has ``workable gifts policy and thorough oversight and compliance framework, but fails to address most other domains, including site access, consulting/speaking relationships, on- and off-site education, and disclosure of financial relationships."

Over the past year, there have been repeated stories in the national press about doctors writing papers in favor of certain drugs after receiving unpublicized payments for speaking or consulting fees from the firms they're promoting.

The Scorecard, released Tuesday, gives an A or B to 45 of 149 medical schools.

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