Community-Based Learning Program Supporting the Wisconsin Experience

UW-Madison PA Program’s unique Community-Based Learning Program (distance education, or DE option) is designed to extend PA education into medically underserved communities. Currently, we are the only PA program in the country to offer this opportunity in this format. Distance students complete 90% of their education in their home communities over a three year period. The first summer session (10 weeks) is completed on campus and allows them to work closely with faculty and campus classmates. Distance students return to campus twice each semester. Community mentors help to reduce isolation, provide professional role models, and act as supplementary resources to instruction. Students complete the clinical year on a full-time basis in preceptorships in or near their home communities.

The Health Sciences Learning Center housing medical school programs, including PA, opened in mid-2004. This state of the art building permits the technological capture and delivery of course content and the dedicated staff continues to explore and encourage the application of emerging technologies.

While one (6%) student is ethnically diverse, seven (39%) of the 18 students in the first six cohorts report educationally disadvantaged backgrounds and five (28%) students report being economically disadvantaged. Forty four percent of the students were raised in medically underserved communities. Early analysis of grades and academic progress showed that distance students perform as well, or better than, campus students. All DE graduates passed the NCCPA national board exam in their first attempt and 6 of the 7 students in the first three cohorts are employed in or near their home community.

We have developed a strong infrastructure for delivering our curriculum by distance. Our project is well organized and designed to address the needs of students, faculty, and all other involved parties. The Distance Education oversight committee meets weekly to monitor progress, make plans, and address concerns. Through a committed faculty and staff, strong community and university partners, incorporation of emerging technologies, and engaged students we are meeting our goal of educating top quality health care providers committed to their home communities.

MESSAGE -- PA Program Director

Winter greetings from the PA Program! Here’s hoping you are experiencing a great start to this new year! The PA Program is moving into the new year with great enthusiasm regarding current initiatives and the pursuit of collaborative opportunities, many of which focus on PA students truly functioning with other healthcare professionals as interdisciplinary team members.

One of the major concepts to strengthening the foundation of primary care today is a delivery model called the patient-centered medical home. As we know, primary care is challenged nationwide to respond to the increasing demand of aging boomers and a decreasing supply of physicians. It is estimated that an insufficiently low number of all graduating medical students plan on practicing in primary care. Reasons stated in surveys are: high patient loads, long office hours and relatively low pay. The PA profession has similarly experienced a

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The distance education advantage

What attracted me to the University of Wisconsin – Madison’s Physician Assistant (PA) program was the Distant Education (DE) option of study. This option let me take classes from home over a two-year period, allowing part-time study, with the traditional full time clinical year [or medical preceptorship] in my home community. We don’t have to uproot our lives to complete the PA program. During the first two years there are some campus visits required but they are infrequent, concise, and yet full of learning. DE students are afforded enough time to be involved in community opportunities and maintain obligations. It’s a win-win-win situation for the student, the university, and the community.

Being a DE student does not detract any quality from the learning experience as compared to the students attending full-time on campus. The DE student can take advantage of the outstanding PA and Medical School faculty, expert community lecturers and clinical instructors. Curriculum is presented through many modes of on-line learning, being driven by a professional, savvy, and innovative information technology staff. Though most teaching is accomplished on-line, there are still other invaluable modes of instruction available, including access to a huge medical library database, its staff, workshops, live lectures, e-mail, conferences, one-on-one faculty and staff connections, and much more. And for an older student such as me, there is also help available the old fashioned way, only a telephone call away!

Honoring community commitments

I am a returning to UW-Madison for a second degree, Physician Assistant, as a student in the Distance Education option. This option makes it possible for me to pursue a career as a Physician Assistant because of the flexibility it offers when trying to balance school, work and family life. In addition to being home to care for my family, I can continue to honor the commitments I’ve made to serve in the local Emergency Medical Service and working at our area hospital. I appreciate the opportunity to stay connected to my community, the place where I feel invested, supported, and where I hope to be of continued service.

Why I chose the distance education option

I was offered a seat in either the traditional or distance education (DE) program. I chose the distance ed. option. I found the staff to be incredibly receptive regarding tech issues and suggestions, especially the dedicated tech support staff. Each semester presents its own tech obstacles, and each semester provides its own improvements on the past semesters. In my opinion, these are advantages of the DE program:

1. Ability to continue to work in allied health care field (in my case, full-time as a paramedic).
2. Ability to further connect to my hometown/ community, network with local physicians, etc.
3. Ability to more readily incorporate didactic material with clinical experiences.
4. Ability to set up own clinical rotations.

