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University of Dayton, Ohio (url: <http://www.udayton.edu/index.php>)



A Focus on Health Sciences

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The University of Dayton's new physician assistant program has passed two milestones, receiving approval from the Ohio Board of Regents and launching a new website.

With construction set to begin this summer on classrooms and labs, the development of the program is on schedule to enroll its first students in August 2014, pending provisional accreditation in March 2014 from the Accreditation Review Commission on Education for the Physician Assistant (ARC-PA).

Prospective students can learn more about the program and apply online at <http://www.go.udayton.edu/paprogram> (url: <http://www.go.udayton.edu/paprogram>). The application is through a common application service for physician assistants (CASPA).

"Interest in the program has been intensifying over the last year, and now that we have state approval, we are excited to begin accepting applications and moving forward with developing the program into one of the top PA programs in the nation," said Sue Wulff, physician assistant program director.

The 27-month, seven-semester program will offer a Master of Physician Assistant Practice. The University expects to enroll up to 30 students in the first year, 35 in the second with a target of 40 students in subsequent years.

The program will be located on the fifth floor of the College Park Center, 1529 Brown Street, three floors above the University's doctor of physical therapy program. Construction is scheduled to begin midsummer on two large simulation areas, 10 mock examination rooms, faculty offices, a large student resource area, study space, lounge and lockers.

With the addition of the PA program to its existing health-related areas of study, the University approved a name change for the School of Education and Allied Professions. Beginning July 1, it will be renamed the School of Education and Health Sciences.

At the undergraduate level, the school offers competitive programs in prephysical therapy, dietetics, exercise physiology and exercise science. The graduate programs include clinical degrees in school psychology and mental health counseling, and the doctor of physical therapy degree.

"Health sciences are among the top interest areas for students graduating from high school today," said Kevin Kelly, dean of the School of Education and Health Sciences. "The health care industry is expanding with the passage of the Affordable Care Act and the increasing demands for care from an aging population and baby boomers reaching retirement. As a Catholic, Marianist university, we need to adapt and prepare our students for these changes."

Physician assistants practice medicine under the supervision of physicians, including surgeons, and are formally trained to provide diagnostic, therapeutic and preventive healthcare services as delegated by a physician.

According to the Bureau of Labor and Statistics, employment of physician assistants is expected to grow by 39 percent from 2008 to 2018. This growth is expected as the scope of physician assistant practice expands in order to contain health care costs to include procedures previously reserved only for physicians.

Ohio currently has eight accredited PA programs, with only one — at Kettering College — in southwest Ohio.

"The hospitals of the Dayton region and the University of Dayton have been working very closely to ensure the current and future workforce needs are met," said Bryan Bucklew, president and CEO of the Greater Dayton Area Hospital Association. "The demand for physician assistants will continue to increase as continuity of care and integration of electronic health information becomes even more integral in providing acute and post-acute care to populations that are experiencing higher instances of chronic conditions."

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