

New degree program offers students better opportunities in health fields

Alex Burnham, Staff Writer 2:13 p.m. EDT October 23, 2016



(Photo: Gerald Ensley/Democrat)

In an effort to propel more Florida State University students into a career in health care and to increase the amount of students graduating and pursuing success in the medical sciences, FSU recently added the Interdisciplinary Medical Sciences B.S. Degree Program (IMS) to the list of possible degrees available at the university.

Seven different colleges at Florida State collaborated to establish the new IMS program as a student-friendly route into a broad array of professional occupations, ranging from physicians, nurses or pharmacists to social scientists, patient navigators and health informaticists.

The Florida State departments, including the colleges of Arts & Sciences, Communication and Information, Human Sciences, Medicine, Nursing, Social Sciences and Public Policy and Social Work all came together to create greater opportunities and more chances for students who are pursuing medical school or a career in health professions.

“Out of the 6,000 some-odd kids that come to FSU every year as a freshman, about 2,000 of them say they want to be a doctor. And only about 150 of them actually go to Med school 4 years later—what happens to all the rest of them? And that’s the problem,” says Maya Hurt, senior associate dean at the College of Medicine.

Hurt, the main architect behind the new IMS degree, explained the main goal of the new program: To create a path that provides students with more time to explore opportunities and a more effective way to choose a career in health care.

The Interdisciplinary Medical Sciences program is the first of its kind in the nation and arrives at a convenient time, as both the program and the university are currently focused on increasing the total number of STEM – science, technology, engineering and math – graduates at Florida State, cutting the time to graduation and boosting the number of graduates getting jobs with good salaries.

“We honestly believe [the program] will help students get through in four years. That’s the university’s goal—but our bigger goal is that they end up in a health profession that they enjoy the rest of their lives,” says Hurt.

Hurt, alongside Associate Dean Helen Livingston, will be the core director of the program.

On October 14, Florida State University honored the new degree program, celebrated its debut and applauded its first 115 students enrolled in the program at the College of Medicine.

As speakers like Provost Sally McRorie and Dean of the College of Medicine John P. Fogarty welcomed the new program, its students, faculty and staff, they also outlined key components of the program.

Students who choose to follow the IMS degree pathway will have a choice of three majors/branches of study (Pre-Professionals, Patient Care in the Community, and Health Policy and Technology), will take the core science courses, will attain real-world experiences, will receive continual advising and will focus on a team-based approach to healthcare and the sciences.

One of the most positive aspects of the program, according to Director of Public Affairs and Communications at the Florida State College of Medicine Doug Carlson, is the type of guidance the students will receive.

“It’s a lot about the kind of guidance you get. This program is going to offer a lot of guidance, a lot of opportunities to help students think about what they’re doing as they go,” says Carlson.

“Not just in an academic sense, but in terms of how they’re growing personally and professionally,” added Associate Dean Livingston.

Carlson outlined the potential that the new IMS program has to attract more students to Florida State and to send them into the world as ready-to-go professionals.

“This is a type of program that will help the university show people how good an option Florida State is when pursuing a career in general and specifically when pursuing a career in healthcare.”

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