



Western Michigan University
ScholarWorks at WMU

Academic Leadership Academy

Office of Faculty Development

Fall 9-30-2016

Affirmative Supplement to the WMU Student Code

Jeremy Ynclan

Western Michigan University, jeremy.ynclan@wmich.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/acad_leadership



Part of the Higher Education Commons

WMU ScholarWorks Citation

Ynclan, Jeremy, "Affirmative Supplement to the WMU Student Code" (2016). *Academic Leadership Academy*. 66.

https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/acad_leadership/66

This Poster is brought to you for free and open access by the Office of Faculty Development at ScholarWorks at WMU. It has been accepted for inclusion in Academic Leadership Academy by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks at WMU. For more information, please contact wmu-scholarworks@wmich.edu.





Affirmative Supplement to the WMU Student Code

Jeremy Yncian

Residence Life, Western Michigan University
Academic Leadership Academy, 2015-16



Introduction

In much the same way that colleges and universities have academic standards for the students who choose to attend, schools also establish behavioral standards for all students. These standards and expectations form the foundation of the Student Code of Conduct. The Student Code serves to identify the set of behaviors that will contribute positively to creating a healthy academic environment, in which students are best positioned to succeed.

At Western Michigan University (WMU), the Student Code is joined by another document, the Community Living Expectations (CLE), for the purpose of achieving this goal. The CLE, published by the Residence Life office, builds off of the Student Code to address behavioral expectations specific to those students living or visiting in on-campus housing. The CLE serves as a complement to the Student Code by placing the policies of the Student Code in the Residence Life context.

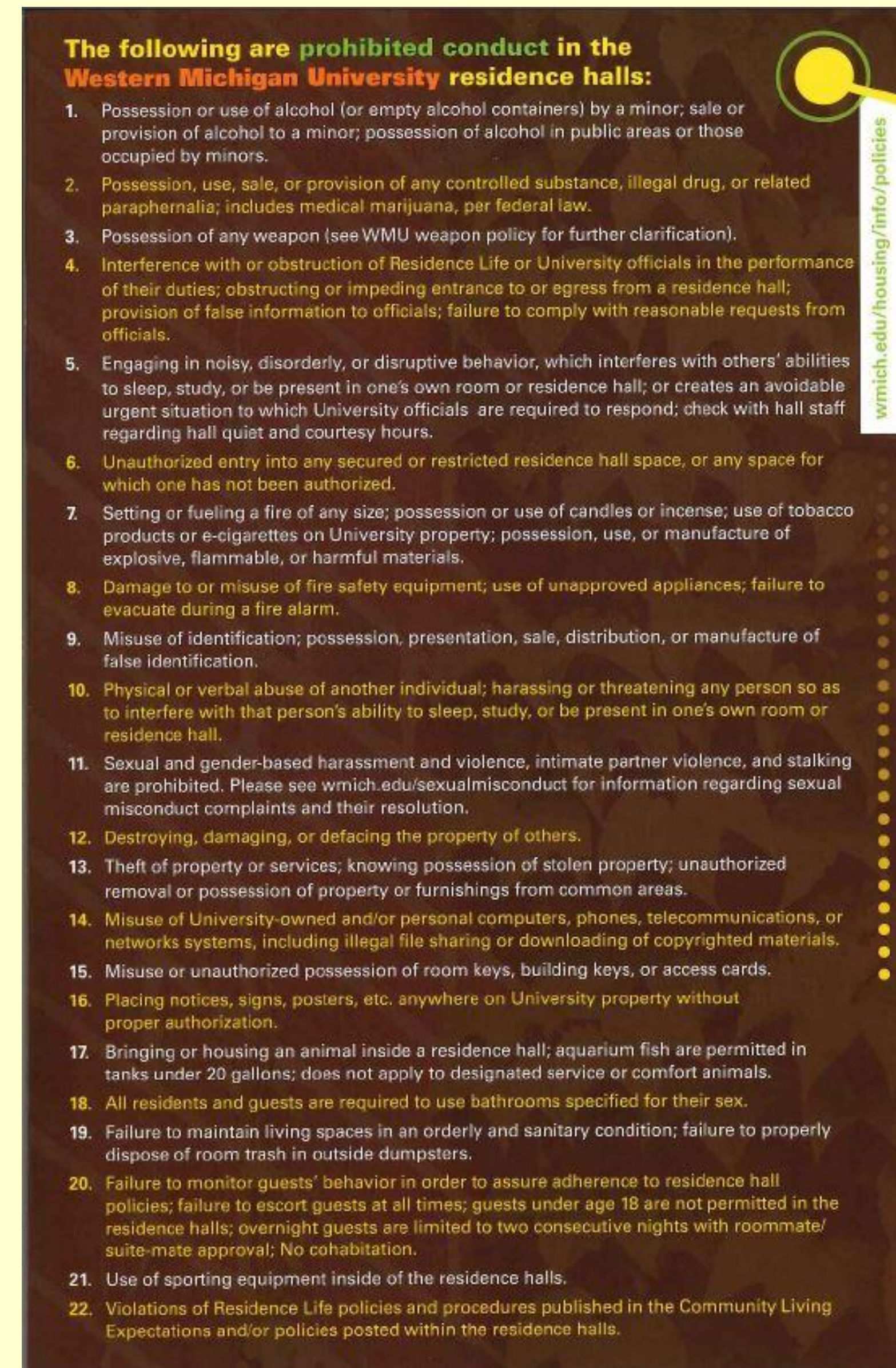
As with any set of expectations and standards, awareness and comprehension are essential for the guides to be able to serve their purpose: to have students engaging in positive behaviors. Awareness is achieved by providing the Student Code electronically to all WMU students. Additionally, all students living on campus are provided with a CLE pamphlet summarizing all policies from the CLE and Student Code.