A dream come true

The UW-Madison Physician Assistant program is truly life-changing both for me and for those I will soon be able to help. With the distance education opportunity, I can do my part to impact the issue of care for those who cannot afford health care and to help people when they need it most. I currently am employed in a full time job, have a family, and participate in community volunteer positions. With 120 miles between me and the nearest PA program – distance education is a dream come true.
Students Today

The Class of 2010 (DE 2011) Officers and Chairs

Officers
President - Brian Beardsley
Vice President - Anne Becker
Secretary - Sarah Westby
Treasurer - Susan Boebel
National Delegate - Shelly Schmoller

Chairs
WAPA Reps ........... Emily Johnson, Chelsea Klos
Historian / Archivist ................. Jane Alesch
Fundraising Committee ............... Ryan Holeon
........................................ Stephanie Lake Melton
Social Activity Committee............ Rachel Elbing
........................................... Juliane Nevers
Diversity Rep........................ Chelsea Klos
Medic Rep............................... Danielle Hare
Employment Reception............... Alissa DeVos
........................................ Danielle Hare
Volunteer Coordinator.............. Alissa DeVos

Student Awards

Wisconsin and neighboring states benefit from having PAs joining interdisciplinary healthcare teams. The health and wellness needs of local residents are served by Physician Assistants that graduate from the UW-Madison program. The PA Program is proud of student accomplishments. It is a rigorous academic program. Congratulations to students who received the following awards:

Andy Stolper Award – Julie Jackan Thomas
In memory of Andy Stolper who would have graduated in 1997, this award is presented to a student in the first year of the professional program who most emulates the attributes and values of Andy, including optimism, service, perseverance, and dedication to the PA profession.

WAPA Leadership Award – Aaron Browne
Awarded by the Wisconsin Academy of Physician Assistants and selected by program faculty, this award recognizes the student who demonstrates both personal and professional leadership at multiple levels.

Words of Wisdom

Live Your Beliefs!
If you believe that people everywhere are entitled to a good quality of life, it’s possible to achieve this through your commitment and actions. Touch your patients’ lives by treating not only their pathologies but their minds and spirit as well.

- anon
PA Program and the Wisconsin Academy for Rural Health

Interdisciplinary Health Care Teams

As the Wisconsin Academy for Rural Medicine (WARM) begins its second year with medical students at the School of Medicine and Public Health (SMPH), it is an opportune time to look at collaboration with other health professional programs to prepare health care teams to meet the need of citizens in rural Wisconsin. WARM has been developed to address the health care needs of rural Wisconsin by addressing the rural physician workforce shortages and will increase the medical school class size by 25 students per year when fully implemented. WARM selects students with a strong potential for practicing in rural Wisconsin and the program will develop curricular opportunities to nurture students’ interest in rural health.

Interdisciplinary health care teams, medical homes and chronic care management are examples of trends as we strive to improve the health of rural Wisconsin in the 21st Century. This also aligns with goals and initiatives of the UW Physician Assistant Program. WARM has been supporting the Rural Health Interest Group which brings in speakers to discuss rural related topics as well as will be offering an elective course on rural health topics this spring. Both of the activities represent opportunities for medical students and PA students to begin learning about rural practice together. As the clinical years of WARM begin in 2009, another opportunity will exist to identify opportunities for health professional students from different disciplines to work on team skills to address the health needs of rural residents and communities. With aligned goals between WARM and the PA Program, now is the time to develop interdisciplinary health care teams to support medical homes and address the health care needs in rural Wisconsin.

New Community Education Coordinator

Michelle Hauser, PA Class of 1991

Michelle joined the UW PA program as Community Education Coordinator with funding support from the 2008-2011 HRSA Title VII, PA Training Grant. Michelle will assist the PA program in the development of rural primary care track curriculum. The goal is to increase the number of students who originate from underserved, rural settings or urban areas and show a strong interest in returning to their home community to practice primary care medicine upon graduation.

