

# Curriculum Renewal Newsletter

From the Curriculum Renewal Steering Committee

**Integration, Collaboration, and Relevance:  
Downstate's Curriculum — Downstate's Future**

*Number 1 — January 2010*

## **A Message From Dean Taylor**

The curriculum renewal effort is well underway. I am very pleased to see the involvement of a large number of faculty (well over one hundred) on committees looking at various aspects of our curriculum. Ten years have passed since the last major review of our curriculum, and it is important that we re-examine it to ensure its relevance in today's environment. The rapid expansion of knowledge coupled with the dramatic changes in systems of care in this country means that the training landscape has changed markedly over the last decade. The accrediting bodies have also introduced change in terms of their requirements. There is a new focus on competency-based assessment, which requires renewed focus on clinical skills, professionalism, medical errors, and so on. Finally, there are dramatic changes on the horizon in terms of the national boards. The elimination of Step 1 has been proposed, with a 'mega assessment' of clinical knowledge and basic science correlates occurring at the end of the 3<sup>rd</sup> year or beginning of the 4<sup>th</sup> year. Although this exam will continue to be computer-based, it will include video and audio clips which allow for testing of clinical material in a way that was not possible in the past.

Curriculum renewal is an exciting but challenging process. I am confident that we can build on Downstate's long and distinguished history and take advantage of the great skills we already have to build a truly integrated curriculum.

**Ian L. Taylor, M.D., Ph.D.** Senior Vice President for Biomedical Education and Research and Dean, College of Medicine

## **Current Status of Curriculum Renewal**

The curriculum renewal process began in late 2008, at the behest of Dean Taylor. A year later, in August 2009, after receiving input from students, faculty and staff at Downstate, as well as looking at best practices at other institutions, an initial proposal was prepared by the Curriculum Renewal Steering Committee and presented in **Document 1 – A proposal for Curriculum Renewal**. Copies of Document 1 are available from the Dean's office and also as a pdf file online — see the Curriculum Renewal Website address at the end of this newsletter — if you don't have a copy, get one today!

Since the completion of Document 1, we have assembled new workgroups with the goal of using the reports from these workgroups to help build a detailed curricular map in mid- to late-2010. Over 140 faculty, students, and staff are participating in these workgroups. Some are charged with making recommendations on how best to include 'competencies' in the new curriculum. Other workgroups are charged with reviewing related issues such as the timeline for all four years of the curriculum, methods of teaching and learning, and methods of assessment. Most workgroups have 6 to 10 members including a chair and a member of the Steering Committee who serves as liaison to the workgroup.

In addition to the recently-established workgroups, others will be assembled in the coming months. If you are interested in

participating in an existing or future workgroup, please contact Dr. Pamela Sass, chair of the Curriculum Renewal Steering Committee: [pamela.sass@downstate.edu](mailto:pamela.sass@downstate.edu).

## Curriculum renewal workgroups

**Assessment** Chair, Barbara Lawrence; Liaison, Rick Sadovsky

**Student Assessment** Chair, Shirley Eisner

**Faculty Assessment** Chair, Peter Bergold

**Curriculum Assessment** Chair, Riccardo Bianchi

**Career** Chair, Christopher Doty; Liaison, Jeanne Macrae

**Health Care in the Context of Community and Society** Chair, TBA; Liaison, Susan Pugliese

**Interpersonal and Communication Skills** Chair, Jeff Feola; Liaison, Sheldon Landesman

**Medical Knowledge and Clinical Skills**

**Internal Data** Chair, Lisa Dresner; Liaison, Keith Williams

**External Data** Chair, Helen Valsamis; Liaison, Miriam Feuerman

**Relevance** Chair, Sage Weiner; Liaison, Pam Sass

**Database** Chair, Christopher Stewart; Liaison, Keith Williams

**Methods and Faculty Development** Chair, Robin Ovitsh; Liaison, Fred Volkert

**Professionalism** Chair, Charlene An; Liaison Pam Sass

**Reflective Practice and Life-Long Learning** Chair, Arthur Grant; Liaison, Mert Erogul

**Scholarship** Chair, Danny Rosenbaum; Liaison, Jenny Libien

**Timeline** Chair, Sophie Christoforou

## Q and A

### Q When does the new curriculum kick-off?

**A** The date has been moved back to Fall, 2012. This will provide us with enough time to adequately prepare a comprehensive and integrated curriculum that covers all four years of medical school.

