

A Different Kind of FAME

The future of our world is only as promising as the future of the medical profession. In recent years, a nationwide discussion has been taking place about the education of the next generation of physicians with an eye on modernizing their course of study and increasing the benefits of the profession to society. Much of the philosophy of today's medical training has its roots in the 1910 findings of Abraham Flexner in his seminal *Flexner Report* on medical education—clearly, an updated approach is required.

One such conversation is occurring in the form of the Transformation in Medical Education (TIME) Initiative, a multi-institutional endeavor in the UT System.

The College of Sciences is participating in this dialogue by partnering with the University of Texas Health Science Center on FAME (Facilitated Acceptance to Medical Education). This program was devised to not only shorten a doctor's postsecondary education to seven years but also let medical instruction begin from a student's first day at UTSA. FAME actually allows them to simultaneously work on their Bachelor of Science in Biology and Doctor of Medicine, all while being taught by physicians and seeing patients from day one.

The program opened its doors this past school year with 30 students in the inaugural class. While FAME is still in its infancy, the program appears to be attractive to students and their families – in 2013 it received 166 applications and 198 were submitted for the 2014-2015 academic year from students across the state.

"Students will gain enthusiasm in gathering their professional identity," says Hans Heidner, the program's co-director. "This will happen through being put into clinical situations and receiving mentoring from medical students, residents and doctors."

An example of a beneficiary is Kevin Chorath. As a high school student, Chorath was profoundly affected by an encounter with a patient while volunteering at a Veterans Affairs hospital—an experience that solidified his desire to pursue a career in medicine. Also specializing in interventional cardiology, Chorath wants to obtain a master's degree in public health so he can effect positive change in the field of global health policy.



FAME BENEFITS

- Two degrees (Bachelor of Science in Biology and Doctor of Medicine)
- Acceptance to UT Health Science Center San Antonio School of Medicine
- Seven year curriculum (Three years at UT San Antonio + four years at UT Health Science Center San Antonio)
- Honors College membership at UTSA
- Reduced costs associated with obtaining a medical degree
- Early exposure to medical training
- Gateway seminar courses
- Competency-based education
- Personal and professional identity formation
- Mentoring

Breadth of Knowledge

In addition to a new medical school curriculum, the students are participating in a variety of new courses jointly developed and taught by UTSA and UTHSCSA faculty. These courses include content that focuses on clinically related topics. In the capstone "Gateway" courses, students will learn many aspects of patient care, incorporating a multidisciplinary approach that emphasizes the importance of communication, leadership, health economics and social and cultural aspects of patient care.

And some of these abilities are competency-based, not just tied to a grade. Communication is a key emphasis. "We will *test* that our students truly understand how to talk to a patient," Heidner says.

The Future Looks Bright

Still, it isn't just what FAME is but what it hopes to become. "The goal is to eventually incorporate many medical professions into the program, including nursing and dental," he says. "There are unlimited possibilities. We hope to be a part of changing the process and, in that way, help change medicine."