A second goal of Michelle’s is to further strengthen and expand the community-based distance education training programs in underserved rural settings, as well as promoting the PA profession by establishing clinical preceptorships in these areas.

Michelle graduated from UW-Madison PA program in 1991 and received her MPAS from the University of Nebraska in 2001. She has practiced family medicine at Medical Associates Family Practice Clinic in Darlington, Wisconsin since 1991. She is also involved with patients at the Memorial Hospital of Lafayette County, where she rounds on inpatients, assists with her patients’ surgeries in the OR, as well as staffs the Emergency Room on a regular basis. She has been involved with Lafayette County Board of Health, Southwest AHEC and has served as a Preceptor for PA students for 18 years.

Michelle happily rounds out her days with the activities of her family; husband, Scott, three children, Hunter, 12; Hannah, 11; and Cashton, 4. In her free time she enjoys watching her children’s sporting events, being a Girl Scout leader, walking, gardening and camping.

Outreach Coordinator Position Opening

The call for PAs to consider joining our team has been partially answered, at least we are halfway there with Michelle Hauser filling one grant-funded position. The Outreach Coordinator position is posted in the Wisconsin Academy for Physician Assistant (WAPA) Spectator and on-line through the UW-Madison Human Resources office. Consider this great part-time opportunity to work with Michelle, the PA faculty, and local communities to explore a medical home model which, with increased PA presence, provides solutions to Wisconsin’s primary care health professional shortages.

For position information see the University of Wisconsin-Madison Position Vacancy Listing:

http://www.ohr.wisc.edu/pvl/pv_060137.html
Did You Know?

1975: The UW-Madison PA program provided its first educational program.

1977: The UW-Madison PA program graduated its first cohort in May of that year.

1990: The UW-Madison PA program joined the Department of Family Medicine.

2008: Virginia Snyder, PhD, PA-C, ‘01 graduate of the UW-Madison PA program, and former PA-C with the Neurosurgery Department of Mercy Hospital in Janesville is now the full-time PA Program Director.

From 1979 to 2008: The UW-Madison PA program has trained and conferred degrees to a total of 831 students.

Two graduates from the early 70’s foundational years, Jerry Noack, PA-C and Honorie Coté, PA-C continue with the UW-Madison PA program as faculty members.

There are 143 accredited PA educational/training programs in the United States.

Local SAAAPA NEWS

Student Academy of the American Academy of Physician Assistants
http://saaapa.aapa.org/index.htm

SAAAPA provides information which will be helpful to current PA students. Look through these resources periodically, as they are updated with the newest information as soon as SAAAPA receives it.

While the fall semester has been a busy one for the Physician Assistant class of 2010, we have managed to find some time for fundraising events as well. This past September hurricane Ike hit Galveston, TX. The University of Texas-Galveston PA program lost 90% of their belongings in the disaster. The Class of 2010 raised $250 in a noon-hour pizza sale for three days in the health science learning center atrium. All proceeds were sent to the PA program at the University of Texas Medical Branch-Galveston. We would like to thank everyone who helped support this cause.

Another fundraising event for the year consisted of selling PA program apparel. The clothing featured Bucky the Badger with a headlamp and stethoscope and the words UW-Madison Physician Assistant. The apparel sale was quite a success, and we were able to raise approximately $400 for the PA class fund which helps send students every year to the national PA conference. Our program is selling PA apparel again this spring so anyone that is interested and would like to be contacted for our sale in the spring can contact Anne Becker at aebecker2@wisc.edu.

Lastly, the PA students are preparing for our biggest fundraiser this spring, which consists of an employee reception for students to network with prospective employers. This event contributes greatly to our class fund and is a wonderful opportunity for all health care professionals to explore prospective jobs.

The PA Class of 2010 would like to thank everyone who has helped or contributed to our fundraising events thus far and making them a success!

To order PA program apparel contact
Anne Becker at aebecker2@wisc.edu

To view the apparel logo and order:
http://www.undergroundshirts.com/?standard=true&p=art&id=40643
MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

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Recent trend toward fewer graduates choosing primary care medicine. This results in health care being less accessible for everyone.

The ‘patient-centered medical home’ concept allows for patients to have continuous access to a primary care healthcare team. The concept promotes proactive, coordinated, integrated, longitudinal quality care, and an attempt to provide more equal access and health cost savings. This model can be applied to most any setting, but likely has strong application to rural and underserved areas, with particular emphasis on chronic disease management.

