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Report Card Ranks Medical Schools on Conflict-of-Interest Policies

Most American medical schools are doing a poor job of preventing conflicts of interest posed by pharmaceutical companies that offer free gifts and drug samples to doctors and medical trainees, according to a [ranking](#) released today by the American Medical Student Association.

The group, which represents about 67,000 medical students, residents, and practicing physicians, teamed up with the Prescription Project ([The Chronicle](#), February 13, 2007), an industry watchdog, to rank 150 medical schools.

Just 21 of them received grades of A or B for their conflict-of-interest policies. Among the schools getting the highest grades were the Mount Sinai School of Medicine, the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center, and the University of California at Los Angeles's David Geffen School of Medicine.

Sixty schools, or 40 percent, received a grade of F. Some of them refused to submit policies for the ranking or did not respond to repeated requests for their policies. Twenty-eight schools are in the process of reviewing or revising their policies.

“It is time to extricate marketing practices from medical education,” said the association's national president, Brian Hurley. “There is substantial evidence that marketing shapes physician prescribing habits. By eliminating the gifts and the misleading information that pharma reps currently bring into our schools, hospitals, and academic medical centers, physicians will be able to better practice evidence-based medicine. And that translates into better care for our patients.”

The report card comes a month after the Association of American Medical Colleges urged a [ban on industry gifts](#). —*Katherine Mangan*