Purposes of the Code of Conduct

1. To provide an objective articulation of the mission, culture, and traditions of LSMSA.
2. To complement the pedagogical and socialization expectations of the school in the campus and residential environment.
3. To reflect the legal, ethical, political, and administrative responsibilities of Louisiana School.
4. To establish order so that learning can take place; that the health, safety, and welfare of the students are maintained; and that the property of the State of Louisiana is protected and used for its intended purpose.
5. To evaluate students and determine whether they should remain enrolled at LSMSA.

Standards

1. Students who choose to come to LSMSA agree to abide by the rules and regulations of the school since attendance at Louisiana School is a privilege and not a right.
2. Students expect consequences if the agreement is broken.
3. Students are encouraged to assist one another in keeping the agreement.
4. Students must recognize that the *Code of Conduct* enunciates behavior that is representative, but not inclusive, of behavior that reflects the school's mission. Students must refrain from any behavior that serves to disrupt the school's function as an educational institution. The school retains the right to assign appropriate sanctions for such behaviors.
5. Students who knowingly continue in the presence of but not participating in any violation generally will be held equally responsible for any infractions. This applies to all violations and to the actions and activities of Louisiana School students and non-Louisiana School students as long as the student considered is under the care and supervision of LSMSA.
6. The school will apply the conspiracy theory to those students who plan activities that violate the school's rules and regulations. Therefore, if any member of the planning group performs an overt act in fulfillment of the plan, all members of the planning group will be placed on the same disciplinary action level as the one performing the act.

Disciplinary Procedures

All members of the LSMSA community must enforce the *Code of Conduct* and are required to report behavior that is inconsistent with its purposes. Whenever a violation is suspected, a designee of the student affairs office will be notified and charged with the duty to investigate the incident.

In most cases, the initial investigation will be handled by the coordinator of student development. In every case, students must cooperate and respond truthfully and completely to all inquiries. Students who deliberately withhold information or deceive a school official conducting an investigation will be subject to additional disciplinary action.
Northwestern State University Police may also assist in an investigation or may initiate an investigation of possible criminal activity. Both students and school officials are required to cooperate fully with NSU Police. (see "Safety Issues")

Minor Infractions

In many cases, minor infractions will be handled solely by the student life advisor or by another school official who has the most direct knowledge of the incident. In such cases, the staff member will speak with the student and request that the student bring his/her behavior into compliance. The staff member will then give the student a verbal warning to refrain from such behavior in the future.

For subsequent violations of minor infractions, more severe sanctions may be applied.
Students who continue to incur minor violations for the same or similar offenses may be referred to the coordinator of student development or the director of student affairs for additional disciplinary action as outlined in the procedure for major infractions.

Major Infractions

When students are suspected of major infractions of the *Code of Conduct*, the coordinator of student development or designee will meet with all students involved and conduct a thorough investigation, render a decision regarding the student(s)' culpability, and assign an appropriate sanction. Parents/guardians also will be notified in all cases involving major infractions. Students who are found responsible for violations will be placed on one or more of the following levels of disciplinary action:

1. Disciplinary Warning
2. Disciplinary Probation
3. Disciplinary Suspension
4. Recommendation for Mandatory Withdrawal (see procedure for Major Infractions Resulting in Mandatory Withdrawal)

Students who are placed on disciplinary probation or disciplinary suspension will not be permitted to attend or to participate in any on- or off-campus activities or otherwise represent the school while the action is in effect.

Disciplinary Sanctions

Final decisions regarding recommendations for withdrawal and expulsion will be made by the director of student affairs. At any action level, students may be subject to sanctions. Examples of these sanctions include the following:

- Loss of privileges
- Campus, hall, or dorm restriction
- Compensatory service
- Educational assignment or project
- Restitution (financial or service-related)
- In-house suspension

Generally, sanctions shall take effect immediately upon placement on disciplinary action.

NOTIFICATION OF DISCIPLINARY ACTIONS AND SANCTIONS

Students and parents/guardians will be informed of the final disciplinary action and sanctions to be imposed. If the disciplinary action includes suspension, withdrawal, or expulsion, then the

parent/guardian will be contacted to make arrangements for retrieval of the student from school at the earliest possible opportunity. Students will be placed on in-house suspension pending their departure from school.

