



Professionalism Across the Curriculum: Reaffirmation of a Core Value

A campus-wide, interdisciplinary endeavor of the University of Mississippi Medical Center (UMMC) to reaffirm professionalism as a core value within its educational culture led to a renewed focus on professionalism for the Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP). The selection of professionalism as the premier focus for institution-wide quality improvement efforts resonated strongly with UMMC's overarching objective to produce graduates who demonstrate technical excellence within their disciplines, exhibit the highest caliber of professionalism, and stand prepared to serve as engaged, responsible members of the communities in which they practice. The QEP topic selection process, a comprehensive needs assessment campaign involving broadly based sectors from all UMMC community constituencies, further identified specific professionalism outcomes expected to improve student learning and the learning environment, to develop well-focused operational goals, to design a structured implementation and assessment plan, and to allocate sufficient resources to accomplish these tasks. At the culmination of the five-year *Professionalism Across the Curriculum* (PAC) program, objective and measureable improvements in UMMC student skills are expected in the following areas:

1. *standards of professional behavior* during interactions with patients and colleagues,
2. *recognition and management strategies* for professional conflict and ethical dilemmas, and
3. *professional ethics literacy*.

Moreover, a similarly objective, measureable improvement in UMMC faculty and staff skills is expected through:

4. *a renewed modeling and embracing of professionalism* as a fundamental practice and pedagogical value.

The UMMC QEP will utilize the “across the curriculum” concept to embed the new professionalism curriculum content into existing teaching and learning activities, clinical rotations, and inter- and intra-professional, collegial, and peer training interactions. This vertically integrated instructional technique has a well-documented history of success within academic health science centers. Features of the “across the curriculum” model particularly suitable for UMMC's *Professionalism* QEP goals are:

- seamless integration of professionalism instruction with core content,
- little or no requirement for additional teaching time,
- utilization of existing course instructors,
- discipline-specific, stage-appropriate embedding of content, and
- minimal stress on an already overcrowded curriculum.

In 2011, the QEP committee audited 800 UMMC course curricula to identify activities particularly well-suited to integrating professionalism content. The content will be collaboratively generated by UMMC faculty and Center for Bioethics and Medical Humanities staff, delivered via blended instructional methods, and assessed via a battery of metrics tailored to the QEP topic and UMMC's unique learning environment. Resultant data on student learning and the learning environment will be continuously evaluated and applied to improve student outcomes and the climate of professionalism throughout all affiliated UMMC schools. UMMC's commitment to the organizational structure and resources required for QEP implementation and completion extends to sustaining professionalism as an ongoing, fundamental component of the interdisciplinary UMMC student experience.

For additional information about the University of Mississippi Medical Center's QEP, contact Ralph Didlake, MD rdidlake@umc.edu, Director of the Center for Bioethics and Medical Humanities.