Regarding comprehension, a unique challenge is presented to the university, in the form of students who experience communication barriers which could inhibit them from fully understanding the purpose and nuance of the policies. One example of a student population who is affected by this set of circumstances is students with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). This raises the question of how colleges and universities accommodate students who face these communication barriers, to ensure that all students are given the opportunity to fully understand what is expected of them while attending that school.

One proposed solution is creating a supplement to the Student Code which would present the policies and expectations in a format which enables these students to more easily process the information contained within. The objective of the Affirmative Supplement to the Student Code is to meet this need.



Current Language (Community Living Expectations)



Sample Language

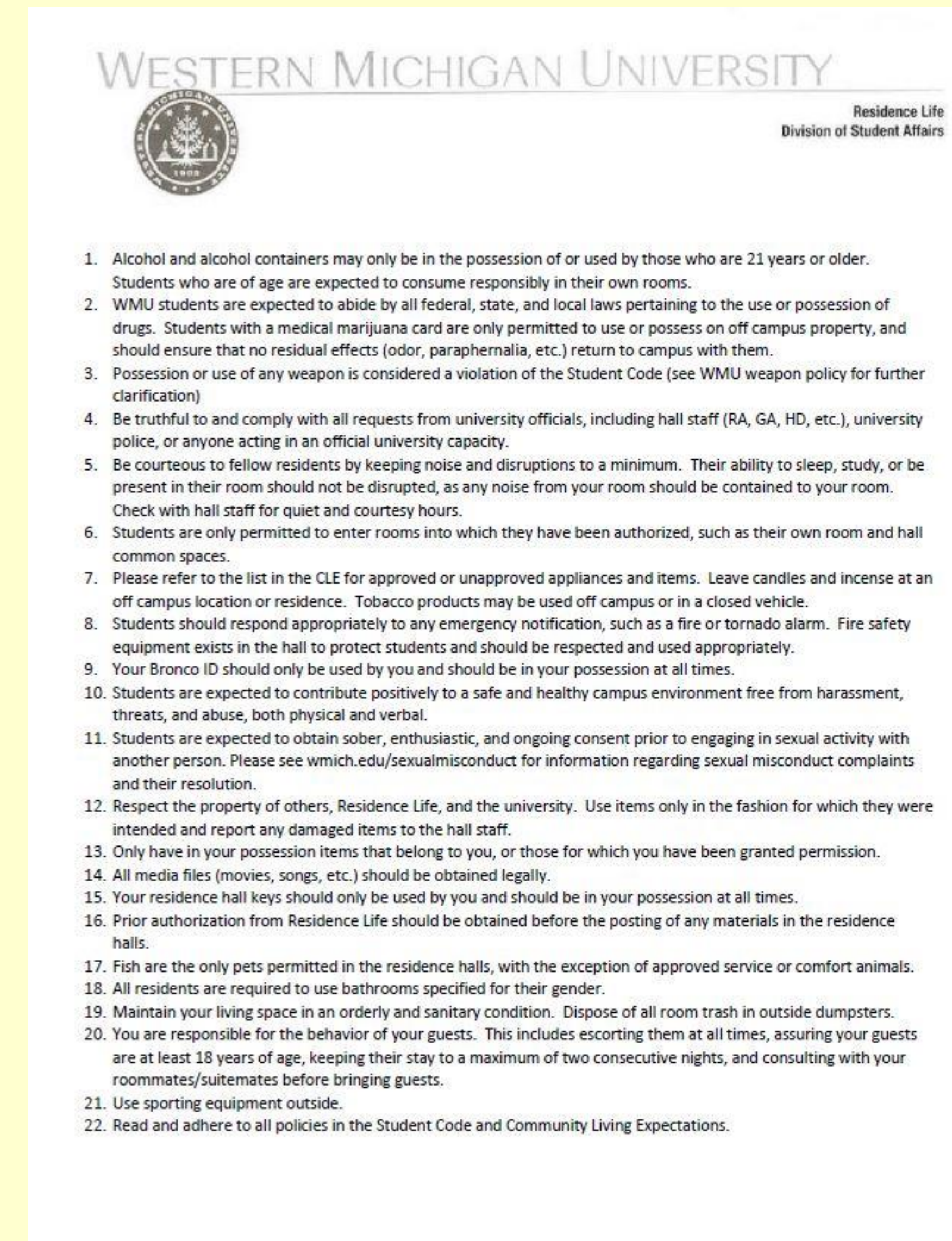
- “Prohibited conduct”
- “Misuse of ...”
- “Failure to ...”