Some PA-Cs currently practice as the primary health care professional in rural, underserved communities. Others will increasingly play this role in Wisconsin’s future. Rural communities are ideal settings for interdisciplinary care and the medical home approach. What this may mean to patients is fewer, but longer face-to-face visits, more emphasis on preventive care, and increased access to healthcare professionals via e-mail and phone. What this may mean to practitioners is increased efficiency of care, sharing of the load, better management of chronic disease, and thus, greater job satisfaction.

We all need to start thinking about how the medical home model would potentially affect us in the future and how to better serve as collaborative healthcare teams, as well as how to best engage patients in a team environment.

This issue of our PA newsletter will introduce unique programs and new approaches to prepare students and health care teams to meet the present and future medical needs, particularly in rural, healthcare shortage areas of Wisconsin. Many of the program’s current grant initiatives and curricular enhancements will support training and investment in interdisciplinary collaboration. The UW-Madison PA Program is very proud of its community-based distance education program, a premier program nationally, that promotes commitment to rural healthcare professional shortage areas, and early connection with practitioners in a community model.

I hope this edition of our PA Program Newsletter is informative and inspirational. Thank you for making a positive difference in Wisconsin’s healthcare. The PA program invites and welcomes your submissions and suggestions – at anytime.

Warmly,

Ginny

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New Clinical Instructor

Diana DuPont, PA Class of 1998

Diana DuPont has joined the UW PA program as a Clinical Instructor for this 2009 spring semester. She is excited to be coordinating the PA 440 Laboratory Medicine course. Diana was quoted as saying, “I appreciate the high-energy level and eagerness of the PA students to learn and offer their own experiences. This paves the way for a well-rounded educational experience.” Diana encourages student and practicing physician assistants to consider academic medicine as a career option, and to work with instructors and the program to uncover strategies which can facilitate such a transition. She models her goal by returning to the PA program and participating in clinical education.

Diana is currently employed as a physician assistant at UW Health Gastroenterology, working in the GI clinic. She provides GI services for patients at Select, a local long-term, acute care inpatient facility. Diana graduated from the UW Physician Assistant program in 1998. Prior to that, she received a BS in Medical Technology from Marquette University, and since PA program graduation, received the MPAS degree from University of Nebraska in 2008. She has previously worked in Emergency and Family Medicine settings as a Physician Assistant.

Admissions Update

Since 1979 there have been 831 graduates of the UW-Madison PA program. Applying to the PA Program is a rigorous and highly competitive process. In each of the past several years, the PA Program has reviewed approximately 230 applications for just 28 campus and 6 distance seats. Competitive applicants demonstrate strong evidence of:

- the ability to complete rigorous academic work
- health care experience sufficient to develop an understanding of the PA profession, the health care environment, and their own aptitude for the PA profession
- outstanding and altruistic commitment to service and volunteerism
- a high level of personal and professional maturity and aptitude for the program and profession

The selection process for the Class of 2011, the UW-Madison PA Program’s 33rd admitted class is well underway. Application materials were submitted through the Central Application Service for Physician Assistants (CASPA) online service of the Physician Assistant Education Association (PAEA). A supplemental application was also required by the October 1 deadline. Applicants were notified of their application status in December, and interviews took place the second and third week of January.

The Campus Class of 2011 and Distance Education Class of 2012 have been named.

Congratulations and Welcome Class of 2011/DE 2012.
In the next issue of the PA Program Newsletter, Fall 2009

- Clinical Year Activities
- Preceptor Spotlight
- Rural Community Primary Care Rotations
- Rural Track Curriculum
- Community Practice Advisory Council
- Graduate Placement
- ARC-PA Accreditation Site Visit Report
- HRSA Title VII Grant Report: Year I
- Honorie Coté, PA-C, Director of Clinical Education

Keep in touch:
Give us a call toll-free, 800-442-6698; in the Madison area at 265-4510 or better yet, visit the office and say hello! We are located at 1278 Health Science Learning Center, 750 Highland Ave. on the west UW-Madison campus area near the UW Hospital and Clinics.

http://physicianassistant.wisc.edu/