

# The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley School of Medicine

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## Medical Education Program Highlights

The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley School of Medicine (UTRGV SOM) uses innovative, competency-based medical education to train the next generation of physicians who are committed to improving the lives and well-being of their communities through innovative research and compassionate, patient-centered care, as well as biomedical scientists who will lead the charge in advancing research on diseases such as diabetes and infectious diseases that affect the Rio Grande Valley (RGV) and beyond.<sup>1</sup>

The mission of the UTRGV SOM is to educate a diverse group of medical students and future biomedical scientists, to develop physicians who will serve across all disciplines of medicine, to bring hope to patients and communities by advancing biomedical knowledge through research, to integrate education and research that advances the quality and accessibility of health care, and to engage with the RGV communities to benefit Texas and the world.<sup>2</sup>

## Program objectives

The UTRGV SOM is committed to providing a forward-thinking medical education experience that graduates physicians dedicated to practicing scientific, evidence-based, and patient-centered medicine in any setting but particularly in underserved communities. The curriculum provides a unique educational experience that integrates basic science disciplines, clinical skills, and professional development throughout the 4-year program by incorporating and promoting:

- Principles of evidence-based practice and scientific research
- Community and population-based health care
- Patient advocacy and cultural awareness
- Interprofessional collaboration and communication
- Ethical and professional behavior
- Lifelong learning and problem-solving

The school's distinctive geographic location at the border of the United States and Mexico offers a rich bicultural experience that will afford students the opportunity to experience and to learn about border medicine and the interplay between the cross-cultural, socio-economic, and environmental determinants of health.<sup>3</sup>

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Supplemental digital content for this article is available at <http://links.lww.com/ACADMED/A901>.

Year school was established: 2015.

School URL: <https://www.utrgv.edu/school-of-medicine/index.htm>.

## Curriculum integration

Woven throughout this 4-year integrated curriculum are:

- Interprofessional education: Students are given the opportunity to experience interprofessional education and team-based care by working and learning alongside an array of disciplines that include nursing, pharmacy, physician assistants, public health, social work, behavioral health, and occupational therapy.
- Early clinical exposure: Each student is assigned to a preceptorship where they are given the opportunity for direct patient interaction during the preclerkship years.
- Underserved medicine: Students are given the opportunity to work in underserved communities, Colonias, and at the student-run free clinic, to learn about health care disparities and population health.<sup>3</sup>

In concert with the strategic plan of our institution, highlights of our educational program include the theme of interprofessional education throughout the curriculum; our utilization of problem-based learning in the preclinical years; our many and varied clinical sites along the border communities of the RGV; and our dual-degree programs: MD–MS in Bioethics, MD–MS in Biomedical Informatics, and MD–MPH.

## Dual-degree programs

**Bioethics:** Students who enroll in the UTRGV MD–MS in Bioethics program will gain advanced learning and develop skills in bioethics and social justice to:

- Address complex bioethical issues of health disparities in multicultural populations
- Transform challenges into opportunities of change that promote health equity
- Shape clinical practice, research, and policy to advance equitable delivery of health care

The program focuses on bioethics, social justice, and health equity, allowing graduates to cultivate specific skills to create opportunities and manage resources effectively while remaining responsive to the diverse challenges within complex health care, social, political, and economic climates.

**Biomedical informatics:** The UTRGV SOM along with the UTHealth Houston School of Public Health and the School of Biomedical Informatics are offering 2 dual-degree programs. Starting with the class of 2022, medical students can apply to these programs through the School of Public Health and the School of Biomedical Informatics if they are in good academic standing at the School of Medicine.

Students who enroll in the MD–MS in Biomedical Informatics program will learn how to decipher large amounts of data related to patients to:

- Make the best clinical decisions regarding patient care, including patient safety
- Inform the development of public health and clinical research initiatives

A biomedical informatics degree is useful in clinical and research settings because it allows health care professionals and researchers to take a large amount of data, information, and knowledge to make inferences regarding medical treatment, drug development, and clinical trials. With biomedical informatics, health care providers can develop protocols to improve care such as reducing medication errors or hospital readmissions and improve patient safety. At the population health level, biomedical informatics can help spot trends and assess the burdens of disease, including financial and economic burdens, to make decisions about interventions.

