
UND SMHS Strategic Plan Individual Unit Report for 2021

GOAL 8 for **Physician Assistant Studies**

LEARNING

UND SMHS Strategic Plan Goal 8: *The SMHS will enhance its purposes of education, service, and discovery by focusing additional efforts toward achieving the broad goals stated in the School's Healthcare Workforce Initiative.*

1. Describe if/how your unit has addressed this goal.

As was last year, the admission process for the DPAS involves a published preference for ND residents as well as those from bordering states along with those from rural and/or underserved communities. The 5-year matriculant average of those from the tri-state area (ND, MN & SD) is ~78% with ~47% from ND. The most recent class accepted has 60% of students from ND which, while provides strength in meeting our mission, is cause for concern in terms of clinical placement availability, especially with stricter accreditation standards related to preceptorships.

Additionally, of those employed from the most recent UND PA graduating class, 57% of graduates are working in primary care fields which is greater than the five-year average of 48% of UND PA graduates in primary care. This is impressive given the national statistic of 24% of PAs working in primary care (2020 Statistical Profile of Certified Physician Assistants © NCCPA 2020). Also, within the same survey of the most recent graduates employed, 48% are working in rural/underserved areas (37% 5-year average) and of these 91% (all but one) are working in rural/underserved primary care.

2. Describe how your efforts are being assessed.

The matriculant data above shows how the DPAS continues to train PAs from ND and surrounding states. With the limiting factor of clinical site availability, we have truly reached a “tipping point” of ND matriculants. This combined with the new edition of accreditation standards gives pause for great concern of the sustainability of the current placement process and structure.

The graduate data above shows that the DPAS continues to meet the primary care mission along with the emphasis to rural/underserved populations. Consistently, UND PA graduates choose primary care fields at a much higher rate than evidenced by national data; and many of those graduates are in rural or underserved areas.

3. Describe how your unit analyzed these data and what assessments were determined.

The DPAS feels strongly about meeting the mission of the program which has been foundational over the past 50 years. The data is robust in meeting the mission and yet, there seems to be continued challenges for graduates to obtain PA employment, especially this past year due to the national pandemic. Often graduates desire primary care, however jobs are scarce with typical trends seen toward the specialties. Advocacy of the profession continues to be paramount to creating PA positions in clinical venues of interest. Consistently, professional advocacy is a constant for faculty and students as the profession has less history than other health disciplines.

4. Describe how your unit will implement any further changes and what barriers may exist.

Refer to section above related to continued and now more pressing challenges with clinical placement. Improvements can also still be made in terms of more intentional effort to retaining students within the state. This will require professional advocacy efforts on the part of the DPAS and the SMHS to encourage clinical practice sites and hospitals to expand hiring practices.

PROVIDE A RATING OF YOUR PROGRESS ON THIS GOAL: ● On Track