Autism Spectrum Disorder

According to the Center for Disease Control (CDC), one of the main challenges presented to individuals with ASD involves communication. ASD affects the way in which people behave and interact with one another. It has also been known to affect the ways in which people learn and process new information. Further complicating matters, there is no set pattern in the way ASD affects those afflicted by it. While ASD poses severe challenges for many, others with ASD may have gifted abilities in learning and information processing. However, even for individuals who are affected by ASD in this manner, their ability to function at a higher level does not preclude them from still facing frequent challenges as a result of communication barriers which complicate their ability to interact with others and comprehend the substance and social context of these interactions.

According to a study published by the Harvard Medical School in 2014, it is expected that there will be a sharp increase in the number of students with high-functioning ASD who will be entering colleges and universities in the upcoming years. The article suggests that students with ASD could be best served by schools engaging in a coordinated effort to assist students with the transition from the secondary education system to the higher education system.

Affirmative Supplement Language



Sample Language

- “Students are expected to ...”
- “Students should ...”
- “... is permitted ...”

Idea and Development

The idea to create an affirmative supplement to the WMU Student Code and CLE was first raised following the 2016 NASPA Conference in Indianapolis. While at the conference, a Hall Director from the Residence Life office at WMU attended a session by Dr. Jane Thierfeld Brown from the University of Connecticut, an expert in the needs of college students with ASD. The focus of the session was on providing resources to students with ASD to encourage academic and social success. One of the concerns raised during the session was that students with ASD may have difficulty comprehending the policies and behavioral expectations laid out in the Student Code. Brown identified the negative language which is utilized in many Student Codes of Conduct as a particularly challenging hurdle, due to the lack of language spelling out what is expected of students instead of prohibited behavior. It was suggested that reframing the contents of the Student Code in positive language detailing the behaviors that are expected of students could prove a useful resource during interactions with students with ASD.

Upon returning to WMU, the decision was made to form a committee to adopt this plan and begin work on transforming the language of the Student Code and CLE to be a more accurate depiction of the conduct which is expected by students of WMU. The committee's work is shown above.

Stakeholders and Partners

Numerous partners exist throughout campus who would make for excellent stakeholders to assist in the further development and implementation of this project. The Office of Student Conduct is a natural fit, as that is the source of the Student Code. It would be necessary to make sure that the expectations are communicated in a way consistent with current policy interpretations and enforcement. Additionally, collaborating with Disability Services for Students would be an essential part of the project, given their role as the primary source of advocacy, education, and support for students with disabilities, including ASD. Finally, another possible partner would be the International Programs office. Though this project has focused on the countering the communication challenges presented by ASD, it is easy to envision the Affirmative Supplement being utilized to bridge the communication challenges of many international students. This will be a source of future development for the project.



Next Steps

- Finalize language and wording for Affirmative Supplement
- Present supplement to stakeholders and partners
- Collaborate with stakeholders to create awareness of this new tool and discuss proper use
- Evaluate effectiveness of language choices and solicit feedback regarding suggested changes
- Investigate resources developed at other institutions and incorporate useful modifications

Contact information