Public health: Student enrolled in the MD–MPH program will learn and develop skills in the core public health disciplines of:

- Biostatistics
- Environmental and occupational health
- Epidemiology and disease control
- Health promotion and behavioral sciences
- Management, policy, and community health

UTRGV SOM students will be able to complete the MD and MPH programs in 4 years because of shared credits between the 2 institutions.<sup>4</sup>

## Curriculum

### Curriculum description

See Supplemental Digital Appendix 1—Curriculum Overview—at <http://links.lww.com/ACADMED/A901>.

### Curriculum changes since 2010

The UTRGV SOM was originally developed in 2015–2016 to accept its inaugural class, which will graduate in 2020. The launch of the school occurred with multiple educational, clinical, and community-based stakeholders to advance the school’s mission of interprofessional education, care for the underserved, and border health. Since that time the Central Curricular Authority Committee (CCAC) has advanced with multiple subcommittees spanning the preclinical and clinical years, and to include evaluation, assessment, and quality improvement. In preparation for our first graduating class, the Offices of Educational Affairs (OEA), Student Affairs (OSA), and Faculty Affairs (OFA), and multiple faculty committees such as the Optimum Learning Environment Committee and SOM Faculty Assembly have all worked together to refine and strengthen the curriculum to its present model.

### Assessment

See Supplemental Digital Appendix 2—Program Objectives and Competencies—at <http://links.lww.com/ACADMED/A901>.

Medical education program objectives are described in outcome-based terms that allow the assessment of medical students’

progress in developing the competencies that the profession and the public expect of a physician (2020–2021 LCME Element Standard 6.1 or 2020–2021 CACMS Standard 6.1).

Our medical education program objectives follow ACGME rubrics for the domains of evaluation of competence for our students in our curriculum.

In the preclerkship years, end-of-module exams were changed to be NBME examinations for all modules except for the final exam for the Medicine, Behavior, and Society course, which is administered via ExamSoft with questions developed by the teaching faculty for the module. In the clerkship years, the clinical performance assessment has replaced the clinical student assessment to better reflect students’ overall performance in the areas of medical knowledge, clinical skills, and altruism.

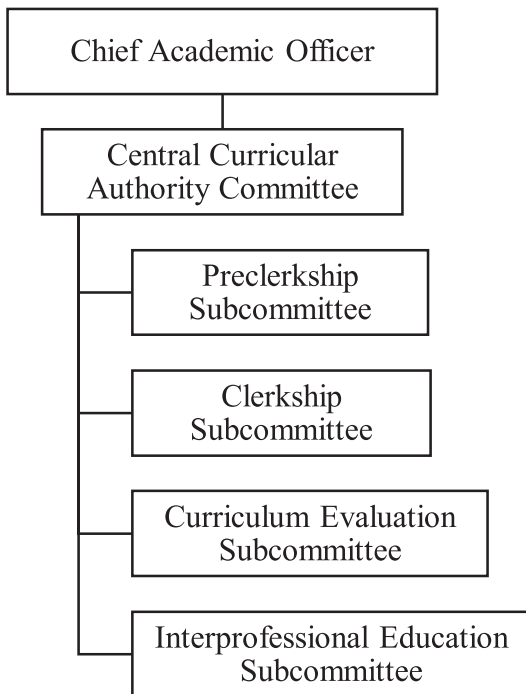
The following methods of assessment are used:

- Clinical document review
- Clinical performance ratings/objective structured clinical examination
- Exam, SOM developed: written/competency-based
- Exam, licensure: written/competency-based
- Exam, SOM developed: oral
- Exam, NBME: norm/standardized, subject
- Exam, SOM developed: clinical performance
- Exam, licensure: clinical performance
- Multisource assessment
- Narrative assessment
- Oral patient presentation
- Participation
- Peer assessment
- Portfolio-based assessment
- Practical (lab)
- Research or project assessment
- Self-assessment
- Stimulated recall

## Curricular Governance

The OEA and the CCAC are responsible for the planning, implementation, and oversight of the curriculum. OEA has the following administrative and academic support:

- Vice dean for academic affairs
- Associate dean for educational affairs
- Assistant dean for educational affairs, preclerkship
- Assistant dean for educational affairs, clerkship
- Program specialist
- Administrative associate
- Education development specialist
- Systems analysts
- Clerkship academic coordinators
- Preclerkship course coordinators
- Instructional development designer
- Medical simulation specialist
- Standardize patient educator



**Figure 1** Curricular governance committees.

CCAC is comprised of membership from the preclerkship and clerkship faculty, teaching faculty representatives, and faculty members at large. CCAC has 4 subcommittees: Preclerkship Subcommittee, Clerkship Subcommittee, Curriculum Evaluation Subcommittee, and Interprofessional Education Subcommittee, with membership made up of faculty and assistant/associate deans who directly recommend and support the curriculum.

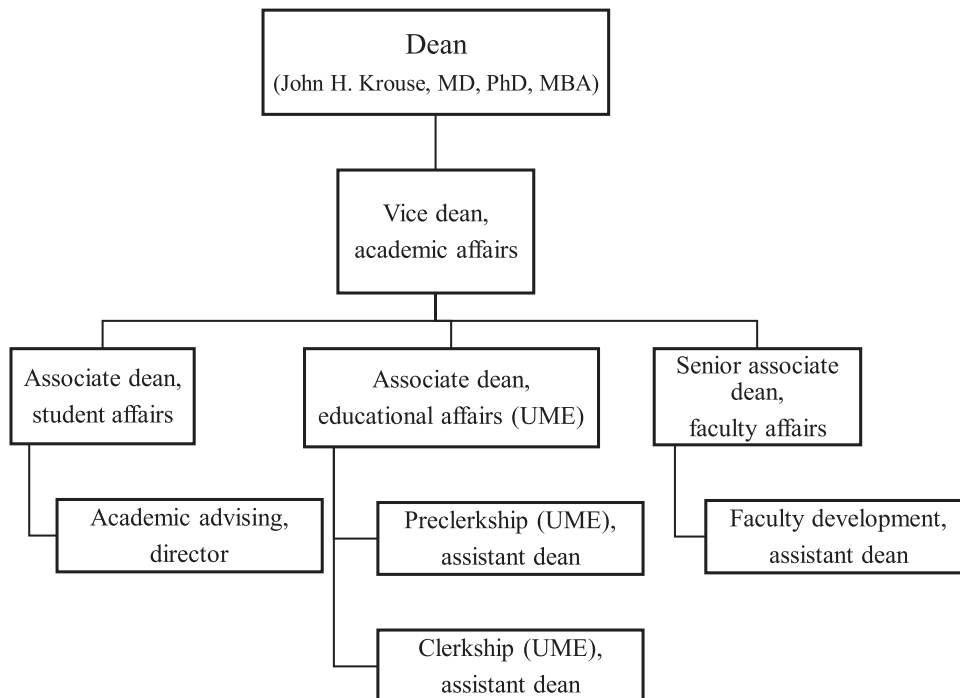
See Figure 1—Curricular governance committees.

The Office of Assessment, Evaluation, and Quality Improvement (OAE&QI) is responsible for the development and maintenance of tools to support curriculum delivery, monitoring, and management. OAE&QI has the following administrative support:

- Associate dean for evaluation and quality
- Assistant dean for assessment, evaluation, and quality improvement
- Continuous quality improvement manager
- Systems analyst
- Testing coordinator and assessment

OEA, CCAC, and OAE&QI work together to collaboratively manage and evaluate the curriculum on an ongoing basis.

See Figure 2—Organizational chart.



