

Intersecting Business and Medicine: An Innovative Model for PA Education

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BACKGROUND

The Bureau of Labor Statistics predicts there will be 37% growth in employment of PAs in the U.S. from 2016 to 2026. As the PA workforce has grown, there has been an increased need for leadership and management in the profession.

Established educational paths for executive leadership development and management are well developed and integrated with clinical training for several health professions, including medicine, pharmacy and nursing. Faculty within the Wake Forest School of Medicine PA Program and School of Business designed and implemented a novel 34-month sequential degree program combining a Master of Arts (MA) in Management and Master of Medical Science (MMS). The Emerging Leaders Program (ELP) strives to produce highly capable, entrepreneurial PAs equipped with business competencies to succeed in a complex healthcare environment.

CURRICULAR DESIGN

The MA curriculum is a 10-month professional and leadership development program focused on conceptual expertise, practical competence and character building using an experiential learning format. Integrated courses concentrate on developing communication, professionalism, ethics, and service leadership. The PA program follows an inquiry-based learning model which incorporates leadership training into a curriculum based on the six clinical practice competencies. Selection into the ELP required applicants to meet all standard admission requirements and demonstrate interest and aptitude for leadership. Target enrollment for the pilot phase was six students. Academic performance was measured using traditional methods with leadership competency measured through summative evaluations.

MA CURRICULUM

Summer Session

- Orientation & Service Project
- Why Business?
- L.E.A.D. I
- Accounting
- Business Analytics
- Career Management

Module 1: Baseline Competencies

- L.E.A.D. I
- Accounting
- Business Analytics
- Career Management
- Managerial Economics

Module 2: Management Competencies

- L.E.A.D. I
- Accounting
- Business Analytics
- Managerial Economics
- Marketing Management
- Financial Management

Module 3: Functional Management

- L.E.A.D. II
- Marketing Management
- Financial Management
- Operations Management
- Information Technology Management
- Macroeconomics

Module 4: Functional Depth

- L.E.A.D. II
- Operations Management
- Information Technology Management
- Legal Environment of Business
- Business Strategy & Planning
- Principles of Healthcare Management
- Business Simulation Capstone

MMS CURRICULUM

Preclinical Year

- Unit 1:**
- Fundamentals of Basic Sciences

- Units 2-5:**
- Clinical Reasoning & Inquiry-based Learning
 - VITALS of Being a PA
 - Clinical & Diagnostic Skills
 - Foundations of Medicine & Surgery
 - Patient Care
 - Pharmacology & Therapeutics
 - The Graduate Project
 - The Sacred Seven (elective)
 - Clinical Year Preparation

Clinical Year

- Core Rotations:**
- Family Medicine
 - Surgery
 - Emergency Medicine
 - Women's Health
 - Pediatrics
 - Internal Medicine
 - Behavioral Health

Subspecialty Selective Rotations:

- Medicine Track
- Surgical Track

Elective Rotations (2)

RESEARCH EVIDENCE FOR THE INNOVATION

Target enrollment for the ELP pilot was met with six qualified applicants accepted. At the end of the MA pathway, all ELP students (N=6) were ranked within the top 10% by final GPA of the overall MA cohort (N=159). After experiential learning projects with local and multinational organizations, students reported a clear understanding of the connection between business principles and their application to clinical care. ELP students demonstrated leadership capabilities in their curriculum teams and were selected as the overall project winner by course faculty.

IMPACT

The ELP pilot cohort successfully completed their business training with strong performance in a healthcare-focused learning project. Despite the fact that all ELP matriculates were drawn from a typical applicant pool for the Wake Forest PA Program, the ELP students' academic achievement was among the highest in the management program. The pilot cohort successfully completed both the MA and PA programs. The students passed the PANCE examination and have begun clinical practice in emergency medicine, primary care, hospital medicine, and a pediatric subspecialty. Successes of the initial six students led to program expansion to 13, 15, and 16 students in the second, third, and fourth cohorts respectively (N=51). Plans are to continue to grow the program and to track the graduates' performance and trajectory toward assuming healthcare leadership roles.

