

## Post-bacc program for pre-meds emphasizes health systems science

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A program for prospective medical students aims to teach them about health systems science, the third pillar of medical education, before they even enter the door to officially begin their undergraduate medical education.

The yearlong post-baccalaureate pre-medical program is offered through University of California, San Diego (UCSD) Extension in collaboration with the, School of Medicine.

The program aims to enhance students' academic records for medical school and includes several key concepts that are tenets of health systems science, loosely defined as the understanding of how care is delivered, how health professionals work together to deliver that care, and how the health system can improve patient care and health care delivery.

“This is a great group to introduce these topics to,” said Stephen D. Schneid, MHPE, co-director of the Team-Based Learning Program at UCSD Skaggs School of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences who has taught post-bacc students in the program for a decade. “They are very enthusiastic to learn as much as they can and they are very receptive to all kinds of things that are going to make them better applicants and better future physicians.”

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## Creating better applicants, physicians

The goal of the post-bacc program is to create better medical school applicants, but ultimately it is to create better physicians. To do both, Schneid worked to balance health systems science topics throughout his post-bacc courses with the biomedical science learning that was required for academic enhancement.

“It seemed like a great group to try out this material with and mix it in in a way that doesn’t take away from their academics,” he said. “I wanted to thread the needle to add enough to get them interested and exposed but not too much where it is interfering with their grades.”

To teach those concepts asynchronously, Schneid drew from the 13 free modules available as part of the AMA Health Systems Science Learning Series via the AMA Ed Hub™.

They are “great resources,” he said. “It’s hard to find a place that has all the stuff all together in a nice, professionally done way.”

Learn what you should know if you are considering a post-bacc program.

## Creating future leaders

Key health systems sciences lessons being taught to UCSD students throughout all of Schneid’s post-bacc courses include covering content on the definition of the concept, the social determinants of health, and systems thinking. After covering the content, students are asked to reflect on their learning in health systems science and how they would apply those lessons to their role as a patient advocate.

The feedback after the exercise was overwhelmingly positive, Schneid said.

The post-bacc students “can see that this is going to be helpful when they go to medical school because it is important content, but they also can see that it makes them stronger applicants to medical school,” he said. “When they fill out secondary applications, there is probably going to be something related to health systems science in some way, like a prompt they are going to have to respond to.”

Schneid’s hope for the UCSD post-bacc students is that they “will be positioned to be champions of health systems science within their medical school.”

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