

Transforming Healthcare:

Themes from the 5th Annual National MD/MBA Conference

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MD/MBA Candidates

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The 5th Annual MD/MBA Conference for program directors, faculty, students, and alumni was held on April 13-15, 2007 in Houston, TX. Sponsored this year by Baylor College of Medicine and Jones Graduate School of Management, Rice University, the conference focused on physician leadership in academic medical centers and hospitals. Speakers detailed how they utilized their combined medical and business training to positively impact their organizations and patients. The diverse examples include activities such as leading department and hospital-wide quality improvement efforts, planning system-wide resource allocation, and bringing promising technologies to market.

In his keynote address, Stephen Spann, MD, MBA, professor and chairman of the Department of Family and Community Medicine at the Baylor College of Medicine, stressed the need for physician-led transformation of health care given the high costs and quality gaps of the U.S. health care system. There was general consensus that physicians with business training are primed to lead this transformation, given their enhanced leadership and management skills. However, there was much debate about the specifics of how students could lead this transformation and how to monitor the impact of MD/MBAs. Students voiced concerns about opportunities to use and demonstrate the

value of business education throughout their medical training and early careers. Faculty stressed the need to track MD/MBA students to demonstrate and optimize the impact of these programs.

Maria Chandler, MD, MBA, president of the national organization of MD/MBA programs and faculty advisor for the School of Medicine and the Paul Merage School of Business at the University of California – Irvine, provided the annual update of MD/MBA programs. The number of MD/MBA programs remains constant at 54, as reported in at the 2006 meeting. However, the total number of MD/MBA students is unknown, since no formal reporting/tracking system is currently in place. Dr. Chandler expressed a desire to engage all of the programs in the organization's efforts to accurately determine the size and characteristics of these programs. She encouraged program directors, as well as students, to provide her with updated contact information, enrollment statistics, and ideas for the future of the organization. (mchandle@uci.edu)

Several actionable steps emerged from the conference. Merilee Perkins of Dartmouth Medical School presented a revamped version of the National Association of MD/MBA Students website (<http://dms.dartmouth.edu/mdmbas/>). The site contains regularly updated information such as MD/MBA profiles and a discussion forum. The Dartmouth Medical School/Tuck School of Business MD/MBA program maintains the site, with support from other programs. Current and past students are encouraged to upload their information to the site. Another goal of the student association is to develop a database of current and former students from all joint MD/MBA programs. Jefferson Medical College has volunteered to serve as an administrative home for this database.

Results from these tracking efforts will be reported at the next year's conference to be held spring 2008 in Washington, DC.