**Figure 2** Organizational chart.

Faculty Educator Series

Thursday, September 5, 2019	IAMSE - The Current Landscape of Faculty Development Challenges and Opportunities
Monday, September 9, 2019	Promotion and Tenure Process Session
Thursday, September 12, 2019	IAMSE - Recruiting, Retaining, and Developing a Diverse Faculty
Tuesday, September 17, 2019	LERN Webinar: Highlighting Humanism
Thursday, September 19, 2019	IAMSE - Congratulations! You've been promoted! Introducing the IAMSE Educator Toolkit
Thursday, September 26, 2019	IAMSE - Innovative Faculty Development Programs: Two Case Studies
Thursday, October 3, 2019	IAMSE - Beyond See One, Do One, Teach One: Developing Graduate Students and Medical Trainees as Medical Educators
Friday, October 4, 2019	#FacultyFriday: Orientation/Interactive Lecture
Friday, October 18, 2019	#FacultyFriday: Item Writing
Friday, November 1, 2019	#FacultyFriday: Writing Measurable Objectives (Workshop)
Friday, November 22, 2019	#FacultyFriday: Small Group Teaching
Thursday, December 12, 2019	Problem-Based Learning (PBL) Training
Friday, December 13, 2019	
Thursday, January 9, 2020	IAMSE - Responding to the Opioid Crisis: An Educator's View
Friday, January 10, 2020	#FacultyFriday: Team-Based Learning
Thursday, January 16, 2020	IAMSE - Using Undergraduate Medical Education to Increase the Number of Physicians Prepared to Prescribe Medication-Assisted Treatment
Thursday, January 23, 2020	IAMSE - Methods for Incorporating Opioid Education into Health Professions Curricula
Thursday, January 30, 2020	IAMSE - "Spinal Manipulation and Opioids: Navigating the Current Treatment Landscape" and "Reduce or Eliminate the Needs for Opioids by Instituting Scientific Integrative Medicine as First-Line Care"
Thursday, February 6, 2020	IAMSE - Medical Students and Substance Use: Challenges and Supports
Friday, February 7, 2020	#FacultyFriday: Peer Observation
Friday, March 6, 2020	#FacultyFriday: Use of Classroom Technology
Friday, April 3, 2020	#FacultyFriday: Curriculum Design and Evaluation
Friday, May 1, 2020	#FacultyFriday: Remediation and End of Year - Faculty Development Session

Figure 3 Faculty educator series.

Education Staff

The associate dean for educational affairs is responsible for the oversight of the UME curriculum in collaboration with the assistant deans for educational affairs (preclerkship and clerkship). Together they work with staff and faculty in each phase of the curriculum to implement the CCAC-approved curriculum. OEA is responsible for UME education only, but collaborates with areas of the continuum. OEA is not responsible for areas outside of the educational programming.

Faculty Development and Support in Education

The Office of Faculty Affairs has developed a robust faculty development curriculum for faculty educators. The Faculty

Educator Series was formulated by the UTRGV SOM annual needs assessment and standpoint survey information. We have started a hashtag #FacultyFriday, which is intended to remind faculty of the faculty educator series planned every first Friday of the month. All sessions are recorded for asynchronous viewing and available on the faculty affairs website via blackboard.

See Figure 3—Faculty educator series.

Our promotion and tenure guidelines each have 3 tracks or pathways: education, research, and clinical service. For tenure track, the criteria require excellence in 2 or more pathways depending on their faculty effort. The standard is demonstration of the ability to secure national funding equivalent to an NIH RO1 in their area of expertise. For nontenure track, demonstration of excellence in education pertinent to the specific type of students or trainees whom the faculty member teaches is required. At present, we do not have clinical educator portfolios but expect to develop educational portfolios for all 3 pathways.

Presently, we do not have an institute for educators. The Faculty Educator Series is open to all health professions schools. We plan to use the Faculty Educator Series program to develop a Master Teacher Certificate in AY 2021 (15 credit hours). Our office works closely with the UTRGV Division of Health Affairs. We communicate our faculty development programs to the assistant vice president for faculty affairs, Division of Health Affairs. The other schools/colleges in the division include Health Professions, Social Work, and Nursing. Schools under development are Podiatry and Pharmacy, with founding deans named for both programs. We will also kick off our faculty mentoring program in mid-January 2020, which has been developed in partnership with AAMC staff.

References

- 1 The Strategic Plan for The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley. Edinburg, Texas: The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley School of Medicine; 2017.
- 2 The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley. Undergraduate Medical Education. Office of Educational Affairs. <https://www.utrgv.edu/school-of-medicine/education/educational-affairs/index.htm>. Published January 2020. Accessed March 2, 2020.
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