If a student and/or parent/guardian indicate that they wish to appeal a disciplinary action, then the director of student affairs, in consultation with the coordinator of student development and/or the executive director, will make a determination regarding the imposition of sanctions until the appeal is decided. Ordinarily, imposition of sanctions for minor incidents will be suspended pending the outcome of the appeal. In cases where a recommendation of withdrawal or expulsion has been made, the student may be placed on in-house or disciplinary suspension pending the outcome of the appeal.

WITHDRAWAL PENDING DISCIPLINARY ACTION

Parents/guardians will be notified at the earliest possible opportunity when a disciplinary investigation has commenced which may result in action of mandatory withdrawal or expulsion from school. If a student or parent/guardian chooses to withdraw before the final placement on disciplinary action, then the right to appeal is forfeited. In addition, the student is prohibited from attending any school-sponsored event or entering any property owned, leased, and/or controlled by the school.

APPEAL OF DISCIPLINARY ACTION

Students and/or parents may appeal disciplinary actions for minor or major infractions. The conditions for appeal are as follows:

1. The student wishes to present evidence which was not presented and which could not have been presented during the course of the initial investigation.
2. The student asserts that he/she was not given the opportunity to present adequately his/her own testimony.
3. The student believes that the sanctions are unduly harsh or discriminatory. However, students must understand that due to confidentiality requirements, staff members cannot and will not discuss in the student's presence other cases that may appear to be analogous to the incident in question. Information regarding the application of sanctions in similar incidents will be presented exclusively to the staff member presiding over the appeal.

Procedure for Appeal of Disciplinary Action

Once a student has been notified of the final disciplinary action and sanctions in response to a disciplinary investigation, the student will submit a written statement of appeal (e.g., letter or e-mail) to the director of student affairs within 48 hours.

The director of student affairs will assign the appeal to the appropriate school official for further action. (Generally, appeals of minor infractions will be adjudicated by the coordinator of student development or the director of student affairs. Appeals of major infractions usually will be heard by the director of student affairs or the executive director.)

The official assigned to adjudicate the appeal will collect statements and evidence from the original disciplinary proceeding. The official also will gather additional statements or evidence

as appropriate. The official then will render a decision of the appeal within two days of receipt of the appeal. Students will be notified in writing of the decision.

Parent/Guardian Appeal of Withdrawal Decision

If the decision is for the student to withdraw from LSMSA, a verbal request for an appeal must be made by the parent/guardian to the executive director within two school days. The executive director will hear the verbal appeal, as soon as reasonably possible, following this request.

If the parents/guardians are not satisfied with the written decision of the executive director, a written request for an appeal must be submitted to the Appeals Committee of the Board of Directors and copied to the executive director within two school days of receipt of the final decision from the executive director. If the said decision has been appealed to the Appeals Committee, the executive director within two school days following the receipt of the written parent/guardian request, will send to the chairperson of the Appeals Committee a written report clearly stating the specific reason(s) and the source of the authority to support the decision.

The Appeals Committee of the Board will render a written decision, as soon as reasonably possible, predicated on the written record. The student will remain on in-house suspension (see "Glossary") until the end of the appeals process. If the director of student affairs has reason to believe that it is in the best interest of the student, or the day-to-day operation of the school, the director may recommend disciplinary suspension (see "Glossary") to the executive director.

REPORTING DISCIPLINARY ACTION TO COLLEGES, UNIVERSITIES, OR SECONDARY SCHOOLS

As a part of each student's college application process, or if a student withdraws from LSMSA pending disciplinary action, LSMSA may be asked to disclose disciplinary actions taken during the student's tenure. Because of the school's residential life component, some infractions that would go unreported in the home school setting, such as an alcohol violation, may be reported by LSMSA upon the request of the college, university, or secondary school. In those cases when the opportunity arises, the counselors attempt to provide context and reasons for such reportable disciplinary actions, but the final characterization of any disciplinary action and the effect of it on the admissions decision are made by the college, university, or secondary school. Reportable disciplinary actions include placement on disciplinary probation, disciplinary suspension, disciplinary dismissal, and voluntary withdrawal pending placement on these levels of disciplinary action.

Although infrequent, when students withdraw from LSMSA pending disciplinary action, a public or private high school where the student is seeking admission may contact LSMSA inquiring about the student's disciplinary record. In such cases, these institutions may be notified that the student withdrew pending action on a violation of either the Honor Code or the *Code of Conduct*. That school will also be directed to a copy of the *Academic and Residential Life Handbook* available online. Other details will not be provided.

