

Honoring the University of Delaware Medical Scholar Graduates

*Commencement Address by Rob Simmons, DrPH, MPH, MCHES, CPH,
Jefferson College of Population Health*

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Thomas Jefferson University is the Medical School home for the state of Delaware. Each year, top undergraduate students in the health and social sciences at the [University of Delaware](#) (UD) come to Jefferson for their graduate education in Medicine, Nursing, Health Professions, Pharmacy, Biomedical Sciences, and Public Health.

Three years ago, UD organized a Medical Scholars program for their top pre-medical students in various degree programs in the College of Arts and Sciences affiliated with the College of Health Sciences. The program has grown rapidly and has approximately 90 UD students who commit to this scholarly elective through their four-year undergraduate degree program across the campus. These highly motivated students often have dual and even triple majors in addition to their participation in this scholarly elective. The [Medical Scholars](#) program is directed by [David Barlow, PhD](#) along with three undergraduate health sciences advisors. Several Jefferson medical and health science faculty share their health science careers with the UD Medical Scholars and serve

as informal mentors. Jefferson College of Population Health (JCPH) Dean David Nash, MD, MBA has presented to the UD Medical Scholars on a number of occasions. Most of the scholars will begin their graduate health science education here at Jefferson in the coming year.

This year, the Medical Scholars program wanted to provide a perspective about public health and its synergy with medicine and asked Dr. Rob Simmons, Director of the Master of Public Health (MPH) program, to speak at its commencement. Some of the themes Dr. Simmons highlighted while sharing his public health experience included:

- The increasing diversity of our society and the importance of cultural humility, recognizing health inequities, and understanding and showing respect for various cultures, populations, and communities
- The root causes of both good and poor health as one addresses the "social determinants of health" as essential supportive systems for quality clinical care

- The commitment to lifelong learning given the explosion of technology that will greatly impact one's health and practice of healthcare
- The importance of interprofessional teamwork (working with other healthcare, public health and social system professionals) and the consideration of joint graduate degrees in related disciplines along with medicine
- The call to leadership and action as a future health professional to represent the patients and communities one serves and "make a difference"
- To follow one's passion, seek out mentors, share one's optimism, and leave a legacy of change to improve the health of our nation.

The UD Medical Scholars program is expected to maintain its rapid growth, in numbers and stature, and Jefferson faculty will continue to provide mentorship and support for our future generation of health leaders.

