



HWCOM POLICY TITLE: Protected Voting Time for Medical Students

HWCOM POLICY NUMBER: AA.170

INITIAL EFFECTIVE DATE: February 20, 2026	LAST REVISION DATE: February 20, 2026	RESPONSIBLE DEPARTMENT, DIVISION: Office of Student Affairs Office of Medical Education
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POLICY STATEMENT

Florida International University Herbert Wertheim College of Medicine (FIU HWCOM) recognizes voting as a core civic responsibility consistent with the values of professionalism, social accountability, and community engagement. National data indicate that physicians and medical trainees vote at lower rates than the general population due to time constraints and clinical workloads, and the American Medical Association has identified voting access as an important determinant of health and professional responsibility.

To facilitate equitable voter participation, FIU HWCOM will provide protected voting time for all medical students during U.S. midterm and presidential general elections. The structure of this policy varies by program phase to account for differences in educational scheduling, while maintaining minimal disruption to required learning experiences.

Protected Voting Time is not counted against excused personal absences, scholarly absences, or unplanned absences as defined in existing policies.

SCOPE

This policy applies to all enrolled FIU HWCOM medical students (Academic Years 1–4) during:

- U.S. Presidential General Elections
- U.S. Midterm General Elections

This policy does not apply to local primary elections, runoffs, or municipal elections.

REASON FOR POLICY

Voting affects health policy, patient outcomes, and the medical profession. Academic and clinical schedules may inadvertently create barriers to students' participation in the democratic process. Providing defined protected voting time:

- Reduces time-based barriers to civic participation
- Reinforces professionalism and social accountability
- Aligns with FIU HWCOM's mission and values

· Encourages early voting and informed participation

DEFINITIONS

TERM	DEFINITIONS
Election Day	The Tuesday after the first Monday in November during midterm or presidential general elections.
Protected Voting Time	Time that may be used by a medical student to vote in person on Election Day or through early voting options.
Preclinical Phase (AY1-AY2)	Students enrolled in pre-clerkship coursework.
Clinical Phase (AY3-AY4)	Students enrolled in required clerkships, sub-internships, rotations, or other required clinical experiences.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Associate Dean of Curriculum and Medical Education
Associate Dean of Student Affairs

RELATED RESOURCES

Policy: Excused Absence (Preclinical Years)
Policy: Excused Absence (Clinical Years)

CONTACTS

Questions regarding this policy should be directed to the Director of Compliance, Office of Student Affairs.

HISTORY

List initial effective date, revision dates, and/or review date.

Initial Effective Date: February 20, 2026

Review Dates: N/A

Revision Dates: February 20, 2026



HWCOM PROCEDURE TITLE: Protected Voting Time for Medical Students

HWCOM PROCEDURE NUMBER: AA.171P

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PROCEDURE STATEMENT

1. Preclinical Students (AY1 & AY2)

- On Election Day, the academic schedule will include a 2.5-hour protected block reserved for voting, during which no mandatory educational activities will be scheduled.
- No excused absence request is required for use of this protected time.
- Students are encouraged to utilize early or absentee voting methods when feasible.

2. Clinical Students (AY3 & AY4)

- On Election Day, clinical students are permitted to depart their required clinical activities at 4:00pm to allow time to vote.
- No excused absence request is required for this protected time.
- Clerkship teams are responsible for notifying clinical preceptors of this policy in advance.
- Students may not be penalized academically or professionally for utilizing Protected Voting Time.
- Students on night float or non-daytime schedules should coordinate with the clerkship coordinator to determine an equivalent voting period that is consistent with patient care needs, without requiring an excused absence request.
- Participation in clinical care before 4:00pm remains mandatory unless otherwise excused through existing processes.

3. Early Voting and Absentee Voting

All students are encouraged to utilize early voting, absentee ballots, or mail-in ballots where available. Protected Voting Time may be used for these purposes.

4. Academic & Clinical Responsibilities

- Protected Voting Time does not exempt students from required coursework, assessments, call schedules, or patient care responsibilities outside the defined protected period.
- Missed graded assignments or examinations must be completed in accordance with existing course or clerkship policies.
- Protected Voting Time is separate from excused absences, unplanned absences, scholarly activity absences, and personal planned absences, as defined in existing HWCOM absence policy documents.



FORMS

N/A

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Associate Dean of Curriculum and Medical Education
Associate Dean of Student Affairs

RELATED RESOURCES

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