If a student withdraws from LSMSA pending discipline for an Infraction Leading to Expulsion (see below), inquiring colleges, universities, or secondary schools may be provided any written statements under consideration by LSMSA in rendering a decision. In such cases, students and parents/guardians will be notified that this information has been provided.

Major Infractions Resulting in Expulsion

Certain offenses are so contrary to the school's mission and/or state or federal law that their commission may be responded to only by expulsion from LSMSA. The following are exemplary, but not exclusive, examples of such violations:

- Illegal activities that violate state or federal statutes
- Leaving residence halls without permission after curfew
- Leaving the school campus and city limits without permission
- Possession of dangerous or illegal items, as outlined in the *Code of Conduct*
- When students are suspected of any of the above violations of the *Code of Conduct*, the director of student affairs or designee will meet with all students involved and conduct a thorough investigation. The director of student affairs or designee will collect all necessary evidence and render a preliminary ruling regarding the student(s)' culpability. If it is determined that the student committed such an infraction, a recommendation for expulsion will be made to the executive director.

When expulsion is recommended, the following procedure will apply:

1. The director of student affairs will verbally notify the student and parent/guardian of the specific violation and that a recommendation for expulsion is being made to the executive director.
2. Before formal expulsion proceedings begin, the student has the option of withdrawing from school. Once formal proceedings have begun, withdrawal is not an option available to the student. **State law mandates the school's transcript must reflect when a student has been expelled from school**.
3. Formal expulsion proceedings begin when the parent/guardian notifies the director of student affairs in writing that they are requesting a due process hearing to challenge the expulsion recommendation.
4. The formal written parent/guardian request for a due process hearing must be received by the school within three school days of the verbal notification and must clearly state the specific substantive and/or procedural reason(s) for the appeal.
5. Within three calendar days of receiving the written request for a due process hearing, the director of student affairs will respond to the parent/guardian in writing stating the specific reason(s) for the recommendation for expulsion and the source(s) of the authority to support the recommendation.
6. The director of student affairs will set a hearing date after consultation with the student and parent/guardian.
7. The director of student affairs will assign the student disciplinary suspension until the date of the scheduled hearing. The student must remain at home until the hearing and throughout the appeals process.

Due Process Hearings

The executive director will appoint a committee to hear the case and to make a recommendation as to sanction. The hearing will be conducted using the following procedures:

1. The director of student affairs will present the reason(s) for the proposed expulsion.
2. The student will maintain the right to counsel during the hearing. If legal counsel is retained, the director of student affairs also will be assisted with legal counsel.

3. The committee will determine rules of procedure. However, directed verdicts are not allowed for this type of administrative hearing.
4. After hearing the case, the committee will recommend in writing to the executive director to uphold or not to uphold the original expulsion with specific reasons for the recommendation.
5. After an independent analysis, the executive director will render a written decision, as soon as reasonably possible, to expel or not to expel.
6. As soon as reasonably possible after rendering his decision, the executive director will inform the parent/guardian in writing of the decision.
7. Within five calendar days of the executive director's decision, the parent/guardian may appeal the executive director's decision in writing by certified mail to the Appeals Committee of the Board. The Appeals Committee will conduct a factual and procedural review of the written record as soon as reasonably possible. The written decision of the Appeals Committee of the Board will be final. If within five days there is no request for an appeal in writing by certified mail, the executive director's decision will stand and the expulsion will be implemented.

SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES

Seniors who violate the *Code of Conduct* immediately prior to graduation ceremonies may be barred from participating in graduation.

The decision to invite sophomores and juniors for return to LSMSA is contingent upon students' disciplinary records. The Residential Review Committee makes determinations regarding students whose behavior has called into question whether they should be invited to return to the school. Decisions to revoke students' invitations to return to the school are subject to the same appeal procedure as outlined above.

Students also may be placed on disciplinary action for behavior occurring during weekends and school vacations when it is found that such actions subject the school to dishonor or call into question whether the students' enrollment at the school is in his/her best interest. Again, the school's decision to take action against a student for such behavior is subject to the appeals process as outlined above.

JURISDICTION FOR STUDENT BEHAVIOR

The process outlined above reflects the school's response to infractions of the *Code of Conduct*. They do not preclude additional legal action that may be taken by NSU Police, City of Natchitoches Police, other law enforcement agencies, or other individuals.

Special Note: All policies in the Code of Conduct will apply to students at all times when they are under the jurisdiction of the school, including free time off-campus and while participating in school-sponsored trips.