### Q Will the faculty have input?

**A** Yes — the entire process is faculty-driven. The Steering Committee has 14 faculty members from across the institution, and there are many faculty involved in the workgroups. The initial ideas for the foundations presented in Document 1 were driven in large part by input from faculty. All faculty, students, and staff will continue to play a pivotal role in discussions about how best to develop and implement the new curriculum.

### Q What's on the table?

**A** Because we are seeking a more integrated curriculum, we are looking at all aspects of curricular design and delivery — not just content, but also teaching methods, assessments, resources, mentoring, and so forth. We are not changing things just for change's sake, and the approach we have adopted does not mean that everything *will* change, but it's all on the table for consideration.

### Q Is this already a done deal?

**A** No; not by any means. As described in Document 1, some broad foundations for the new curriculum have been developed and agreed upon. These foundations come under the overarching themes of *Integration*, *Collaboration*, and *Relevance* and include: 1) Increased emphasis on clinical relevance, especially in the first two years. 2) Melding the study of 'normal' and 'abnormal/pathological' human conditions in the first two years, and the inclusion of fewer blocks overall, together with 'Integrated Exercises' following each large block in the first two years. 3) Greater integration of basic science and clinical material throughout the curriculum; greater integration between blocks and within blocks. 4) Earlier exposure and increased emphasis on development of clinical skills. 5) Inclusion of 'competencies' as a central component and driving force of the curriculum. 6) Establishment of related 'Clerkship Blocks' in Years 3 and 4.

Thus, the real work of designing the curriculum has yet to be done. Many crucial decisions concerning the structure of the curriculum remain to be discussed, including the content of blocks and clerkships, the structure and content of the Integrated Exercises, and the timelines for all of these curricular components.

**Q What's happening with the timing of Years 1 through 4?**

**A** Whatever timelines are eventually established, the curriculum as a whole will function far more as a continuum than the current curriculum, and the distinctions between the 'pre-clinical' and 'clinical' years will be increasingly blurred. For this to be accomplished, our approach to curriculum design requires some re-thinking and breaking down of existing boundaries.

**Q Why the big overhaul instead of just tweaking what we already have?**

**A** The last major overhaul of the curriculum was about ten years ago, when changes were made to the first two years (the 'pre-clinical' years). In the interim, small adjustments have been made to all four years, but the current curriculum still exists largely as a collection of isolated components with limited integration, rather than as an integrated whole with the capacity for easy future growth and development. By reviewing and restructuring all four years during the curriculum renewal process, we have an opportunity to build a truly integrated curriculum focused on relevant and forward-looking medical education and to help promote a better understanding among faculty of the curriculum as a whole and of the mission of the College of Medicine.

**Who's who...**

**Members of the Curriculum Renewal Steering Committee**

Pamela Sass, M.D., Chair  
Charlene An, M.D.  
Michael Augenbraun, M.D.  
Alaina Burns, Class of 2012  
Sophie Christoforou, MS.Ed.  
Mert Erogul, M.D.  
Miriam Feuerman, Ph.D.  
Stanley Friedman, M.D.  
Daniel Horn, Class of 2010  
Sheldon Landesman, M.D.

Jenny Libien, M.D., Ph.D.  
Jeanne Macrae, M.D.  
Samuel Márquez, Ph.D.  
Daniel Parry, Class of 2011  
Susan Pugliese, R.N., D.D.S.  
Richard Sadovsky, M.D.  
David Stern, Class of 2010  
Fred Volkert, Ph.D.  
Keith Williams, Ph.D.

**Remember to keep an eye on your e-mail for future issues of the CURRICULUM RENEWAL NEWSLETTER**

Please be sure to check-out the **CURRICULUM RENEWAL WEBSITE:**

<http://www.downstate.edu/curriculum-renewal/index.html>

and look out for the **CURRICULUM RENEWAL BLOG**, which will be coming soon – we'll let you know as soon as we go live!